PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

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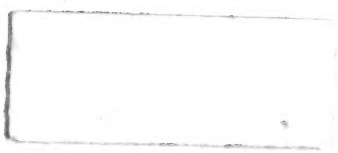
HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

FOURTH SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
FORTIETH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1990-91

COMPRISING PERIOD
15 July—25 July 1991



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THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FOURTH SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 25 JUNE 1987]

FORTIETH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 195**

SIXTEENTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1990-91

House of Commons

Monday 15 July 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Imprisonment of a Member

Mr. Speaker: I have received a letter from a magistrate from the petty sessional division of South Sefton informing me that Mr. Terry Fields, the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen, has been sentenced to a period of imprisonment of 60 days. I shall cause the text of this letter to be published in the Votes and Proceedings and in the *Official Report*.

Following is the letter:

Dear Mr. Speaker,

I must advise you that Mr. Terence Fields, Member of Parliament for Liverpool, Broadgreen, appeared before this Court yesterday in relation to non-payment of the community charge for the period ending 31st March, 1991.

The Court found that he had wilfully refused to pay the outstanding sum and as a consequence he was committed to prison for sixty days, the sentence to commence forthwith.

This information is provided in accordance with the requirement imposed by Home Office Circular 103/1982.

Yours sincerely,

G. W. Budd
Justice of the Peace
South Sefton P. S. D.

Oral Answers to Questions

ENERGY

Alternative Energy Sources

1. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his present target for the percentage of electricity to be generated from alternative energy sources; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Colin Moynihan): The Government are working towards a figure of 1,000 MW of new renewable electricity generating capacity by the year 2000.

Mr. Colvin: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the Government are obviously doing their stuff in that regard, because, through expenditure on research and development and through the non-fossil fuel obligation, the Government and the Department of Energy are doing more than any other Government to help renewable energy? However, should not that be part of an overall strategy for energy encompassing all sources of energy? Is not that particularly important with the proposed privatisation of British Coal and the need for manufacturers in the industry to plan their R and D and commercial developments so that they can capitalise on the opportunities that will be offered in the future?

Mr. Moynihan: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's contribution and I agree with him completely. More than £180 million has been invested to date in the R and D programme with a record budget allocation of about £24 million for 1991-92. Through that sum, 300 projects are currently supported under the Department's R and D programme.

Mr. Alton: Does the Minister agree that it remains the Government's firm conviction that one of the best

non-renewable schemes would be the construction of the Mersey barrage? Will the feasibility study continue to be financed?

Mr. Moynihan: I confirm the point that the hon. Gentleman has just made. With regard to the Mersey barrage, the Government are supporting, on a 50-50 basis, a third phase of feasibility studies and are contributing £1·5 million.

Dr. Michael Clark: Is my hon. Friend aware that members of the Select Committee on Energy recently visited Scandinavia to look at alternative energy sources such as power from wind, from burning refuse and from the use of waste hot water? Is he aware of the fact that despite this Government having devoted more money to encouraging alternative energy than any previous Government, it still appears that we are behind some of our continental neighbours? Is he satisfied that the Department of Energy is doing all that it can to sponsor research and to encourage the creation of commercial alternative energy sources from those developments?

Mr. Moynihan: I can confirm that and not least through the non-fossil fuel obligation which permitted the creation of a market for exactly the type of projects mentioned by my hon. Friend. When my hon. Friend was travelling with his colleagues, I hope that he emphasised that the United Kingdom's wind energy R and D programme is second to none and is creating enviable expertise and a sound basis for exactly what my hon. Friend wants—the commercial exploitation of wind.

Mr. Redmond: Will the Minister agree to set up a full inquiry into energy needs, paying particular attention to the demise of the British coal industry, because British coal will fall into the category of alternative energy sources? Does he agree that something needs to be done to ensure that future needs are met from within this country and not from abroad?

Mr. Moynihan: I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the question, which concentrates on alternative energy sources. He asked whether there would be an inquiry and then deviated to coal. However, I assure him that, with regard to alternative energy sources, we are setting up a major review to ensure that the environmental benefits of renewables are fully exploited.

Independent Gas Suppliers

2. **Mr. Rost:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he is satisfied with progress towards the development of a competitive gas market by independent suppliers.

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. John Wakeham): I shall announce shortly the results of my Department's monitoring of gas contracted over the past two years. I am encouraged by the progress made so far, although there is still some way to go to achieve a fully competitive gas market.

Mr. Rost: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Director General of Gas Supply has expressed the view that there will be no meaningful competition in gas until at least 30 per cent. of the industrial market is offered by the new independent suppliers? Will my right hon. Friend do everything that he can to encourage those efforts?

Mr. Wakeham: The review is into the first two years of the new system and I hope shortly to be able to publish that and to report on it. We want there to be as fully competitive a market as possible. The advice given to us by Ofgas is important in formulating that opinion.

Mr. Hardy: Does the Minister accept that history is likely to find cause for deep regret in the unseemly haste with which British Gas reserves are being exploited? Does he realise that the unseemly haste is emphasised by the fact that that premium fuel is largely being used for steam-raising purposes? The Government will stand charged with gross irresponsibility when a wiser generation is in charge of this country's energy affairs.

Mr. Wakeham: I do not accept that at all. Gas has an important part to play in power generation, not least because of the good environmental effects of using gas.

Mr. Hannam: My right hon. Friend will be aware of the difficulties over the supply of gas to some independent private power project companies. Can he give an update on the latest stage of the negotiations between British Gas and the companies concerned?

Mr. Wakeham: British Gas is soon to introduce a new price schedule for all power generation customers. I hope that the new schedule will help to resolve the current difficulties not only between British Gas, Coryton and Thames Power, but for other operators.

Mr. Doran: The Secretary of State will be aware that one of the main tools in aiding competition onshore is the regulation of the gas transmission system. There is growing concern about the Government's failure to use their powers to regulate the transmission system offshore. That is leading to an inhibition of development of some of our vital gas supplies. Does he have any proposals to use the powers contained in the Petroleum and Submarine Pipelines Act 1975 to encourage development offshore?

Mr. Wakeham: I have no such proposals at present, but we are especially studying the development of some satellite fields. There may be a possibility of improving some of them.

Alternative Energy Sources

3. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he proposes to have discussions in the European Council of Ministers about alternative sources of energy.

Mr. Moynihan: Alternative sources of energy will continue to be important and relevant in future Council discussions. The next Energy Council meeting is planned for 29 October.

Mr. Knox: Can my hon. Friend say which specific area of research into alternative sources of energy is likely to be most fruitful? Does the European Community propose to devote additional funds to research in that area?

Mr. Moynihan: Grants are available for projects in a wide range of areas on renewables, not least energy efficiency, renewables across the board, clean coal technology and gas and oil exploration and development. We very much welcome the recent announcement that there will be an inclusion of wave power projects under the

non-nuclear energy sub-programme of the third framework programme in view of that technology's potential contribution to energy supplies in Europe.

Mr. Janner: In recent meetings of the European Council of Ministers on energy matters, have the Government discussed the problem that is afflicting the Government and worrying the Opposition—the payment of those who make the decisions on these matters, such as the chairman of East Midlands Electricity, who has received a 63 per cent. pay increase at a time when industrial workers in the area have been held to 8·9 per cent? Surely that matter has a European dimension. Does any other European country have miseries that are similarly scandalous to those with which we contend here?

Mr. Moynihan: The hon. and learned Gentleman asks whether we have discussed that point at Energy Council meetings and the answer is no.

Mr. Michael Morris: As alternative energy sources are environmentally friendly, when my hon. Friend meets his colleagues in Europe, is not there a strong case for reviewing progress on clean coal technology, which is also an environmentally friendly source of electricity generation?

Mr. Moynihan: I agree with my hon. Friend. That is why the Commission and the Community, through its Thermie programme, have made grants available for projects on clean coal technology.

Mr. Morgan: When the Minister next discusses alternative energy at the European level, will he take the opportunity of separating nuclear energy and the Government's support through the nuclear levy and the non-fossil fuel obligation, which is justifiably due to finish in 1998 given that it is a mature industry that is now more than 30 years old, from the similar protection of the non-fossil fuel levy that is given to alternative energy, which should certainly not be terminated in 1998 as that is an infant industry? Will he confirm that, at some point or other, he will extend the protection of the two-tier price system that he has instituted beyond 1998 for non-fossil, non-nuclear energy?

Mr. Moynihan: I accept the importance of the hon. Gentleman's point. This year, despite the 1998 issue, which the hon. Gentleman raised, many projects for the second tranche of the NFFL obligation have come forward to be contracted and are thus financially viable. As I said, I recognise the importance of the hon. Gentleman's point, which will be discussed in detail by the group that is shortly to meet for the first time to consider the strategy of renewable energy projects.

Energy Saving

5. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what grants his Department gives to organisations to undertake energy-saving measures in homes.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): My Department gives grants under the home energy efficiency scheme, which provides insulation measures to low-income households. Some £26 million is available under the scheme this year.

Mr. Cohen: The Minister did not say how much is being spent, so his answer is cold comfort for the many householders on low incomes. Have not the Government punctured energy efficiency efforts in the home by voluntary and public organisations and the electricity and gas companies? Does he agree that there is scope for much more home insulation and for more energy-saving measures and would not it make environmental sense to do that? Are not the Tories too bloody mean to be green?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Those are not unparliamentary words, but they are distasteful and unnecessary in the Chamber.

Mr. Cohen: They are too mean to be green.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that it makes environmental sense to be more energy efficient. Our home energy efficiency scheme will enable 200,000 houses a year to receive insulation and energy efficiency advice, which is a substantial advance on any other year and on what was done by any previous Government.

Mr. Dickens: Does my hon. Friend agree that we need no lectures from the Opposition on energy efficiency, because the last time there was a Labour Government, they spent £2·4 million on energy efficiency, whereas today, under the Conservative Government, the figure stands at £40 million? Does my hon. Friend agree that we are doing something about energy efficiency, which was always neglected by Labour Governments?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: That is a typically sound point from my hon. Friend. I confirm that my Department's expenditure on energy efficiency has increased eightfold since 1979 when the Government took office.

Landfill Gas Projects

7. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many landfill gas projects are in operation in the United Kingdom and other EC member states.

Mr. Moynihan: There are 34 landfill gas projects currently in operation in the United Kingdom. The latest approximate figure that I have for other EC member states indicates a total of 150 projects.

Mr. Tredinnick: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who will be aware of the great interest in my constituency in all projects that support the environment. Can he give us some idea of the savings that can be made in conventional energy by the use of landfill gas projects and can he project what savings he thinks we will have made by the turn of the century?

Mr. Moynihan: The existing 34 schemes save some 160,000 tonnes of coal equivalent a year. In response to my hon. Friend's second point, as well as the existing schemes, nine others are under construction and 25 are proposed. When all 68 schemes are in operation, the energy saving will be equivalent to about 500,000 tonnes of coal equivalent per annum.

Electricity Generation

8. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many independent electricity generation projects have been announced since the passage of the Electricity Act 1989.

Mr. Wakeham: Under section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 I have given consent for four independent power stations to be constructed. They are at Coryton, Deeside, Keadby and Wilton, Cleveland.

Mr. Butler: Is not this excellent news for consumers? Can my right hon. Friend give a guarantee that we shall not return to a monolithic monopoly supply, which would be the case if we followed the advice of Opposition Members?

Mr. Wakeham: I have considerable expectations that we shall not return to such a system. Competition in generation is good for not only consumers but the environment. It should be very much encouraged.

Dr. Kim Howells: Does the Secretary of State agree that the dominance of National Power, PowerGen and Nuclear Electric precludes any real competition in electricity generation? Does he further agree that the monopolistic powers which have been handed to PowerGen and National Power in particular threaten to destroy Europe's most efficient coal industry, as those powers have all but destroyed the coal industry of south Wales and wasted a great national asset?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not accept that for a moment. First, competition in generation will be widespread. Apart from the four projects that I have announced, four other projects were applied for and received planning permission before the 1989 Act came into force. We have been advised about several other projects which, at this stage, are confidential. Secondly, I do not believe that the coal industry will be ruined, as the hon. Gentleman made out, as a result of the privatisation of the electricity generating industry. The industry has a significant and important future in the provision of coal for generation in Britain. If it continues to improve its productivity as it has done in recent years, it will stand to have a larger share of the market.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Will my right hon. Friend give some idea of not merely the number of projects but those which, in his estimation, are likely to materialise? Will he also tell us how many projects out of the total number are gas turbine projects and how many are coal? Are not they all gas turbine?

Mr. Wakeham: With the best will in the world, as the applications have to come to me and I have to consider them and decide whether to give planning approval, it would be unwise for me to speculate about which projects are good runners and which are not.

Electricity Supply

9. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what plans he has to meet the chairs of the statutory electricity consumer committees to discuss the regulation of the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Wakeham: This matter falls within the responsibility of the Director General of Electricity Supply, who meets the chairmen of the consumers' committees on a regular basis.

Mr. Flynn: When the meeting with the chairs of the Merseyside and North-Western and the South-Western electricity boards takes place, will they be reminded that the Government knew in advance that the directors' salaries would be doubled and trebled and that the Government deliberately gagged the companies and forbade them to reveal that fact last autumn? Will the Secretary of State take advantage of the fact that today is a day of national penitence to confess the Government's and the Prime Minister's shameful complicity in this orgy of greed which scandalised the whole nation?

Mr. Wakeham: If any penitence is required it is from the hon. Gentleman, who has just made a statement which he knows to be untrue. The statement in the prospectus was the position and that position was set out. What was said at a meeting was subsequently withdrawn by those concerned. The hon. Gentleman should be ashamed of himself.

Mr. John Marshall: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the privatised industries have had much more effective control of their prices than was ever the case when they were in the public sector? Does he agree that privatisation has led to much higher investment, productivity and revenue to the tax authorities than ever occurred when the industry was in the public sector?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend makes his point well. He is correct.

Mr. Dobson: Will the Secretary of State end this pretence that he and the rest of the Government were not involved in the massive pay increases for electricity bosses? In particular, will he confirm that the Government paid City advisers Coopers and Lybrand no less than £360,000 for advice on the pay and perks of electricity bosses? That sum is so large that it would almost pay for one of the chairmen. As the taxpayers paid for the advice that the Secretary of State received, will he now publish it so that they can see whether they got value for money?

Mr. Wakeham: In recent times we have had a number of exchanges and a debate on these matters and there is not much more that I want to say. I will just add this: Coopers and Lybrand produced one of several reports on executive pay. Naturally, the companies pressed for increases. The Government decided that salaries should be restrained while the companies were in the public sector. Thereafter it was a matter for the companies.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the Secretary of State look again at the regulation of privatised industries, such as the electricity industry? Does he recognise that it is unacceptable for the industries to be able to offer their chairmen and other executives such enormous pay increases when that goes contrary to Government policy? Does he accept that the House of Lords Select Committee, which is about to report, makes it clear that the new structure of the industry adds to the possibility of generation and supply, but goes against energy efficiency? The regulative powers of the new industry are not effective. What will he do about it?

Mr. Wakeham: First, I will not add anything to what I said about directors' pay. I have already expressed my view, as has my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. I merely add that salary increases do not affect the price to the consumer, because of the regulation. That is important. I disagree with the hon. Gentleman about energy efficiency in the privatised system. Competition in generation is one of the single most important steps that we have taken to improve energy efficiency. The generators now have a direct financial incentive to reduce the costs of producing electricity. As their principal cost is the fuel that they use, they have a powerful reason for wanting to improve efficiency.

Energy Efficiency

11. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the current level of investment in energy efficiency.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: It is not possible to separate out a national figure for total investment in energy efficiency because it is often part of wider capital expenditure in industry, transport and the public sector. However, since 1983 the amount of energy used per unit of national output has fallen faster in the United Kingdom than in the majority of other EC countries.

Mr. Holt: However much we try to save energy, we are concerned about its creation in the first place. We on Teesside are getting worried that there is no strategy for the number of power plants that will be sited there, that there are no controls and, more particularly, that there is no concern about the transportation of that electricity by cables once the plants are in operation. Is not it time that the Government gave that some thought instead of just leaving it to the roulette wheel?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My hon. Friend will appreciate that new and modern generating stations can mean new transmission networks. He will also know that any proposals for substantial overhead lines introduced by the National Grid Company must be accompanied by an environmental statement which balances the need for energy with the environmental concerns of my hon. Friend and others.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the Minister agree that any investment in energy conservation, whether by insulation or otherwise, creates employment for people in other industries? Surely now, when the whole of industry is in recession, any Government-led investment of that nature must be welcome?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I agree about the importance of energy efficiency measures, which is why my Department is spending more than £40 million on promoting energy efficiency.

Mr. John Browne: I welcome my hon. Friend's answer. May I ask him whether he has any plans to encourage —[HON. MEMBERS: "Put your hat on."] individuals and corporations to invest in energy-saving devices, such as PL lightbulbs? Their use could be encouraged even at retail level through rebates, which are used in the United States and Canada. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Perhaps that will encourage the hon. Gentleman not to wear his hat.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I am sorry about my hon. Friend's hat—as a result I have already forgotten part of my hon. Friend's question. There are plenty of incentives to invest in energy efficiency measures, because, by saving fuel and electricity, the customer is also saving money. For those low-income households where such savings may not apply we have a separate scheme which I have already described to the House.

Electricity Supply (Sharing)

12. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the operation of the EC Energy Council's development of electricity supply sharing arrangements.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I understand that the European Commission expects to bring forward proposals for opening up electricity markets in Europe very soon. I welcome that development and look forward to such discussions with other EC countries in the Energy Council.

Mr. Dykes: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. Will he confirm that Her Majesty's Government will press that campaign and policy vigorously, bearing in mind that there are rumours of tardiness by other member states as well as some of the officials in the Commission dealing with that policy? Notwithstanding that the single market has not yet begun—*[Interruption.]*—if I had a hat I could take it off to hear my hon. Friend's answer—does my hon. Friend agree that a single market for electricity supply is vital so that we can sell some of our electricity to the continent?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I agree, but there is resistance in some other member states to the proposals for a free market in electricity. Their state monopolies are inevitably, somewhat resistant to competition, but we strongly believe that a true internal market requires a freer market in electricity. We have introduced proposals to that end.

Mr. Douglas: Will the Minister exercise some care in examining the internal market within Britain? Would he care to comment on the progress that has been made on the interconnector between Scotland and England? That would facilitate the use of Scottish energy generated from coal and other means in England.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I cannot comment on specific proposals, because my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State may be required to authorise such developments in due course. It is a sign of the developing market in electricity in the United Kingdom that trade from one part of the United Kingdom to another is an increasing possibility.

Photovoltaic Electricity

13. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his estimate of the potential for photovoltaic electricity generation in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Moynihan: I have recently reviewed the scope for photovoltaic electricity generation in the United Kingdom and concluded that there is a significant opportunity for photovoltaic power to contribute to United Kingdom

energy needs in certain applications. For that reason I recently announced a new research programme into the technology.

Mr. Page: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. It is obvious that that form of energy production has considerable usage not only for stand-alone purposes, but as an environmentally clean form of energy. So that we can get a handle on the size of the power that could be generated, can my hon. Friend tell the House and the nation what volumes of energy in gigawatts could be produced by that form of electricity generation into the early years of the next century?

Mr. Moynihan: I assume that my hon. Friend is including consumer products—it is estimated that 170 GW hours could be produced by the year 2025.

Nuclear Power Stations

14. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a further statement on the decommissioning of nuclear power stations.

Mr. Wakeham: Decommissioning is a matter for nuclear power station operators to consider within the guidelines on safety and environmental protection set by the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate and Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

Mr. Williams: In its proposals for "deferred dry store", is it right that Nuclear Electric should consider postponing the decommissioning of nuclear power stations by 30 years, which would leave the problem to future generations to tackle? Is not the idea of simply "mounding over" spent nuclear power stations to create massive nuclear tombs environmentally irresponsible? Does the Minister agree that Nuclear Electric's proposals amount to an admission of defeat, because it simply does not know how to dismantle nuclear power stations and is terrified of the cost?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not accept that. When considering decommissioning it is important to ensure the continued safety of the workers, the public and the environment. That will be ensured by continued control by the regulators. Nuclear Electric's proposals demonstrate its commitment to seeking the most cost-effective strategy, which takes account of safety and environmental concerns.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Will my right hon. Friend reflect that, when those nuclear power stations, particularly the Magnox power stations, were first built, it was intended —it was Government policy—that the sites should be mounded in that way? Does he agree that to do anything other than that would be a total waste of what will probably become taxpayers' rather than private operators' money?

Mr. Wakeham: I always listen to my hon. Friend with considerable care when he is talking about such matters. However, the nuclear installations inspectorate is considering those proposals and it would not be right for me to comment further.

Mr. Barron: When the Government privatised the electricity supply industry they agreed that a levy of 10·6 per cent. would be added to people's electricity bills to pay for the difference between the cost of expensive nuclear power and fossil fuel. That levy has now increased to 11 per cent. Given that, at that stage, it was meant to cover the total decommissioning of power stations over 100 years and that the nuclear industry now talks about decommissioning over 130 years, why has there been no decrease in electricity bills?

Mr. Wakeham: The levy was set for the first five years on a declining basis. It has gone up from 10·6 to 11 per cent. because of estimated differences in the take off. However, I confirm that there is still a trend downwards over the eight years.

British Coal (Output)

15. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about the change in output per man shift in British Coal since 1984.

Mr. Wakeham: In 1983-84, British Coal's putput per manshift was 2·43 tonnes. Figures just received for the year to 29 June 1991 indicate that this has more than doubled to 4·87 tonnes.

Mr. Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that those magnificent figures underline the great benefits to the country from winning the coal strike in 1984-85? Does he also agree that they underline the potential for the speedy privatisation of that industry?

Mr. Wakeham: I agree with my hon. Friend. the improvements in productivity have been remarkable, and they must continue if the industry is to have a long-term, competitive base. I remind my hon. Friend that since 1979 the Government have approved more than £7 billion of new investments and grant aid of about £17 billion, including provision of more than £6 billion in deficiency grants under last year's Coal Industry Act. Improvements in productivity, financial support and long-term contracts with the generators are all part of the improvements to the coal industry.

Mr. Eadie: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that those output figures in a publicly controlled industry far surpass the productivity rate in, for example, Germany, which has a privatised coal industry? Although the right hon. Gentleman said that he had high hopes that the coal industry would win contracts from the power companies, is he aware that a statement was made this weekend to the effect that the power companies are reluctant to give long-term contracts? Indeed, they are still hell bent on importing 50 per cent. of their coal.

Mr. Wakeham: I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not falling into the same trap as some of his colleagues who, whenever a discouraging statement is made by the electricity generators in the run up to a renegotiation, treat it as the gospel truth according to St. Neil. The renegotiation for the coal industry is extremely important and the generators will take into account all the factors to which I have referred many times from the Dispatch Box. They include security of supply and questions of exchange rate risks. It is not a question of contract based purely on price and British Coal has a great deal to offer in those contracts.

Electricity Disconnections

16. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the level of disconnection for debt of electricity customers in *(a)* 1976, *(b)* 1986 and *(c)* 1990.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: In the year ending 31 March 1976, disconnections for domestic electricity debt in England and Wales totalled 125,000. In the year to 31 March 1986, they had dropped to 102,000. In the year to 31 March 1991, they had fallen to 51,637—the lowest recorded level.

Mr. Carrington: Does my hon. Friend agree that that significant drop in disconnections demonstrates the success of the privatised electricity companies in looking after customers who can, temporarily, least afford to pay their bills? Does my hon. Friend agree that the privatised electricity companies should be congratulated on their efforts to assist people who get into financial trouble? Will he encourage those companies to continue that policy in future?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Yes, Sir. The fact remains that, under Labour, more than twice as many people were having their supplies cut off because of electricity debts. That shows that the privatisation programme that we have pushed through is good for the customer, particularly low-income households that would otherwise be disconnected. I can confirm that, under the codes of practice agreed between the newly privatised companies and the regulator, the figures should drop even further.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Duchy Visit

31. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next intends to visit the county palatine.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. Chris Patten): I am sorry to be the bearer of bad news, but I have no plans to visit the county palatine in the near future.

Mr. Hayward: When my right hon. Friend next goes to the county palatine, will he visit Blackburn? When he does so, will he go via Newham and Marlow, where the Conservatives recently took seats off the Labour party, Clwyd where last week the Labour party was denied control of the county council, and so arrive at Blackburn, where the Conservatives also recently took a seat off the Labour party? Are not those results a clear sign that the public at large are seeing through Labour party proposals, particularly on issues such as defence—today, the Government announced an invitation to tender for a fourth Trident nuclear submarine.

Mr. Patten: I am sure that one reason that we have done so well in recent local government by-elections is because the public do not trust the Labour party on either the economy or defence. I am equally sure that people in Barrow will have been delighted by today's announcement that we are going ahead with building the fourth Trident which is essential to the credibility of our deterrent. The public will know that the Labour party is opposed to the building of that Trident vessel and will be interested to know what Labour's overall defence policy is. I am sure that the public can look forward to an intensely interesting discussion at the Labour party conference.

Mr. Grocott: Can the Minister confirm that, in view of his disastrous record since taking up his present job, he must be pretty nervous about visiting the north-west or anywhere else, when part of the reason for his visit is to manage a Tory party by-election campaign? May I ask him the following question termed in his own colourful language: which of the two results in the north-west left him feeling the most gobsmacked—the Tory party's performance in Ribble Valley, where it lost a safe Tory seat, or its performance in the Walton division of Liverpool, where its candidate lost his deposit?

Mr. Patten: I think that the television coverage of events in Liverpool reminded people throughout the country that, as the Labour party could not run Liverpool, it certainly would not be able to run Britain. The result in Walton reminded us that extremism in the Labour party, which we were told years ago had been wiped out, is still rife. I look forward to securing the same 10·9 per cent. swing in our favour as we achieved in Blackburn the other day.

32. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next intends to visit the Duchy on official business.

Mr. Chris Patten: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Coombs: May I urge my right hon. Friend to consider an early visit to the Duchy to tell his tenants about the disastrous consequences of a national minimum wage policy? Is it not extraordinary that there was no mention whatever of that policy by the Leader of the Opposition on his recent visit to Blackpool to the Transport and General Workers Union conference?

Mr. Patten: As I understand it, before the Leader of the Opposition went to Blackpool his office was telling people that in his speech he would make strong references to a national minimum wage because he was so proud of Labour's policy on that. In the event he kept mum, and one can only draw one's own conclusions.

Parliamentary Questions

33. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many parliamentary questions he has answered since he last answered questions orally in the House.

Mr. Chris Patten: Five, Sir.

Mr. Winnick: That must have kept the right hon. Gentleman pretty busy. Although the Tory vote in Walton was the lowest Tory percentage vote this century—a new record—is it not of some consolation to the right hon. Gentleman that at least the Tory candidate in that by-election got a few more votes than Lord Sutch?

Mr. Patten: It was a great comfort to us that all Conservative Members who were asked supported the Conservative candidate in Walton. I understand that that was not the case for the Opposition.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

National Audit Office

39. **Mr. Dickens:** To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission what representations he has received regarding the sufficiency of the National Audit Office's funding to ensure adequate coverage of all Government Departments.

Sir Peter Hordern (on behalf of the Public Accounts Commission): In considering the adequacy of funding for the National Audit office, the Public Accounts Commission takes into account the proposals of the Comptroller and Auditor General as set out in the National Audit Office corporate plan, together with the views of the Public Accounts Committee and the Treasury. The Commission has received no other representations.

Mr. Dickens: I am obliged to my hon. Friend for that answer. Will he confirm that the quality of audits is beyond dispute and that they are absolutely first class? Nowadays shoppers and everybody else seek value for money. Is my hon. Friend satisfied that sufficient value-for-money audits take place? Are people getting value for money from Government Departments, and is my hon. Friend satisfied that they have sufficient audits?

Sir Peter Hordern: I agree with my hon. Friend that value for money from Government Departments is at least as important for Government Departments as it is for the consumer. I am happy to tell him that there were 43 value-for-money exercises last year and 47 this year, and that there will be 50 next year and each year thereafter. The House can be grateful to the Comptroller and Auditor General, his staff and other firms for the time and experience that they devote to value-for-money exercises in Government Departments.

Mr. Franks: Will my right hon. Friend inquire of the Audit Commission whether it has recently investigated the activities of a well-known firm of local bookmakers in Cumbria called Barrow city council? This organisation——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must ask questions relating to the Public Accounts Commission.

Mr. Franks: I am asking my hon. Friend to inquire of the Audit Commission about this firm of bookmakers which has managed——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Questions must relate to the Public Accounts Commission.

Mr. Franks: Surely the Public Accounts Commission has an interest in this firm of bookmakers which over the past three years has managed to blow £4·5 million, including recently £1·2 million on the Bank of Credit and Commerce International. Perhaps that firm of bookmakers did not realise that a horse which was doped in the United States should not be running in local races in Cumbria.

Sir Peter Horden: I have to tell my hon. Friend, with some disappointment, that the Public Accounts Commission has no authority over the Audit Commission, which looks after local government. We are responsible for the National Audit Office. Much as I think that the Public Accounts Commission would like to look at a firm of bookmakers, that does not come within its ambit.

Mr. Butler: Does the National Audit Office have enough money to look into the premature closure of the nuclear structure facility at Daresbury, which seems to involve a scandalous waste of taxpayers' money?

Sir Peter Horden: I have not heard about this one, but I shall draw the attention of the Comptroller and Audit General to it, and write to my hon. Friend.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Duchy Business

34. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proportion of his time he spent on official Duchy business in the last month.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. Chris Patten): I spend up to a quarter of my time carrying out my duties as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. Thanks to the hon. Gentleman getting in with his question, the percentage has increased slightly.

Mr. Cohen: As part of those duties, the Chancellor must be getting lots of representations about saving the regiment in his area. What about the regiments that run our hospitals and schools, work on our buses and trains and manufacture our goods and products? Has not the Conservative party shown that it is incapable of saving those regiments? Even without the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) at the helm, are not the Conservatives still a monstrous regiment?

Mr. Patten: I hope that that is the end of regimental metaphors for the time being. I have had none of the representations that the hon. Gentleman suggests I have, although I have had some representations that the country should be saved from Labour's defence policy, whatever that may be.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Telephone Directory

41. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Lord President of the Council when the design and lay-out of the Palace of Westminster telephone directory was last revised for the benefit of its users.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): The present design and layout of the Palace of Westminster telephone directory have not changed substantially for a number of years, but the format and content are reviewed and modified on each occasion it is published.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: I hope that my right hon. Friend does not feel that this is a trivial matter, because I know that I am not alone in finding the document physically unwieldy and appallingly indexed and laid out, to the extent that many colleagues telephone the operator rather than wade through it. Is this not a ridiculous state of affairs? Will my right hon. Friend initiate a redesign of the document, preferably by a user?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend may have ideas of his own and I shall ask the Serjeant at Arms to consult him about the improvements that he may wish to suggest for future editions.

Mr. Dykes: On the design and layout of the European destination envelopes, will my right hon. Friend confirm that they are commencing today, that supplies are available and that they are properly designed?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is about telephone directories.

Palace of Westminster (Access)

42. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what plans he has to extend public access to the Palace during recesses.

Mr. MacGregor: I have no plans to extend the present arrangements that enable parties of visitors sponsored by Members of both Houses to tour the Line of Route during recesses.

Mr. Coombs: Will my right hon. Friend give some consideration to the fact that the Palace of Westminster is a most attractive proposition for all tourists who come to London during the summer? Will he consider the implications of making access to the Palace during the summer recess available on a commercial basis so that some of the costs of the upkeep of the Palace can be defrayed by the substantial income that would be received?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend will know that there are security implications about general access. Any decision to reopen the Line of Route to the general public, other than under the arrangements that we have at present, would have security implications that would need to be considered by the relevant Committees of both Houses before being put to the three authorities responsible for Westminster Hall. Succesive Administrations have accepted that the costs of upkeep of the Palace should be a charge on public funds. I understand the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee, when it last looked at the proposal that my hon. Friend made, rejected it. However, I accept that it could look at the suggestion again.

Mr. Corbyn: When the recess comes, will the Leader of the House spend some time finding out why so little has been done to improve access to the building for those with disabilities, particularly those in wheelchairs or using crutches and those with sight difficulities? Will he also look at the lack of Braille editions of the guides and other literature available for visitors? Does he accept that, until we can give people with disabilities full access to this building, we cannot say this is truly a public place, as it ought to be?

Mr. MacGregor: A number of improvements have recently been agreed by the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee. It is proposed that a comprehensive study should be carried out to identify other practicable and acceptable proposals for further access for the disabled.

Sir John Stokes: Before my right hon. Friend considers making further proposals for access to the Palace of Westminster, will he find time to consider the standard of dress of visitors who are now coming in here? Recently some of them have appeared to be practically naked.

Mr. MacGregor: I assume that my hon. Friend is not referring to hon. Members in this place. I do not know what proposals he has in mind. If there are any particular matters that he wishes to raise, I shall be happy to consider them.

Natural Heritage (Scotland) Bill

44. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Lord President of the Council how many hours were spent on each of Second Reading, Committee stage, Third Reading, and consideration of Lords amendments of the Natural Heritage (Scotland) Bill.

Mr. MacGregor: The time spent on each stage of the House of Commons consideration of the Natural Heritage (Scotland) Bill [*Lords*] was as follows: Second Reading, six hours and three minutes; Standing Committee, 19 hours and 43 minutes; Report, four hours and 50 minutes; Third Reading, one hour and 23 minutes, and consideration of a Lords amendment to a Commons amendment and Lords amendments in lieu of Commons amendments, four hours and six minutes.

Mr. Dalyell: And what squandering of parliamentary time it proved to be after a group of self-interested peers had inserted an amendment into the Bill that changed its very nature at the 11th hour and 59th minute. Does not the Leader of the House feel just a tinge of shame that he could not even get the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) to vote for it and that Sir Fred Holliday, who was appointed by the Government during April of this year —a man whom the right hon. Gentleman must have known when he was Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and Secretary of State for Education and Science —resigned on a point of principle? What has happened is appalling.

Mr. MacGregor: I do not accept that the Lords amendment changed the very nature of the Bill as it was introduced on Second Reading.

Air Conditioning

45. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he has any plans to improve the air conditioning system of the House.

Mr. MacGregor: I have no plans to make any immediate improvements.

Mr. Butler: I have to report to my right hon. Friend that there is great stuffiness in Commons Court, especially for the new boys who do not have a window. I have had to buy an auxiliary unit. Can my right hon. Friend offer any comfort?

Mr. MacGregor: I am aware of the problem that arose recently for my hon. Friend and for other hon. Members on both sides of the House in what is known as the Tea Room block, where my hon. Friend's office lies. The compressor is in a hermetically sealed unit and so there are access problems. A new compressor was installed last year and it failed in early June of this year. The specialist firm

failed to meet the timetable for manufacturing a replacement unit. I am glad to say that the equipment is now working again.

Premium Rate Telephone Services

48. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make it his policy to bar House of Commons telephones from connections to premium rate services.

Mr. MacGregor: Access to premium rate telephone services will be barred for the duration of the summer recess, and the issue will be considered again by the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee when the House returns.

Mr. Flynn: Does the Leader of the House think that much will be achieved by barring the services during the summer recess? Will he give us a guarantee that like most Government Departments that already have a bar on these services, the bar will continue when we return? Surely it is right that the House shows its disapproval of the majority of the services, which are extremely damaging and run by soft pornographers.

Mr. MacGregor: In view of the hon. Gentleman's request, I thought that he would welcome the fact that the chairman of the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee has decided to bar access to the services during the summer recess. It is a matter for the Committee to reconsider and then to take a full decision.

Victoria Tower

49. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Lord President of the Council when he expects the cleaning of Victoria Tower to be completed; at what cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: In 1994, at an estimated cost of £7·5 million.

Mr. Greenway: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that some years ago we could have had Victoria Tower cleaned for £3 million? It is sad that the cleaning will now cost £7·5 million. Will he ensure that when it is cleaned, the Union Jack that flies proudly on top of the Tower is always a clean one. Sometimes we have a dirty flag.

Mr. MacGregor: On my hon. Friend's second point, I shall ensure that his request is noted. On the first point, of course the cost has increased, partly because the scope of the work has changed and partly because of noise problems. However, it is a major undertaking: for example, the scaffolding weighs more than 700 tonnes, the bars measure about 70 miles and the piling had to go down 21 m. It is a major undertaking and by far the largest phase of the project of cleaning the Palace.

Mr. Grocott: Do not the towers of this building represent some of the last few unused wasted spaces? I refer in particular to the tower above the Central Lobby which would be an ideal location for a central control room for television cameras. Now that cameras are an integral part of our democracy, should not the location for television crews and for the House's own facilities be somewhere central within the Palace of Westminster?

Mr. MacGregor: That question goes wider than the cleaning of the Victoria Tower, but, as the hon. Gentleman knows, the issue was discussed by a Committee on which we both served and it will come before the Services Committee this week. Speed and cost must be considered in relation to whether that part of the Palace should be used for the central control room for the broadcasting of the House, as he knows, but I agree that it is right to make full use of every available space in the Palace.

Mr. Jopling: Does the Leader of the House realise that the restoration of Victoria Tower will mark the completion of the fundamental and far-reaching changes instigated by the late Sir Robin Cooke, many of which have been hugely to the advantage of hon. Members, of those who work here and those who merely pass by? Does he accept that the changes are comparable to the work done by Harcourt which has been commemorated by part of the Palace being named after him? Does not the Leader of the House think that it would be appropriate for the work of Sir Robin Cooke to be given similar recognition?

Mr. MacGregor: I agree that the outside and the inside of the Palace have been vastly improved and I think that the improvements are widely welcomed by all hon. Members and by those outside. I also agree that the work of the late Sir Robin Cooke deserves the highest praise for the improvements that it has achieved and which we all enjoy. I shall bear in mind the point that my right hon. Friend made in the last part of his question.

Points of Order

3.32 pm

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sure that it has been brought to your attention that on Friday the debate ended in considerable acrimony because of the actions of the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, who broke with the tradition of the House and refused to allow the Minister any time to reply to the debate. When Back Benchers had finished speaking, there were 20 minutes left and it had been agreed that each Front-Bench speaker would have 10 minutes. The Opposition Front-Bench spokesman deliberately spoke out his time because he did not want the Minister to answer the debate. If that happens, law and order in the Chamber will break down because anyone who succeeded in catching your eye, Mr. Speaker, could go on speaking ad infinitum and no one else would get a chance to speak. It is very important that we do not allow Front-Bench spokesmen of any party to behave in such a way at the end of a very important debate.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I read in *Hansard* what the Deputy Speaker who was in the Chair at the time had to say. I understand that it was alleged that agreements made through the usual channels had not been kept. That is what *Hansard* reports, but certainly I think that the Government Front Bench should have an opportunity to reply to a debate.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. At the risk of incurring your intense disapproval, may I ask you, as inscrutably as I can, on what authority in "Erskine May" you made a judgment, however much you may have deplored doing so, on an hon. Member wanting to raise an important subject—in this case, the threat of military action against Iraq—under Standing Order No. 20? I would like to argue very succinctly that——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that I can allow the hon. Member to do that, because then he will raise my —[HON. MEMBERS: "Dander"?] If the hon. Member had been available during the lunch hour to discuss the matter with me, I could have explained. I think that the whole House agrees that the Standing Order No. 20 procedure gives Back Benchers a prize opportunity to raise matters of great importance in prime time. Some time ago, I had to rule that I could not hear applications that did not even reach first base. It would not be right on any day for right hon. or hon. Members to take three minutes in prime time to discuss matters that they think are particularly important. If the hon. Gentleman had come to see me at lunch time, I would have explained to him why I could not hear his Standing Order No. 20 application today—and I am not going to hear it now.

Mr. Dalyell: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. As to the question of certain debates, as I understand it, the problem is one of urgency. It is not just a question of wanting three minutes; some of us desperately feel that, given the situation in which our country may be involved——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that it would be right for me to have an argument with the hon. Member, in the Chamber. Perhaps he will reflect that the United Nations deadline runs out on 25 July, and that gives us a little time.

Mr. Donald Thompson (Calder Valley): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Are you not required by the House not to give reasons for your rulings?

Mr. Speaker: Sure.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, on your selection of amendments to the Finance Bill. You will be aware that a large number of hon. Members on both sides of the House want to discuss the appalling decline of the British Merchant Navy, and have put their names to two new clauses that would have made such a discussion possible. I see that yours is a provisional list of amendments, Mr. Speaker, so am I right in assuming that there could be a revised and final list that might enable discussion on the new clauses to which I referred? Failing that—which I hope will not be the case—will you inform the House whether you selected any amendment on which a realistic debate about the plight of the British shipping industry could be mounted?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson) has just explained to the House that I should not give reasons for my rulings. In fact, it would be very dangerous to do so. I think that the right hon. Member knows why, in that particular case, it was not possible for me to select the two new clauses to which he referred. I will not go beyond that. However, the issue could be raised on Third Reading.

Sir Ian Gilmour (Chesham and Amersham): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will be aware that that subject was not debated in Committee. A vast number of hon. Members want it to be debated, and it will not be understood outside the House if it is not. I refer to a letter that you, Mr. Speaker, sent to an hon. Member—which I believe is not confidential—in which you stated that because there was so much pressure upon you, and such urgent concern was felt about the matter, you felt that such a debate would be counter-productive. I venture to suggest that in reaching that decision, Mr. Speaker, you misdirected yourself. It may be that some of the letters that were sent to you were not properly phrased, and no doubt that is the fault of the hon. Members concerned. However, surely that should not have affected your judgment.

Mr. Speaker: As the right hon. Gentleman mentioned my letter, and said that my decision might not be understood outside the House, perhaps I should explain that I received a great many letters on the subject. Some of them included a copy letter that stated, "Please put this in your own words." When the Speaker receives letters of that kind, he is led to believe that there is some kind of organised lobbying, trying to persuade him to take certain action. Against that background, I could not possibly have selected the new clauses in question.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I reply to the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt)? He did not tell me that he intended to raise the matter here this afternoon, but I suspected that someone would.

I want to make it absolutely clear that, when I rose to speak at 2.7 pm on Friday, I was still under the impression

[Mr. Win Griffiths]

that the original agreement had been that the winding-up speeches would begin at 1.45 pm. I thought that the three consecutive Conservative speakers had taken time set aside for their own Minister. I said that I was going to finish when I was first interrupted by the Minister, but, following that, some seven minutes were taken up by Conservative Members raising points of order. If they had not been, I should have been able to finish my speech and to allow the Minister time to speak.

Mr. Speaker: It sounds as if there was a breakdown in communications between the usual channels. I think that we should leave it at that.

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It has been suggested that I use the emergency written question procedure to deal with an urgent matter that has arisen in my constituency.

Over the past few days, new evidence has come to light that shows that Winston Silcott, of the Tottenham Three, is innocent, and that confessions were forged by police officers. Is there any means, apart from the written question procedure, of dragging the Home Secretary to the House, given the urgency of the matter?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman and I had a conversation about that too, and he knows what advice I gave him.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Have you received any request for a full debate—or, at the very least, a ministerial statement —on the growing scandal of BCCI? Should not the Government be required to make a statement, and should there not be a procedure to allow that, given that it is clear that the relationship between the Bank of England——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is taking time out of the debate on the Finance Bill—which, indeed, will give hon. Members an opportunity to discuss the matter that the hon. and learned Gentleman has raised, provided that they do not raise too many points of order. It can be discussed on new clauses 3, 35 and 37.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I welcome what you have said. During Prime Minister's Question Time on Thursday, however, the Prime Minister stated—no doubt inadvertently—that the Bank of England had acted as soon as it was given notice that there was evidence of fraud. We now know——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot answer for what the Prime Minister said. This is not a matter for me. I think that it should be raised on new clause 3 of the Finance Bill. No doubt those responsible—that is, the Government—may be able to give an answer, but I cannot.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the statement that was made over the weekend about the new evidence surrounding Winston Silcott's conviction, do you not accept——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I had a conversation about that with the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant), and I explained the correct procedure then. I give procedural advice in private, and I cannot hear points of order on the subject now.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helen's, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster confirmed that he had answered only six questions. Up to 25 per cent. of his time was spent in saying that he did not intend to visit the County Palatine, or to carry out any Duchy business. Which Select Committee should I approach to find out whether the right hon. Gentleman's job is really worthwhile, or whether he should go?

Mr. Speaker: As I said, I give procedural advice in private.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You mentioned new clause 3 of the Finance Bill. The new clause is about the future of banking. However, the chief worry of more than 200,000 people in this country concerns what has happened in the past. The BCCI problem is not about the future, but about something awful that happened in the past. Why should there not be a separate debate?

Mr. Speaker: There will be an opportunity to consider the matter, and lessons for the future can be drawn from the past. The hon. Gentleman should not find it too difficult to refer to it later.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I will put together the Questions on the motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

That the draft Social Security (Severe Disablement Allowance) Amendment Regulations 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Disability Living Allowance Advisory Board Regulations 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

Question agreed to.

WAYS AND MEANS

EMPLOYEE SHARE SCHEMES

Resolved,

That provision may be made about savings-related share option schemes and profit sharing schemes.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

Orders of the Day

Finance Bill

Not amended in the Committee and as amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New Clause 11

EMPLOYEE SHARE SCHEMES: NON-DISCRIMINATION

'.—(1) The Taxes Act 1988 shall be amended as follows.

(2) In Part III of Schedule 9 (requirements applicable to savings-related share option schemes) in paragraphs 19(b) and 20 for "pensionable age" there shall be substituted "the specified age".

(3) In Schedule 10 (further provisions relating to profit sharing schemes) in sub-paragraph (b) of paragraph 2 and in sub-paragraph (c)(ii) of paragraph 3 for "pensionable age" there shall be substituted "the relevant age", and at the end of each of those paragraphs there shall be inserted—

"In this paragraph, the reference to the relevant age is a reference, in the case of a scheme approved before the day on which the Finance Act 1991 was passed, to pensionable age and, in the case of a scheme approved on or after that day, to the specified age".

(4) In section 187(2) (definitions for the purposes of provisions relating to employee share schemes) after the definition of "shares" there shall be inserted—

"'specified age', in relation to a scheme, means the age specified in pursuance of paragraph 8A of Schedule 9 as the specified age for the purposes of the scheme;".

(5) In Part II of Schedule 9 (requirements generally applicable to employee share schemes) after paragraph 8 there shall be inserted—

"8A.—(1) In the case of a savings-related share option scheme or a profit sharing scheme, the scheme must specify what age is to be the specified age for the purposes of the scheme.

(2) The age specified—

(a) must be the same for men and women, and

(b) must not be less than 60 and not more than 75."

(6) Subsections (2) and (5) above shall have effect in relation to a scheme not approved before the day on which this Act is passed.'.

Brought up, and read the First time.—[Mr. Maude.]

3.46 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Francis Maude): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The new clause will replace the term "pensionable age" in the approved all-employee share scheme legislation with a new term, "specified age". The change will apply to schemes approved on or after Royal Assent. The effect of the change is to ensure that schemes approved after Royal Assent provide equal treatment for men and women.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 12

EXPENSES OF ENTERTAINERS

'.—(1) Section 201A of the Taxes Act 1988 (deduction of fees paid by entertainer to employment agency) shall be amended as follows.

(2) In subsection (1)(a) after "subsection (2)" there shall be inserted "or (2A)".

(3) The following subsection shall be inserted after subsection (2)—

"(2A) Fees fall within this subsection if—

(a) they are paid by the employee in pursuance of an arrangement under which a bona fide co-operative society agrees, or the members of such a society agree, to act as agent of the employee in connection with the employment,

(b) they are calculated as a percentage of the emoluments of the employment or as a percentage of part of those emoluments, and

(c) they are defrayed out of the emoluments of the employment falling to be charged to tax for the year concerned."

(4) The following subsection shall be inserted after subsection (3)—

"(3A) Subsection (3) of section 1 of the Industrial and Provident Societies Act 1965 (co-operative society does not include profit-making society) shall apply for the purposes of subsection (2A)(a) above as it applies for the purposes of that section."

(5) The following subsection shall be inserted after subsection (4)—

"(4A) Subject to subsection (4) above, a deduction by virtue of this section as regards a particular employment and a particular year of assessment may be based on fees falling within subsection (2) above or fees falling within subsection (2A) above, or both."

(6) The amendments made by this section shall apply for the year 1990-91 and subsequent years of assessment.

(7) Any such adjustment (whether by way of discharge or repayment of tax, the making of an assessment or otherwise) as is appropriate in consequence of this section may be made.'.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Maude: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

In the debate on the taxation of actors in Committee, I proposed a change to the relief that we introduced last year which allows actors and other theatrical artistes taxed under schedule E to claim tax relief on fees that they pay to theatrical agents. Those fees can amount to 10 to 15 per cent. of an actor's income and it is therefore a valuable relief for those starting out in the theatre.

It was not appreciated at the time, although we consulted with the industry's tax working group, that the provision did not cover the position of actors who, rather than employ a traditional agent, preferred to get together with colleagues and to form their own co-operative agencies. We did not intend that group to be excluded. Indeed, they represent some of the newcomers to the theatre whom we particularly wish to help.

New clause 12 extends the relief introduced last year to agency fees paid to co-operative societies. The new relief will apply to fees paid out of earnings taxed under schedule E where a bona fide co-operative society acts as an agent in finding work for a theatrical artiste. Fees up to the

[Mr. Maude]

present limit of 17·5 per cent. of earnings can qualify for relief. On this occasion it seemed appropriate to back-date the new relief so that, as with the relief that we introduced last year, it will apply to fees paid after 5 April 1990.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): We welcome new clause 12 and we will be happy to speed it on its way. We argued strongly during the Committee stage of last year's Finance Bill, and we argued strongly again this year in our deliberations upstairs, that the Government and the Inland Revenue were being unfair to actors, especially those who are just starting out in the profession in the switch from schedule D to schedule E consideration of their tax treatment which has taken place since last year.

As a result of our representations, and of those of the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) on behalf of actors, the Government have sought to make some ameliorations to the new tax regime to which new actors are subjected. Last year relief was introduced for the agents' fees that actors pay up to a percentage limit. This year, the Government have gone a little further and, with the small step in new clause 12, they are giving relief where the agency to which an actor belongs is a co-operative agency. It provides some additional and welcome relief.

However, the Government have not gone far enough and they have yet to address a number of specific issues. We want the Government to restore the position that existed before last year. When we take over on the Government Benches, we will do that. In the meantime, we want to raise two matters. The first is the touring allowances that are paid to actors, and the second is the audition fees that are paid by actors, both of which deserve better consideration. We hope that the Government will now use their breathing space to consider those two further items. Agents' fees are one thing and co-operative agency fees are another, and the new clause is a welcome step on those matters. We want the Government to take some more steps to restore the position for actors who are not only a hard-pressed profession, but who form part of our heritage and part of our distinctive cultural strength, which we must preserve at all costs.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for introducing the alterations that we sought from him last year. Will he join me in congratulating the founder of the actors' co-operative in Lancaster, Mr. Stephen Allen, who has just become this country's Mastermind?

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): I join in welcoming the new clause, which was admirably moved by my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary. Most hon. Members will not take the threat of the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) too seriously because one of the groups who have prospered in the past 12 years of Conservative government have been people involved in culture, the arts and literature. However, we agree that the hon. Gentleman is right in saying that we have not gone far enough in restoring the position of young actors.

Will my hon. Friend take advice from our hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), who might be able to get together a group of leading actors who could speak not on their own behalf, but on behalf of the many hundreds of young actors who each year are in the position that they were in when they started? It might then be possible to go further, either in terms of Inland Revenue procedures or in terms of next year's Finance Bill, so that new actors have the chance to come into the profession without adverse tax treatment.

Mr. Maude: I join my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) in her tribute to the new Mastermind, whose connection with the new clause I am glad to acknowledge.

I take the point of my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley. When we discussed the matter in Committee, I said clearly that I would consider carefully whether practical steps could be taken to meet the pressing anxieties especially of those starting out in the acting profession. That examination is under way and I will pursue it. I made it clear in Committee that I was by no means unsympathetic to the points that had been made.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 18

INVESTMENT EXCHANGES AND CLEARING HOUSES: STAMP DUTY

'.—(1) The Treasury may make regulations providing as mentioned in this section with regard to any circumstances which—

(a) would (apart from the regulations) give rise to a charge to stamp duty,

(b) involve a prescribed recognised investment exchange or a prescribed recognised clearing house, or a member or nominee (or member or nominee of a prescribed description) of such an exchange, or a nominee (or nominee of a prescribed description) of such a clearing house, or a nominee (or nominee of a prescribed description) of a member of such an exchange, and

(c) are such as are prescribed.

(2) The regulations may provide that the charge to stamp duty shall be treated as not arising or (depending on the terms of the regulations) as reduced.

(3) Regulations under this section—

(a) shall be made by statutory instrument subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of the House of Commons;

(b) may include such supplementary, incidental, consequential or transitional provisions as appear to the Treasury to be necessary or expedient;

(c) may make different provision for different circumstances;

(d) may make any provision in such way as the Treasury think fit (whether by amending enactments or otherwise).

(4) In this section—

(a) "prescribed" means prescribed by the regulations,

(b) "recognised investment exchange" means a recognised investment exchange within the meaning of the Financial Services Act 1986, and

(c) "recognised clearing house" means a recognised clearing house within the meaning of that Act.'.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Maude: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government new clause 17.

Mr. Maude: New clauses 17, 18 and 19 flow from the proposed merger of the London traded options market and the London international financial futures exchange,

which, it is hoped, will take place later this year to form the London derivatives exchange. New clauses 17 and 18 give power to the Treasury to make regulations about stamp duty in connection with the proposed merger. At present, the traded options market is part of the stock exchange and present legislation reflects that. The merger of the options and futures markets will change that basic structural fact. The legislation will have to be adapted to fit the new exchange if the existing tax reliefs are not to be lost. We are giving careful consideration to exactly what changes may be required. Given that the new structures are not yet totally clear, it is not possible to form final judgments on that point.

The new clauses provide enabling powers so that we can make the necessary changes by regulation at the appropriate time.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): Before asking the Minister a brief question about the new clauses, I should like to advise him that the Opposition recognise the need for them given that the London derivatives exchange will be different and, unless the new clauses are passed, will operate under a different tax regime from the existing two institutions. As the notes on clauses state, the powers that will be sought and the regulations that will be applied are rightly wholly relieving, as the London derivatives exchange will be liable to extra tax without such relieving powers. We recognise, therefore, that the new clauses are necessary to ensure that the position does not change.

What does the Financial Secretary intend to do under the regulations? Does he intend to bring in new reliefs or does he intend that the position should be broadly the same? Stamp duty and stamp duty reserve tax are due to be abolished in any case when TAURUS—the transfer and automated registration of uncertified stock—comes on stream, so I am not including that in my question. I should, however, appreciate any help that the Financial Secretary can give on this point.

Mr. Maude: I can confirm to the hon. Gentleman that it is our intention simply to reflect existing reliefs in the provisions because if we did not make provisions, such as we are giving ourselves the power to make under the new clauses, under the merger that we expect to take place, the reliefs might disappear and would not be available. Our intention is simply to replicate the existing provisions as far as possible and to enable them to be applied sensibly to the new circumstances of the new derivatives exchange.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 17

INVESTMENT EXCHANGES AND CLEARING HOUSES: SDRT

'.—(1) The Treasury may make regulations providing as mentioned in this section with regard to any circumstances which—

(a) would (apart from the regulations) give rise to a stamp duty reserve tax,

(b) involve a prescribed recognised investment exchange or a prescribed recognised clearing house, or a member or nominee (or member or nominee of a prescribed description) of such an exchange, or a nominee (or nominee of a prescribed description) of such a clearing house, or a nominee (or nominee of a prescribed description) of a member of such an exchange, and

(c) are such as are prescribed.

(2) The regulations may provide that the charge to stamp duty reserve tax shall be treated as not arising or (depending on the terms of the regulations) as reduced.

(3) Subsections (3) and (4) of section (*Investment exchanges and clearing houses: stamp duty*) above shall apply for the purposes of this section as they apply for the purposes of that.'.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 19

BOND WASHING

'.—(1) In section 732 of the Taxes Act 1988, after subsection (2) (exemption for market makers) there shall be inserted—

"(2A) Subsection (1) above shall not apply in prescribed circumstances if—

(a) the first buyer is—

(i) a prescribed recognised clearing house, or

(ii) a member, of a prescribed class or description, of a prescribed recognised investment exchange, and

(b) the subsequent sale is carried out by the first buyer after a prescribed date and in the ordinary course of his business."

(2) At the end of that section there shall be added—

"(7) For the purposes of subsection (2A) above—

"prescribed" means prescribed in regulations made by the Treasury;

"recognised clearing house" means a recognised clearing house within the meaning of the Financial Services Act 1986;

"recognised investment exchange" means a recognised investment exchange within the meaning of that Act.".'.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Maude: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The new clause addresses the issue of representations from the exchanges that we have just discussed. It has been put to us that the exemption for market makers under section 732(2), covering bond washing, will be too limited in the context of the operations of the new merged market.

The substantive point, of whether an extension should be made to the exemption for market makers to include London derivatives exchange dealers, is still under review. The new clause simply provides the enabling power for regulations to extend the exemption. That has to be done in this year's Finance Bill because it is intended that the LDE will be operational by the end of the year. The case for making the substantive change has yet to be made and considered. The taking of the powers does not imply a Government view at this stage on the desirability of extending the exemption. Parliament will have an opportunity in the normal way to scrutinise any regulations implementing any substantive change that we seek to make.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 20

AUDIT POWERS IN RELATION TO NON-RESIDENTS

'. The following section shall be inserted after section 482 of the Taxes Act 1988—

"Audit powers in relation to non-residents.

482A.—(1) The Board may make regulations with respect to the exclusion, in relation to investments of persons who are not ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom, of powers conferred by regulations made by virtue of section 477A(2)(a) or 482(11)(aa) ("audit powers").

(2) Regulations under subsection (1) above may in particular—

"(a) make provision for the exclusion of audit powers in the case of any building society or deposit-taker to be dependent on whether the society or deposit-taker is approved by the Board for the purposes of the regulations and on the scope of that approval;

(b) make provision with respect to the approval of building societies and deposit-takers by the Board for the purposes of the regulations;

(c) make provision with respect to, and with respect to alteration of, the scope of approval by the Board for the purposes of the regulations;

(d) make provision with respect to the termination of approval by the Board for the purposes of the regulations; and

(e) make provision with respect to appeals against decisions of the Board with respect to approval for the purposes of the regulations, including decisions with respect to the scope of such approval.

(3) Regulations under subsection (1) above may—

(a) make different provision for different cases; and

(b) contain such supplementary, incidental, consequential or transitional provision as appears to the Board to be appropriate.

(4) In this section "deposit-taker" has the meaning given by section 481(2).".'.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Maude: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The purpose of the new clause is to enable banks and building societies to make special arrangements with the Revenue on maintaining records relating to accounts held by their non-ordinarily resident depositors. Where satisfactory internal procedures for self-regulation are introduced, the Inland Revenue's power to audit those accounts will cease to apply. The new clause responds to some genuine anxieties about a provision in last year's Finance Bill. It follows exhaustive discussions between the Revenue and the banks. I hope that the provision meets with the approval of the House.

4 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): We should like an assurance from the Financial Secretary that the Revenue will not in any way be disadvantaged by the new clause in its eternal pursuit of those who evade their obligations to pay tax.

Mr. Maude: There is always a balance to be struck between the proper interests of the Revenue and, indeed, of this House in ensuring that tax which is properly due is paid and the interest of retaining proper confidentiality. I have considered the matter carefully and I am satisfied that that balance is properly struck in this case.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Will this new clause affect the affairs of the company that purchased Westminster cemeteries, which operates in the United Kingdom as well as abroad?

Mr. Maude: I cannot comment on that without being given any notice whatever. It is an interesting and fascinating question, but one to which I am afraid that I must deny the hon. Gentleman an answer.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 23

CAPITAL ALLOWANCES: HIRING MOTOR CARS

'.—(1) Section 35 of the Capital Allowances Act 1990 (motor cars) shall be amended as mentioned in subsections (2) and (3) below.

(2) In subsection (2) (reduction of allowance for hiring cars whose retail price when new exceeds £8,000) at the end there shall be inserted the words "; but this subsection shall have effect subject to subsection (3) below."

(3) The following subsections shall be inserted after subsection (2)—

"(3) Subsection (2) above shall not apply where the hiring is under a hire-purchase agreement under which there is an option to purchase exercisable on the payment of a sum equal to not more than 1 per cent. of the retail price of the motor car when new.

(4) In subsection (3) above 'hire-purchase agreement' has the meaning given by section 784(6) of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988."

(4) This section shall have effect in relation to any chargeable period or its basis period ending on or after the day on which this Act is passed.'.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Maude: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The new clause makes a minor and technical amendment to a provision in the Capital Allowances Act 1990 which discriminates between businesses that use hire-purchase arrangements and those that use other methods of finance. It removes hire-purchase transactions from the scope of rules that restrict tax relief for rental payments on the hire of cars costing more than £8,000. Those rules prevent the circumvention of the capital allowances restriction which applies to such cars.

A straightforward hire-purchase agreement is in essence equivalent to an outright purchase financed by a loan. That fact is recognised in the general application of the capital allowances legislation by the granting of capital allowances on the asset in question to the hire purchaser. As a result, the capital allowances restriction for cars bites directly on the hire purchaser and therefore there is no need for the leasing restriction to apply to hire purchase.

The original 1961 legislation on cars made it explicit that hire-purchase agreements were not to be subject to the leasing restriction. But the relevant legislation has gone through several reconstructions and consolidations since then. It appears that the law may inadvertently have been changed in the process. The Revenue has received legal advice that in its existing form the leasing restriction applies to the finance charge element of a hire-purchase payment. If that were allowed to continue, businesses and traders who bought cars on hire purchase would face additional tax and compliance burdens. It is likely that

among them would be smaller businesses, the credit status of some of which might require them to obtain finance through hire purchase rather than a straightforward loan.

The new clause will take straightforward hire-purchase agreements—that is those with a nominal purchase option—outside the scope of the leasing restriction, thereby restoring the legislation to its original intention and bringing hire purchase back into line with outright purchase. It is a minor but nevertheless helpful change for businesses which meets anxieties voiced by the leasing industry. We thought it right to introduce legislation at this, the earliest opportunity. I commend the new clause to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 3

MANDATORY REPORTS TO BE MADE BY BANKS

'(1) Each bank carrying on a bona fide banking business in the United Kingdom shall, within six months of the end of each of its accounting periods, prepare a report which shall be sent to the Treasury and to the Bank of England, giving details of—

(i) the average interest rate charged on all of its loans in aggregate to small businesses, the average aggregate principal of such loans and the average number thereof;

(ii) the average interest rate charged on all of its loans in aggregate to large businesses, the average aggregate principal of such loans, and the average number thereof;

(iii) each loan made during the year or in existence at the beginning of the year where the average percentage rate of interest charged on the loan exceeded such rate as is specified for the purposes of this section, not being less than 3% above base rate for the year as a whole;

(iv) the average level of provisions made against loan interest due and against loan principal for loans of the sorts described at (i) and (ii) above, and the provisions, if any, made against each loan falling within (ii) above, and

(v) such other matters as may be prescribed by regulations made under this section.

(2) The Treasury shall make such regulations as are needed to give effect to this section; and in particular such regulations shall define the terms "small businesses" and "large businesses" mentioned in subsection (1) above and the specified rate of interest, and shall state the extent to which loans to a single borrower or associated borrowers may be regarded as a single loan for the purposes of this section.'.—*[Mr. Chris Smith.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Chris Smith: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following: new clause 35—*Statement of interest and charges—*

'(1) This section applies to any bank operating in the United Kingdom.

(2) When a bank sends a customer a bank statement detailing recent debits from and credits to the account of that business customer, the bank must publish on that statement the following items:

(a) the interest rate or interest rates that have been applied to borrowings by that business over the period covered by the statement;

(b) an itemised list of charges levied by the bank on the account of that business over the period covered by the statement.'.

New clause 37—*Reports by banks as to enquiries—*

'—.(1) Any bank granted authorisation to receive deposits under section 9(1) of the Banking Act 1987 shall publish within one month of each accounting period a statement detailing—

(a) the nature of any enquiries of which it is aware that are taking place or have taken place during that same accounting period into its affairs or the affairs of any associated company where those enquiries are being or have been carried out by supervisory or regulatory authorities, auditors appointed by such authorities, authorities responsible for investigation of fraud, or the Bank of England; and

(b) the results of such enquiries.

(2) Publication of the results of such enquiries shall include all information as to communications and all correspondence to and from the authorities as defined in subsection (1)(a) unless such information as to communications or correspondence has not been approved for publication by those authorities.

(3) Where, pursuant to subsection (2) above, information as to any communication or correspondence has not been approved for publication by the appropriate authorities, a report shall be submitted to Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer detailing the reasons why that information has not been published.'.

Mr. Smith: This debate on new clause 3, new clause 35 tabled by the Liberal Democrats and new clause 37 tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) will enable us to discuss two particular and important issues that are of great public concern and relate to the procedures and practices of the banking industry.

The first issue is the treatment by banks of small businesses, especially in relation to the interest charged on loans that are taken out by small businesses, and the procedures followed by banks in the light of a falling base rate and not so rapidly falling interest rates which are charged to businesses that are borrowing money. The second issue relates to the regulatory system of banks, investigations of banks and the information that the public have about those investigations. That is uppermost in our mind in relation to the practices and record of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International.

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): I am a little uncertain about the exact status of new clause 3, as it appears in the name of the shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury, but not in the name of the shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer. Is it official Opposition policy?

Mr. Smith: I am surprised that the right hon. Gentleman, who is normally very perceptive in these matters, should have made such an elementary error. During the proceedings on the Finance Bill, both in Committee upstairs and on the Floor of the House, it is usual practice for the shadow Chief Secretary to lead for the Opposition on amendments and speeches. The new clause which she, other colleagues and I have tabled has the full endorsement of the shadow Chancellor. We are simply following the normal practice in ensuring that her name stands at the top of the list.

Mr. Higgins: I fully understand that point, but it does not answer my question. Is new clause 3 official Opposition policy?

Mr. Smith: The right hon. Gentleman again betrays a certain degree of ignorance, which suprises me. As I have said, the Opposition tabled the new clause to the Finance

[Mr. Smith]

Bill with the full support of the shadow Chancellor. It is an official Opposition new clause. If the Government were minded to support it in the Division Lobbies at the end of our proceedings, we should be only too delighted to see it on its way into the Finance Bill. In so doing, it might ensure that some of our practices were improved generally.

The primary issue identified in new clause 3——

Mr. Higgins *rose*——

Mr. Smith: I must proceed. I have answered the right hon. Gentleman twice on that point.

Mr. Higgins: Is new clause 3 official Opposition policy?

Mr. Smith: If the right hon. Gentleman wishes me to repeat the answer a third time, I am happy to do so, but other hon. Members wish to contribute to the debate.

The first matter raised in new clause 3 is the fundamental issue of the relationship between banks and small businesses. In recent weeks we have heard a lot about the concern among small businesses about the way in which the banking system has treated them. The case has been most strongly put by the National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses in a submission to the Treasury which contained more than 100 case histories of member businesses that thought that they had been badly treated by the banks. One of those businesses claimed to have suffered recently a 250 per cent. increase in charges, while another was charged a £50 fee for being overdrawn for one day in the previous 18 months.

Despite the fact that the high street banks claimed that most small businesses were paying only 4 per cent. or less above the base rate, the submission included details of businesses that were paying 6, 9 or even 15 per cent. over the base rate. Such are the concerns that have been clearly identified by the National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses.

Further concerns were identified two years ago in the Jack report published by the review committee on banking services. A significant number of recommendations were made in that report on the need to ensure a more friendly culture among banks in their dealings with small businesses.

Such is the scale of the concern that has been voiced by people in industry. However, the banks protest that they are not the guilty party. Recently, Shearson Lehman Brothers conducted an investigation into the rates charged by banks, especially the four large United Kingdom clearing banks, to small businesses. Its findings were, perhaps surprisingly, remarkably kind to the practices of the banks. It reported that some banks were better than others, but none the less it believed that some of the criticisms levelled at the banks were somewhat overstated.

All we have to go on is the claims that are made, on the one hand, by small businesses and, on the other, the claims made by the banks. We understand that the Treasury has conducted an analysis of what is going on and perhaps we will hear a little more about the Treasury's findings during the debate.

The new clause seeks to ensure that, at the very least, the public can have access to information about precisely what the banks are up to. So long as businesses claim that they are being unfairly penalised by the banks, while the banks say that they are in no way unfairly treating those small businesses, there is an obvious need for clear information about what is happening. That information should be available to the public, the small business sector and those who are considering starting up a small business.

Sir Ian Stewart (Hertfordshire, North): The new clause states that a report should be:

"sent to the Treasury and the Bank of England".

Does that also imply that the report should be made public at the same time?

Mr. Smith: It states in the new clause that the report should be

"sent to the Treasury and the Bank of England,"

because there may conceivably be items of commercial confidentiality included in such a report. However, we would confidently expect that the Treasury—at least under a Government who cared about public access to information—would wish to make public whatever useful findings that could be made on a comparative basis from the report submitted to it. It was with that in mind that we drafted the new clause.

A recent example illustrates the banks' understanding of small businesses. A constituent who happens to be an adviser to a number of small businesses drew my attention to a company that supplies high-quality shop fittings and employs 20 or 25 people, mainly skilled workers, in Somerset. Its order book contained orders amounting to some £1·25 million to a major customer on a cost-plus basis, so there was no risk of the company making a loss on the deal. Its marketing had attracted a DTI grant and sales of the firm's products were increasing. Therefore, on a cursory analysis, the firm was conducting its affairs with considerable success. However, National Westminster bank has now stepped in to reduce its overdraft arbitrarily by some 25 per cent. on the basis that the value of properties has decreased nationwide. About five months after the bank reduced the overdraft, it brought in Cork Gulley to close down the business overnight, dismissing all the staff and returning the equipment, because it believed that the company was no longer viable.

4.15 pm

The way in which National Westminster bank acted in that incident is not only a tragedy for the company and employees concerned but serves to highlight how little the banks in this country understand about the practicalities and realities of the business world which those in industry and the market place face each day. An improvement in understanding between the banks and their customers in the small business sector is desperately needed and I hope that the new clause will help to bring it about.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Where not such decisions taken, not so long ago, by local bank managers who knew their customers and worked with them? Now they are often arbitrarily determined decisions made much higher up the line and the local bank manager has no control.

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman makes an extremely pertinent point. It is borne out by the decision taken by National Westminster bank to reduce overdraft facilities on the basis of a national assumption about the value of property without looking at the circumstances of individual companies or the different regions of the country. We strongly endorse the need for much greater local input into such decision making.

Having said that we want to know precisely what the banks are up to and that we want the banks to treat businesses properly and in a sensible and user-friendly way, we must not let the main culprit go unremarked. The main culprit in the problems faced by small businesses are the Government, whose policy of high interest rates has been the root cause of the difficulties faced by small businesses, whatever the banks may have been up to.

Even after last Friday, interest rates are 11 per cent. in Britain compared with 9 per cent. in Germany and France, and 5·5 per cent. in Japan and the United States. Interest rates in this country have been at 11 per cent. or more since August 1988, and were held at 15 per cent. for an entire year while the present Prime Minister was Chancellor. In the first half of this year, there were 23,000 business failures—a rise of 66 per cent. on the same period a year earlier and the highest level ever recorded. According to the Dun and Bradstreet figures, 900 business are going out of business every week in this country.

That is the Government's precise record, and it is directly attributable to the high interest rate policy that they have followed. They have used high interest rates as the only weapon to try to take demand out of the economy. We know from the savage experience of the recession that that taking out of demand has been belatedly, but all too substantially, successful. It has meant that we have been plunged into recession, which has dramatically affected the small business sector.

The Government should not seek to evade their responsibility for the problems faced by small businesses in this country. The Government are the principal culprits; the banks may or may not be secondary culprits in the affair. We will not know whether they are unless and until they are required to provide the information, as they would have to do under our new clause. We strongly believe that new clause 3 would represent an improvement in the availability of information and highlight the way in which Government policies have been operating to the detriment of the small business sector in this country.

New clause 37 was tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Workington as a direct result of the enormous concern that is felt, and has been felt in the past week, at the closure of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International a week ago last Friday. It raises two primary issues, the first of which my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor drew attention to a week ago—*[Laughter.]* My right hon. and learned Friend the shadow Chancellor, I should say. I am running ahead of myself, but before too long we shall be referring to him as the Chancellor—the sooner that day comes, the better.

Last Monday, my right hon. and learned Friend raised the fundamental issue of the inadequacy of the depositors' protection scheme as it stands. It effectively places a cap of £15,000 on compensation available to those people and businesses that have put money into BCCI. That sits oddly alongside the investors' protection scheme, run under the auspices of the Securities and Investments Board, which has much more generous limits on the protection offered. The investors' compensation scheme pays up to the first £30,000 in full, and 90 per cent. of losses between £30,000 and £50,000.

Last week, we asked the Economic Secretary to the Treasury why the depositors' protection scheme was so much less generous than the investors' protection scheme, but received no answer. We should like an answer now. We also drew the attention of the Economic Secretary to the example of other countries where deposit protection schemes are more generous than those available here. For example, the Canadian scheme offers 100 per cent. compensation up to Canadian $60,000. That is substantially more generous than the scheme that is in place here. The first issue is whether the deposit protection scheme is adequate and, if not, why not. Many small businesses, especially in the Asian community, have been badly hit by the closure of BCCI. The relief offered by the scheme, much delayed as I fear it will be, seems to be inadequate.

The second question raised by the affairs of BCCI and to which new clause 37 refers is perhaps even more fundamental. It is when the Bank of England and the Government knew that the affairs of BCCI required investigation and why they did not carry out such an investigation at an earlier stage. If the investigation that was clearly necessary had taken place earlier, much of the pain caused to depositors and employees of BCCI could have been avoided.

We know that doubts were expressed by Ernst and Young when they were BCCI's auditors some two or three years ago. We know that considerable doubts were raised in the marketplace for months before the Bank of England acted. We also know that doubts arose as a result of the prosecutions in Florida last year and that the present auditors, Price Waterhouse, delivered a report to the Bank of England in March 1990 which raised serious questions about the way in which BCCI was operating.

If reports in *The Sunday Times* yesterday are correct, the question of what information was provided to the Bank of England and the Treasury and why they failed to act upon it becomes urgent.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Does my hon. Friend accept that the statement by Lord Henley in April last year in the other place is significant? When he made that statement, what did the noble Lord know that was not revealed to the other place in the debate?

Mr. Smith: I cannot answer that question, which is an important one. I hope that we shall get an answer from the Government. If we do not get a satisfactory answer I am sure that my hon. Friend will wish to press the matter if he speaks in the debate. My hon. Friend will be aware that whatever the noble Lord may have said at that time was said after the Price Waterhouse report of March 1990 was delivered to the Bank of England. *The Sunday Times* tells us that that report,

"had already revealed that BCCI was in serious financial trouble, with major gaps in its accounts raising the possibility of misuse of funds, a large number of questionable loans outstanding and lax internal controls."

If that catalogue of impropriety was suspected at that stage, why did the Economic Secretary tell us last week that the Bank of England had sufficient information to act only 10 days before last Monday? Why was it that, in March 1990, the Bank of England did not commence serious investigations? That is a most important point. It is not only a question whether there is misuse of funds or potential fraud, or whether the Bank of England has powers to take action if it suspects fraud. The Bank of England is also supposed to reassure itself about whether someone running a bank is a "fit and proper person" to do so. Under that provision, there must have been scope for

[Mr. Smith]

questions to be raised, for investigations to be started and for the Bank of England to begin to take action earlier than it did.

4.30 pm

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Is not one of the duties of the Bank of England to reassure itself about the liquidity of banks? In other words, it has to be sure that, if there is a run, each bank can meet its obligations. Bearing in mind the Price Waterhouse report of March 1990, was not it clear that the Bank of England could not properly have reached that conclusion?

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend raises an important point. It seems that BCCI was adept at shuffling funds around among its various national identities to disguise the true position of its liquidity. Only a thorough investigation could have shown the true position. That is why a thorough investigation should have taken place sooner than it did.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): I am obliged to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) both for his remarks and for new clause 37, which raise reasonable questions that should be addressed. I have a question for the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), which must be addressed, as his party has pretensions to government. Is not it important for any Government, and the Bank of England, to ensure that there is neither a run on a bank nor a lack of confidence in the banking system? An extremely difficult balance must be struck between precipitating a run on a bank, and thus closing it peremptorily, and leaving it too long and allowing people to be defrauded. In that difficult balance of judgment, where does the hon. Gentleman stand? The Bank of England instituted inquiries properly, dealt with the matter exemplarily and, when it had clear evidence, closed the bank.

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman is right to identify the difficult balance which the banking regulatory authorities have to undertake. It is a balance between raising too many public questions too early, and therefore undermining confidence in part of the banking system, and ensuring that, where bad practice is taking place, it is immediately investigated. Although we have our suspicions, we do not yet have enough information to answer our question about whether the Bank of England got the balance right with respect to BCCI. The reports of the past week leave us with no certainty that it did.

If the hon. Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) has read new clause 37 closely, he will know that it addresses this point. It requires that if a bank has been cleared of any wrong doing, the Chancellor of the Exchequer can require the report of the investigations to be made to him rather than be made public. That is a substantial protection against the confidence problems that the hon. Gentleman has identified. It is our belief that my hon. Friend the Member for Workington has addressed precisely that issue in his carefully worded new clause.

I shall draw my remarks to a close, because I know that many hon. Members wish to contribute to this important debate. It seems to us that we have still to hear a satisfactory response from the Government to the two overwhelming questions that must be directed to the tragedy of the BCCI closure, which has caused so much difficulty for so many in this country. First, why is the deposit protection scheme so inadequate? Secondly, what did the Bank of England know, when did it know, how soon did it know and how rapidly or slowly did it seek to investigate? It is our impression from the information that is available to us that there are serious question marks about the way in which the Bank of England, the regulatory authorities and the Government have acted.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): It is obvious that new clause 35, in the names of my right hon. and hon. Friends, is linked with new clauses 3 and 37. I shall take up later the final comments of the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), but first I shall direct my remarks to the nub of the original problem, to the publicity that that has been given in recent weeks to exceptionally high interest rates allegedly being charged by several clearing banks, including Scottish banks, and to the damage that those rates have done, especially to small businesses.

As the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury has reminded us, the high interest rates that are being charged are a regrettable and damaging symptom of the general regime of high interest rates that we have suffered for a long time. Life has not been made any easier for small businesses by the Government opting for the highest charge available to them for this year's uniform business rate in England and Wales. The Government are taking more from the business sector, particularly from small businesses, than they are putting back into it by means of the measures in this Bill.

There has been a dramatic and record increase in the failure of small businesses in recent times. Nine out of 10 of the businesses that have gone under employed fewer than 100 people. The major redundancies that are announced by household-name companies tend to attract news headlines, but the cumulative effect of small businesses going under is one of the principal causes of an increasing rate of unemployment. It is important, therefore, that we examine the implications of the Government's high-interest-rate policy and the way in which the banks have dealt with small businesses.

The main criticism and focus of attention has been on the rates of interest that are charged by banks to small businesses, but that is not the sole problem that small businesses face in their relationships with banks. I have heard complaints about the fact that a bank can increase the interest rate that is paid by a small business when the owner of the business reaches his current overdraft limit and has to negotiate an increase. That is often taken as an opportunity to increase the lending rate.

Another factor is the deduction of bank charges at source, invariably without notification to the business concerned. As that happens when it is least expected, or even when it is unexpected, the business can find that it has exceeded its overdraft limit and that charges are being applied at punitive rates.

Some bank managers restrict borrowing to bring discipline to bear upon a business if it is not going about its business in the way that the bank would like. There are banks that charge an arrangement fee if a business takes the bank's advice and reduces its level of borrowing. Non-negotiable charges are imposed unilaterally by the bank and the unfortunate customer becomes aware of them only when he is told to pay up.

Another problem is that of the collateral demanded from small businesses which seek to take out loans. If one studied law, as I did, one worked out the respective advantages of limited liability companies or of unincorporated firms. We were told that one of the advantages of a limited liability company was that if the business went under, the authorities could not come after one's home or other assets. However, the truth is that many limited liability companies are family firms and they are asked to put their homes on the line as collateral. There are many examples of banks asking for homes as collateral as a sign that the person involved is committed to the business although that person has already put on the line his savings, his way of life and his energy. I fear that the use of such collateral may have a damaging effect in the long term because, if so much personal risk is involved, it may inhibit a business's growth, or make it think twice about diversifying or taking up new ideas.

Those are examples of the banking sector not necessarily being in harmony with the small business sector. However, there are also problems with the small businesses themselves. Some go over their overdraft limit and some are not especially good at keeping the bank provided with information. Some perhaps use overdraft expenditure for capital investment when it might be much better to examine other ways of raising capital. Perhaps the recent furore over interest rate charges has given some focus to the search for a way in which the relationship between banks and small businesses can be improved. In some respects, that is a matter not for the House or for the Government but for good practice, and that can often be achieved without regulation.

New clause 35 proposes that, when making interest rate charges, the banks would be obliged to stipulate the rates at which the charges are made and the period of the loan or overdraft in respect of which they have been made. The same would apply to bank service charges: the bank would be obliged to stipulate the various component parts of the bank charges. I should not assume that you pay bank charges on your account, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I am sure that many hon. Members do and that they sometimes merely accept them without bothering to find out the precise detail of those charges.

4.45 pm

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Has the hon. Gentleman also considered the penalties that are paid? I am sure that many hon. Members know of businesses which have exceeded their overdraft limits and whose interest rates have shot into the sky. In those circumstances, the proprietor of a small business had not anticipated what would happen and yet he automatically faces the bill. It is important that the public are made aware of that.

Mr. Wallace: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. One of the complaints made by small businesses is that the charges are often applied without notification and can, as a result, push the business above its overdraft limit and into the realm of punitive interest rates.

We must seek a contract between small businesses and the banks, but the uneven negotiating position of the banks and small businesses often stands in the way of such a contract.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that another danger is what is known as uncleared effects? The small business man pays into the bank a cheque that he has been given by his supplier——

Mr. Hind: Uncleared funds.

Mr. Bermingham: Yes, uncleared funds, or whatever they may be called. The cheque is as safe as houses because it is often drawn on state bodies and will not bounce. However, cheques take three to five days to clear and a business must pay a penalty during that time. That can materially affect a business's cash flow and ultimately its solvency.

Mr. Wallace: I could not agree more with the hon. Gentleman. That applies to my account and my salary cheque from the Paymaster General. One hopes that such cheques would not bounce and, if they did, we would have worse problems than those relating to small businesses and banks. As the hon. Gentleman says, when cheques are drawn, often on public bodies, and therefore will not be dishonoured, we must seek a way of speeding up the clearing process, especially as the company may draw on the strength of that cheque.

The relationship between small businesses and the banks is skewed because of the difference in their bargaining positions. If competition could encourage good practice, I am sure that it would benefit not only small businesses but the banks. Banks will do what they can to win the account of a large business and there are no doubt ways of offering an attractive package. The same can apply to individual customers. Loyalty to a particular bank is probably not such that if one did not receive a good service one would not switch to another bank or to a building society. If in future building societies and foreign banks were encouraged to enter the business loans market, the clearing banks and their Scottish counterparts might do much more to provide a better service for their small business customers. The Government, who are committed to competition, might wish not only to call in the banks and ask them about their policy with regard to small businesses, but to investigate how banking services for small businesses might be opened up to more competition which would, I believe, be for the greater benefit of all.

Although I believe that much should be done by good practice instigated by the banks themselves and by some contractual understanding and negotiation with the small business sector, if the banks were not prepared to take the initiative, the two modest proposals contained in new clause 35, which provide for the stipulation of a breakdown of bank and interest charges, would perhaps encourage them along the way. There would be resistance from the banks, but every other business is expected to give details when invoicing customers, so it is not unreasonable to expect banks to do the same.

Another issue raised by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury, and which is the subject of a new clause tabled by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), is the Bank of Credit and Commerce International. The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury was right to focus his attention on why rumblings and suspicions were allowed to fester for so long before the Bank of England finally pulled the plug at the expense of many people in the business community—especially the Asian business community—of individual

[Mr. Wallace]

investors and of a number of local authorities, not least that of the Western Isles which had invested perhaps more than any other authority in BCCI.

The House will be aware that my noble Friend Lord Harris of Greenwich raised the matter in another place in April last year. If one reads the report of that debate, one can say only that the Government's response was stonewalling as a refined art. It was clear that the Government were unwilling to give away what the Bank of England might have made of convictions across the Atlantic, but we can conclude that the Government must have been on notice—the Bank of England was certainly on notice. One wonders why such a state of affairs was allowed to continue for so long before the failure occurred and the plug was pulled, with the consequences of which hon. Members have been given examples over the past week to 10 days.

What sort of help will it be possible to provide to depositors? One amendment that has not been selected argued for an increase in the safety net incorporated in the Banking Act 1987. However, even an increase in that figure from £20,000 to £50,000 would have gone only a small way. It might have been a saving grace for some businesses, but it would have been of only minor assistance to the worst affected.

There is a prima facie case for protection to meet lost deposits. If the Government can say, even at this stage, that they are prepared to raise the compensation ceiling, that would come as welcome news to many.

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that increased compensation should be paid by the Government or by the banks?

Mr. Wallace: If there is to be immediate help, I suspect that it would have to come from the Government rather than from the banking sector.

One must consider the effect of those losses on not only the firms immediately involved but the entire small business sector. The initial outlay could well be recouped because of the difficulties that would be prevented from occurring further down the line.

Last Thursday, the Prime Minister said during Question Time:

"Local authorities have a duty of care over the funds entrusted to them".—[*Official Report*, 11 July 1991; Vol. 194, column 1082.]

The Prime Minister is not a lawyer, but the phrase "a duty of care" implies a certain relationship. One wonders whether local authorities have a duty of care to their poll tax payers. If no Government assistance is forthcoming, poll tax payers may have grounds for legal action against their local authorities, and have a right to pursue through the courts the argument that they are not obliged to pay any increase in poll tax that is a consequence of local authority financial negligence. The phrase "a duty of care" was an interesting one for the Prime Minister to use, and perhaps the Economic Secretary can enlighten the House as to what was in the Prime Minister's mind when he uttered it.

Returning to new clause 35, let me say that the small business sector has a tremendous contribution to make to the economy. Over the past two or three years, it has been prevented from doing so by high interest rates, and for even longer by a banking sector that is not particularly well attuned to the needs and expectations of small firms. If the Government would make a positive response to some of the suggestions that are made today—many of which would not require legislation—that would show the way forward, and would be of considerable encouragement to small businesses.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): The hon. Members for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) and for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) make a sympathetic argument. Hon. Members in all parts of the House are concerned about the current plight of small businesses and have considerable sympathy with them—so one starts with a favourable disposition towards the proposed new clauses. However, on closer examination one discovers that new clause 3 in particular contains much that is not sensible—which leads one to believe that the amendments ought not to be supported in the Lobby.

New clause 3 makes at least two references to

"the average interest rate charged"

in respect of various categories of borrowing, which is not a sensible concept. That would give the House and the country only a rough idea of what was happening, and would be comparatively meaningless information in trying to monitor the terms and conditions of such loans.

The range of obligations imposed by new clause 3 implies a considerable burden of compliance costs on banks and other lenders in providing such information, and that would be at the expense of shareholders or customers, or both.

Subsection (1)(v) introduces a provision which a future Government of a different disposition and attitude towards banks and other financial institutions could use as a trojan horse in placing on banks and other financial institutions burdens far greater than could legitimately be justified. For those technical reasons, I find myself unable to support the new clause.

That does not take away from the concern that lies behind the arguments made by the hon. Members for Islington, South and Finsbury and for Orkney and Shetland, which is common to both sides of the House. There can be no doubting that the interest rates recently charged on loans, especially to small businesses, have been penal. Some might describe them almost as usury. The banks argue, justifiably, that the interest charged must relate to the risk involved in each case. However, it is not always easy for small businesses to understand or to accept that rationale.

One must acknowledge also that the banks themselves have been in some difficulty. That is recognised by the media and by the public. Banks have been understandably anxious to restore their balance sheets, and that has often been done at the expense of their clients—notably, their small business clients. The wide spread of interest rates charged to different borrowers should be more fully explained. To that extent, I have considerable sympathy with the argument of the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland, that more timely information on the charges levied, and on the other terms and conditions insisted upon, would be useful. The best way to achieve that is, as the hon. Gentleman said, by good banking practice—spurred on by the power of publicity, which is to some extent enhanced by debates in the House.

When my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary replies, I hope that he will be able to tell the House the outcome of the discussions between my right hon. Friend the

Chancellor of the Exchequer and the managements of our leading banks, which I hope will serve to point the way to better and more responsible banking practices.

According to many small firms in my constituency, almost a greater problem than varying interest rates and the other terms and conditions on which loans are made is the late payment of large bills by major customers—which is sometimes deliberate, but often accidental. Delayed settlement and a change of policy in respect of payments to small firms can completely ruin their cash flow. I hope that my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary and his Treasury colleagues will reconsider adopting some of the measures used in other countries to encourage the earlier payment of bills to small businesses.

Mr. Nelson: My hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) may be aware that our hon. Friend the Member for East Hampshire, (Mr. Mates) introduced some time ago a private Member's Bill that sought to overcome the problem of overdue settlement, but that it received precious little support from the Department of Trade and Industry—despite the fact that many of us emphasised, long before delayed payment became a real problem, that something ought to be done. Ministers appeared reluctant to do anything at that time, but I urge them to reconsider that aspect, and I ask my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to answer that point when he winds up.

Mr. Forman: I would expect my hon. Friend to endorse the thrust of my argument. It is time that Ministers gave us a full explanation of why they do not think it appropriate to act now.

I have much less sympathy with new clause 37. The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury said that the depositors' protection scheme was markedly less generous than the investors' protection scheme, and that it should therefore be made more generous. Surely, however, the extra money could come only from either the banks or the taxpayer. I was interested by the challenge offered to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland; I do not believe that any more should be taken from the taxpayer. It has been asked why the Bank of England did not intervene earlier. The critical point is, in my view, the problem of balance alluded to by my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson).

5 pm

Ministers should consider two other points. First, those who deposit their funds with such institutions as BCCI and Barlow Clowes should realise that a greater return probably implies a greater risk. That should be stamped on every such venture. Secondly, depositors should be wary of advice that comes not independently, from people who charge a straightforward fee, but from people who are on commission. It is well known that larger-than-average commissions were earned by those whose advice favoured BCCI. Advice that comes on commission should be regarded with some suspicion.

Mr. Latham: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Forman: I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me if I do not. I want to be brief.

Obviously, much more will be said about the auditors, and I shall not say much about them now. At present, auditors have the right to draw the attention of the supervisors and regulatory agencies to any shortcomings that could amount to fraud in certain circumstances, but no duty is imposed on them to do so. Ministers should take that into account when considering any changes in the law.

I appreciate the problems of small businesses, but I do not think that new clause 3 would solve them. Everyone should be extremely careful not to become involved in circumstances such as those that gave rise to the tragedy of BCCI.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: New clause 37 combines self-regulation with political accountability, and establishes an early-warning system to operate when banks are experiencing difficulties. Its objective is to construct a balance between the need for investors to be given some information about the nature and development of inquiries into the affairs of banks, and the need to avoid unforeseeable outflows of capital—otherwise known as "runs on the bank".

The idea was prompted by the comments of Ian Brindle, a senior partner at Price Waterhouse, in the *Financial Times* last week. When asked why BCCI accounts had not been qualified more promptly, Mr. Brindle replied:

> "You simply cannot go round qualifying the accounts of a bank without creating all sorts of problems and without the whole thing collapsing."

Unpalatable though they may appear at first glimpse, Mr. Brindle's remarks contain a grain of truth. What action can we take? We have a duty to maintain confidence in the banking system, as it oils the wheels of industry; but we must have a well-supervised banking system. I appeal to treasurers and institutional depositors who are considering pulling out of the secondary and fringe banking sectors to think twice before they do so. A quick pull-out could wipe out a sizeable part of Britain's small-business industrial base, doing immeasurable harm in regions such as mine.

Responsible institutional investors should do their homework before taking any precipitate action. They should check with their financial advisers and with sectoral advisory bodies, and perhaps collectively approach the Bank of England. They must not aggravate the current difficult situation.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Is there not a paradox in what the hon. Gentleman is saying? Local authorities' money should never be put at risk in any way: it is not their own money to invest in schemes that will earn interest. Some extra risk must be incurred by those who invest in the smaller, marginal banks, rather than in A or B banks. Why should community charge payers' money be endangered? The hon. Gentleman cannot have it both ways; either local authorities take a risk, or they do not.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The small banking sector plays an important part in the funding of British industry, and it cannot be written off. The question is, what constitutes a risk? I shall deal with that later.

Pending reform of the Bank of England's supervisory arrangements, which should follow any inquiry such as that called for by my hon. Friends the Members for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) and for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), we must maintain confidence in the banking system as it exists today, warts and all. My new clause would establish an early-warning system: it would require a bank to publish, within one month of its

[Mr. Campbell-Savours]

accounting period, information about inquiries that have been, or are being, made into its affairs or those of an associate by the relevant supervisory or regulatory authorities.

Such a disclosure could be avoided only if the bank could convince the supervisory authority that, for whatever reason, it should not be made—or that a full disclosure should not be made. If it succeeded in persuading the authority that no disclosure should be made, the authority would have to inform the Chancellor of the Exchequer of its decision.

In the spirit of self-regulation, banks would have a real incentive to keep their affairs squeaky-clean. Not to do so would invite inquiry on the part of the relevant supervisory authority, and possibly require a public statement. The supervisory authority, recognising the critical nature of its decision to approve—or not approve—publication, would have to balance the need-to-know requirements of the discerning investor with the publicity that such a disclosure might engender. Furthermore, the authority, aware of the procedure triggering notification of the Chancellor, would be extremely sensitive to the political embarrassment that would arise if a decision to approve non-disclosure was followed by a collapse, as happened with BCCI.

The Chancellor would not be empowered to instruct the supervisory authority about disclosure or non-disclosure decisions. Nevertheless, he would be able to exert considerable pressure beyond assuming a supervisory responsibility himself. The fact that a Chancellor might at some stage have to stand at the Dispatch Box, held accountable to Parliament and the country, would certainly concentrate his or her mind on the decision being taken by the supervisory authority. I believe that the Chancellor would demand assurances that the most detailed inquiries were being undertaken into a bank's affairs before he would be prepared to sit back and let matters take their course under the cloak of confidentiality.

I want now to consider the question of adverse publicity that would arise where a bank had been obliged to issue a statement. The supervisory authorities are frequently called in to query the affairs of the banking community. To some extent, that frequency would insulate banks from the danger of a precipitate run and collapse. Rumours surrounding BCCI seem to have contributed little to undermining the credibility of and confidence in that bank. That is why the treasurers of local authorities continued to invest in it. The heavy hand of the Bank of England announcement triggered the bank's closure and, in other conditions, that could have led to a run on the bank.

Ms. Mowlam: My hon. Friend has referred to the attitude of local authorities and I invite him to comment on the minutes of a Treasury meeting of the committee of local authority borrowing. Back on 10 May, before BCCI issues were raised, the local authorities raised three points with the Treasury in which they were particularly interested. Their first point related to Chancery which was still on the Bank of England's authorised list. The local authorities raised the issue of the list of approved bodies on which Chancery still appeared. They said:

"If authorised banks were unsound, the list should carry a health warning."

The local authorities asked for that back in May. In addition——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The hon. Lady is making an intervention, not a speech.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The health warning to which my hon. Friend refers is embodied in my new clause in so far as I provide for an early-warning system.

I believe that the disclosure procedure that I have outlined, in so far as a number of banks might be required to use it and where such inquiries are under way, would act as no more than a signal to depositors that they should be alert and sensitive to a bank's affairs. The effects would be no more undermining than the rumouring in the City in recent months about BCCI's affairs. However, it would enable institutional depositors such as local authorities to enjoy the benefits of what has hitherto been insider information available only to those who are more informed in the City.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): The House is indebted to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) for proposing his new clause. Why should local authorities be in a privileged position over and above other investors in the hon. Gentleman's scheme of things?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Local authorities would not be in a privileged position. When the bank made a statement one month after the end of its accounting period, that would be a public statement to which anyone would have access.

I want now to consider BCCI's affairs and my knowledge of the events and to pose a number of questions which the Government should answer. My authority of Allerdale was the first authority in the United Kingdom to reveal that it had lost £1 million. That arose as a result of a policy decision taken by the Labour-controlled council when it was elected in May this year. It decided that at every stage, and whatever the matter, it would pursue a policy of full disclosure in the spirit of freedom of information legislation at local authority level. I pay tribute to my local authority for deciding to announce what happened in the way that it did.

5.15 pm

The Government claim that the list of which I have a copy is not an authorised list. Hon. Members should note the size of the list which contains the names of all the banks that are authorised deposit-taking institutions and banks within the United Kingdom under the terms of the Banking Act 1987. The banks says that the list is only a list of authorised institutions. If that is the case, why are Chancery and Edington on that list when one of them went into liquidation earlier this year and the other is the subject of an administration order? Why were they on that list when my authority received a copy of that list on 28 June this year, two days after the Government had been informed in the Price Waterhouse report——

Mr. Sumberg: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: No, I do not intend to give way again. Why did my authority receive a copy of that list two days after the Government had been informed formally of fraud in the bank?

I want the Government also to comment on a statutory instrument which I managed to dig out last week entitled the Local Authorities (Capital Finance) (Approved Investments) Regulations 1990. I draw those regulations to the attention of the House because the Department of the Environment has insisted repeatedly in press briefings that in no way was it approving the investments of local authorities. According to the explanatory note,

"These regulations contain a list of investments which are approved by the Secretary of State".

Under 2 it states

"the following investments are approved".

Under 2(b) it states

"any deposit made with an authorised institution or Bank of England"

and it defines deposit as having

"the same meaning as in the Banking Act 1987."

Having received a letter a week and a half ago which referred to a revised list, having received the list to which I have just referred, and knowing of the existence of the regulations to which I have just referred, local authorities believed that they were acting with the approval of the Bank of England and with the approval——

Mr. Sumberg: Will the hon. Gentleman give way now?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I have no intention of giving way to the hon. Gentleman. Judging from his ill-conceived comments at the beginning of this debate when the revelations were first made public and his comments about Bury metropolitan district council, comments of which he should be deeply ashamed, he should make a point later of apologising to his local authority.

Mr. Sumberg: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I have the impression that the hon. Gentleman's point of order is not a point of order for me but a point of frustration. I will try to call him later.

Mr. Sumberg *rose*——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: It is not a point of order.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Well, if it is a point of order to me, I must hear it.

Mr. Sumberg: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, is it in order for the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) to make comments about my conduct in this matter and then to refuse to give way? Is that not a disgraceful way to behave?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. It is for the hon. Member who has the Floor to decide whether to give way. I will do my best to ensure that the hon. Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg) is called later.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I want now to consider why local authorities invested in the way that they did. First, they were given assurances that the bank was being restructured. Secondly, they were given assurances that a major cash injection into the bank had taken place. Thirdly, the terms offered by the bank were special not only with respect to the premium interest rate on deposit accounts, but they provided an arrangement under which local authorities could put their money into the bank overnight and draw it out in the morning. A call arrangement existed at that bank which, I am told, is not generally available in all the institutions. The fourth reason was that BCCI was on the banking list that the local authorities regarded as approving investment. Fifthly, the local authorities justify their actions on the basis of the regulations to which I referred.

I want to ask Ministers about the role of the brokers. If we cannot have an answer today, I should like to think that we can have an answer within the next couple of weeks. Were the brokers paid inflated commissions? Do Ministers know the answer to the question? Have they set out to establish the truth? If the brokers were paid inflated commissions, do Ministers believe that the size of those inflated commissions should have been revealed to the local authorities that were placing such large sums on deposit? What is the role of the Sterling Brokers Association which was drawn in over the Chancery affair? To what extent are the recommendations or statements that it makes to be taken seriously by local authorities? Will the Bank of England carry out its own inquiry into the actions of the money brokers involved in the affair?

I understand that BCCI purchased insurance from a Pakistani insurance company based in Karachi called Adamjee Insurance. To some extent, that insurance should cover losses. I ask the Minister whether it is effective. We are told that the policies that were taken out with Adamjee were reinsured on the London market through a subsidiary of Commercial Union—British and European—and were also reinsured in Italy through the Company Generali. May we also be told what were the links between BCCI and the life assurance London-based holding company CCL? I understand that CCL had money on deposit with the bank. It is a life assurance company. Will the collapse of BCCI affect the liquidity of CCL? Policy holders would like to know the answer to that question.

May we also be told about the position of Westminster city council? The treasurer there has drawn a distinction between lending and placing money on deposit. I am unable to understand the distinction.

May we also be told about the status of the Bank of England in the affair? Mr. Ian Brindle of Price Waterhouse has said that the Bank of England was repeatedly informed of irregularities. There must be a stage in the unwinding of the whole affair at which the substance of the reports—I understand that there were 10—from Price Waterhouse to the Bank of England is made public and certainly at which it is made available to the Government so that we can hold Ministers accountable at the Dispatch Box on those matters.

Did the Bank of England ask Ernst and Whinney why it gave up its £2 million lucrative BCCI auditing contract in 1988? That is an important question. Had Ernst and Whinney found evidence of fraud which it felt that it did not want to reveal by qualifying the accounts? Perhaps it gave up the auditing contract to place on its successor, Price Waterhouse, the responsibility for qualifying. Did Ernst and Whinney tell Price Waterhouse why it gave up the contract? Is it true that Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan al-Nahayan sent £375 million to the bank only two weeks ago? Is it true that Ghanem Al Mazrui, the secretary general of the Abu Dhabi investors' authority, offered to invest £2·3 billion in the bank immediately prior to its collapse? If that is true, is it fair to say that the bank was trading insolvent?

May we have an assurance from the Dispatch Box that none of the 10 Price Waterhouse reports warranted earlier intervention? I am sure that Ministers have had access to the reports—at least, I hope that they have—so may we

[Mr. Campbell-Savours]

have that assurance today? A BCCI director has said that Price Waterhouse was informed as early as 1988 of fraud in the bank and he says that his evidence for that is that Price Waterhouse was asking questions about fraud at that time.

May we have assurances about deeds held in the bank as security against mortgages? May we have an assurance that those who have mortgaged their properties will receive back their deeds? Furthermore, should mortgagees be paying money to the bank now? They need to know the answer.

Another question has been raised with me repeatedly, although I have no evidence in connection with it. Did the Foreign Office press for a delay in the appointment of Price Waterhouse? It may have pressed for a delay in the appointment of Price Waterhouse to carry out the inquiry into fraud until after the Gulf war had ended. I ask the Minister whether that is true; if it is not, I am sure that he can give the House assurances.

What is the position of local authorities affected by what has happened? They have few options open to them, although I will outline some. Some local authorities will have to sell assets to cover their losses. Some local authorities will use reserves, if they are available, to overcome the immediate funding crises. In some local authorities, a higher poll tax may be levied. I hope that that is not the case because it would have a severe effect on much of our community. The Government may decide to increase the borrowing limits of local authorities to help them to supplement their losses. Who should pay the servicing costs of those borrowings? I have no answer to that and I remain strictly neutral. It will have to be either the Government or the local authorities. In my local authority, if my local poll tax payers have to pay off the £1 million debt which has been incurred as a result of what I can only regard as negligence on behalf of the Government and of the Bank of England authorities, they will pay £3 a year extra in poll tax for the next 10 years, if the loan extends over a 10-year period.

Mr. Nelson: The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) does a service to the House in raising these matters and in tabling new clause 37. I oppose the new clause for reasons that I shall adduce, but I believe that his questions and the respect that he has paid to the integrity and security of the banking system in our economy are well made, responsible and worthy of the House.

I shall confine my remarks almost exclusively to new clause 37. My hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) dealt extremely well with new clause 3, although I pay respect to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) who raised a number of important points about small businesses.

I do not share the view of the hon. Member for Workington that his new clause is timely or worth while. Far from showing that the system of regulating our banks has been brought into question, this latest episode, tragic, hurtful and loss-making as it is for many individuals, has shown that that system is actually working and that the Banking Act 1987, which was introduced to redress the inadequacies in the supervision of our banking system, is also working, because it is bringing to book and closing down banking businesses that are acting fraudulently.

5.30 pm

The question that the House is addressing—not, I hope, in an unduly party political fashion—is when one should blow the whistle. Does one blow the whistle too soon and risk a run on the banks and bringing into question confidence in our entire banking system, or does one blow the whistle too late and jeopardise the deposits and interests of many people which otherwise might have been saved? If the whistle had been blown a year ago, many individuals would have lost out then, just as many have lost out now. On the other hand, many individuals have been saved because it happened a year later.

It is important for the House, which talks incessantly about accountability, to be sure that when we call people to account we can do so with justification. How can we ask the Bank of England to close down an authorised bank, a private enterprise or a company unless there are sound reasons for taking such action so that we can then hold it accountable? If the Bank of England were to take such action on the basis of suspicion, and if either the House or one of its Select Committees brought that into question how could we pillory the Bank for taking such action peremptorily?

In my judgment, and in so far as I observe these matters, it appears that the Governor of the Bank of England and the department of banking supervision at the Bank of England have behaved in an exemplary and wholly proper fashion in this matter, as have the Government of the day——

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Does the hon. Gentleman consider that, as part of behaving in an exemplary fashion, the Governor of the Bank of England owed any—and, if so, what—duty to pass on his suspicions to the Government of the day, and did the Government of the day have any—and, if so, what—duty to investigate those suspicions?

Mr. Nelson: The Banking Act 1987 deals clearly with those matters. The important matter to which the hon. and learned Gentleman has drawn attention was the subject of an extensive debate when that Bill was in Standing Committee and subsequently when it was considered on Report——

Mr. Janner: What is the answer to the question?

Mr. Nelson: The answer is that the primary responsibility for banking supervision rests with the Governor and with the department of banking supervision at the Bank of England. Undoubtedly, some informal discussion takes place—it is not required by statute—with the Treasury and with Ministers. To stiffen that process and to ensure that decisions would not be taken in a laggardly or neglectful fashion, this House and that Act established a board of banking supervision in the Bank of England, which is quite different from the department of banking supervision at the Bank. I am sorry that this is so esoteric, but it is an important point. To try to ensure greater accountability and greater supervision in our banking system, the House established—*[Interruption.]* I suggest that this is an answer to the hon. Gentleman's question—a board of banking supervision in the Bank of England to stand alongside the Governor, of which he would be a member, to which he would report, and the composition of which we discussed at length, as I am sure my hon. Friends will agree.

The Bank of Credit and Commerce International has a considerable history beyond the last year of suspicion. Many hon. Members will know that when it was first established in this country its wholesale expansion within a matter of months on some prime sites throughout the capital gave rise to suspicions about the way in which it was financed. When assurances were forthcoming that major depositors from the Gulf states were supporting it, the matter was laid to rest for some time. However, some doubts remained about the bank's ethics, objectives and deposit base.

Until 1987, this country differentiated between major authorised banks that could offer the whole range of banking services and the secondary or fringe banks that were licensed deposit-takers. It was only in 1987 that one category of bank was established—authorised banks. One major problem was that when authorising banking status we could not differentiate between domestic banks and foreign banks with branches in this country. That involved some risk, but there had previously been a risk with the licensed banking system.

The position of BCCI, however, was special, if not unique. To some extent and to some people, it was rather objectionable, because it tried to establish a banking basis that was different from all others. It sought to move beyond the financial facts of life and to talk about "moral profits" and "spiritual growth". It persuaded employees to work overtime for no remuneration at the weekend so that it could pay their moneys elsewhere. It was a crusading bank—a new phenomenon—which was attached to an ethnic background in this country and had an understandable appeal. I do not decry the sentiments behind it, although, in retrospect, we see that it was a scam like many others. In reality, it appears that those "moral profits" were being siphoned off into Grand Cayman and into a so-called charitable foundation that itself had an interest in BCCI. This and other irregularities subsequently brought about the downfall of that bank. The disappearance of significant funds which undermined the security of depositors and customers alike.

Therefore, although one rightly has enormous sympathy with those who, as employees, as well as depositors put their trust in that company, one must conclude that there can be no departure from the financial facts of life. Cardinal rules are that one should look at the spread of assets and liabilities of a banking organisation. One has to trust to the authorisation of the regulatory system and one should ensure that, when it comes to investing money, one does not put all one's eggs in one basket.

The United Arab Emirates and Sheikh Zayed al-Nahayan have behaved completely honourably. They may have been ripped off by Mr. Abedi. Time and time again, the sheikh has been asked to pay up to that bank. Let it not be forgotten that he donated generously and willingly to our country when we came to the aid of the Gulf militarily. He, personally, has behaved generously and honourably. I believe that, up to a certain level, he may yet be prepared to act again in that way towards the bank's non-sterling depositors. However, why should we limit our own liability and yet call upon him to idemnify without limit all others who have lost in this case? He may do more, but he has behaved entirely properly and we should be grateful for the role that he has played in stabilising the international banking system.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury asked why there should be a differentiation between the depositor protection scheme that operates for the banking system and the investor protection scheme that operates in the financial services industry. There is a difference between liquid money and any equity investment. It is fair enough for the House to decide—as it did—that those who invest in banks shall be indemnified up to a certain level to try to protect the small depositors who may not have the benefit of reading the *Financial Times* every day and who cannot be expected to know which bank might be dodgy.

In 1987 we set that limit at £20,000 and for the time being decided that 75 per cent. of that should be the limit of the amount against which any individual depositor could be indemnified. So the sum was £15,000. That was not unreasonable at the time and it is not unreasonable now. It could perhaps be increased to £20,000, but it should not be increased to significantly more than that.

However, in the case of equity investments, the financial services industry and the vast range of organisations that operate as authorised businesses under a variety of recognised professional bodies and self-regulating organisations, people are probably entitled to greater recompense and security. But let us never forget one important factor. In both cases, it is not the taxpayer who indemnifies or guarantees the investor. It is not us or those whom we represent who pay depositors or loss makers in the banking or investment sectors. It is the rest of the banking industry which, under the depositors' protection scheme, have to pay up or, under the Financial Services Act 1986, as authorised investment businesses have to pay into compensation funds.

If the House took a decision significantly to increase the amount of compensation made available to depositors, the cost would fall on the banks and their customers rather than our constituents. Therefore, it is a decision about which we should be careful——

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): People would pay higher bank charges.

Mr. Nelson: Well, it would cost the rest of the industry money. Let us take the banking sector as an example. If we raised the compensation under the scheme from £15,000 to, say, £50,000 or £100,000, on whom would the cost fall? It would fall not on the taxpayer or the Government but on the banks and their customers. Let us consider for a moment the consequences of that, not only the benefits for unlucky depositors. Let us consider the principle of the matter.

Surely the reputable, the conservative, the trusty and the responsible banks and financial service companies would end up indemnifying the least responsible, riskiest and fraudulent businesses in the same industry. The banks may well be prepared to cover that to a certain extent. So they should, because things can go wrong and there are bad apples in every tray. However, there must be a limit to the extent to which we can ask any bank or investment business to provide massive subvention to cover the losses of people who seek to take business away from them. It is true that banking is a market, that it is competitive and that there will be good as well as bad. However, it is impossible to create a failsafe system in which no one loses.

If bad decisions are made and if fraud takes place, someone must carry the loss. This House and the relevant industries can go too far in indeminifying people. At the

[Mr. Nelson]

end of the day, we as well as the industries must send out the firm message, "Depositors beware. Investors beware. Nothing that this House can do can indemnify you against the possibility of loss. We will do our best to authorise institutions and ensure that fit and proper persons run them, but you must balance and cover your risks, and make your own judgment about with whom you invest."

I have sought strenuously today and on previous occasions to defend, indeed strongly to back, what the Governor of the Bank of England and the Government have done in this matter. Their action was absolutely responsible and right. As far as I can assess, their timing was wholly right.

However, I wish to make one point that I have made previously. It could be the answer to this difficulty. I urge the Government to listen to what I say, because I am sure that it will attract support from hon. Members on both sides of the House. There is a way of improving significantly the protection of depositors, investors and shareholders in businesses. It is called audit committees. Sir Brandon Rhys Williams, a former Member of the House, campaigned for years for the boards of companies to have a sufficient number of independent non-executives who would be forced by statute to form a cabal in order to ask difficult questions of the board and, in particular, sometimes of an autocratic chairman of a company. They could ask questions about extensive loans, faulty security for loans and the spread of risks. At the annual meeting of shareholders they could stand up and say what they had or had not asked during the year and what they received or did not receive by way of a reply.

5.45 pm

I challenge anyone to suggest that in the cases of Blue Arrow, Johnson Matthey, BCCI or virtually any other collapse in the past 10 years a stronger, more independent, forthright audit committee of non-executive directors could not have saved many ordinary people from losing out.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Although my hon. Friend's idea sounds good, is not there a flaw in it? BCCI had worldwide ramifications and hundreds of thousands of customers. Would not his idea end up with non-executive directors who were almost full-time directors and a large staff to serve them? My hon. Friend's idea sounds good, but I do not believe that it would work in practice.

Mr. Nelson: I understand my hon. Friend's intervention and the motives behind it. International companies have a better reputation than us for appointing non-executive directors and audit committees. They do not seem to have the apocalyptic scandals and collapses that we have from time to time. Where such committees exist in Britain and elsewhere they seem to have an extremely good record of looking after shareholders' funds, as well as the security of depositors and employers.

It is extraordinary to hear from the Opposition Benches calls which seem to be for the bailing out of an offshore banking organisation and for people to be defended from losses which they should be expected to incur. Often they are big enough to incur such losses and sufficiently wise to make their own judgments.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was absolutely right to come to the House last week and say that local authorities that, for a marginal increase in the interest rate which they could obtain on deposits, decided to hold 100 per cent. of the value of the capital at risk could not be indemnified at public expense. It is not the job of the House or the Government to underwrite every local authority treasurer who runs amok. One can only question the motives of treasurers who put enormous sums of money—millions of pounds of local communities' money—into banks which were previously licensed deposit takers and were long regarded as dubious. It is extraordinary that such decisions were made with the public's money.

The Prime Minister and the Government were absolutely right to say that there was a limit to our competence and the extent to which the taxpayer can bail banks or local authorities out. That is why I hope that the Government will take a reluctant and resistant attitude to the new clause.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): The hon. Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) should be careful that he does not go too far. Contrary to the views of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark), the smaller banks have a role. If we end up with everyone putting their money into the top four banks, it would play the devil with the City of London.

Like the hon. Member for Chichester, I intend to speak mainly to new clause 37, for which we are grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). Not only is it a good new clause but he made a fine speech. However, first, I wish to comment briefly on new clause 35.

The charges that banks impose on their customers are an outrage. The first a customer knows that he is being charged anything is when the statement shows a deduction. That is a scandal. If I buy anything or incur any cost, I expect, first, an invoice, and, secondly, the details of what I have purchased, giving me the cost of each item. Then I pay after a certain time. All right, the banks are paid a bit quicker, but they give no detailed information of any kind. It is an outrage that we have got used to. I have had discussions with the chairmen of the main banks who all accept that and say, "Yes, eventually we must move in that direction." I say, "Not in that direction; we must give an itemised list of what the charges are for and some justification for them."

The Banking Act 1979 was the first legislation to lay responsibility on the Bank of England for granting a licence to a bank to take money from depositors. Section 3(3)(b) states:

"the Bank shall not grant a full licence to an institution unless it is satisfied that the criteria in Part II of that Schedule are fulfilled with respect to the institution."

The said schedule 2 states that a licence shall be granted if "the institution enjoys, and has for a reasonable period of time enjoyed, a high reputation and standing in the financial community."

Nobody could ever have said that the BCCI ever qualified in that respect. Right from the start—this is not something new; we all knew it at the time—it was astonishing that the Bank of England accepted that the BCCI was a responsible institution and gave it power to expand all over London. It was a scandal.

That having been done, it is clear from the debate of 23 November that it was understood that the Bank of England would supervise the activities of such banks. When the hon. Member for East Lindsey (Sir P. Tapsell) asked about that, he was assured that everything would be

all right because the Bank of England would be supervising the banks. That allayed some of our doubts. We knew that the BCCI had been given these powers, but we were reassured by the supervisory role of the Bank of England. Moreover, as the BCCI was such a fraudulent concern—it was fraudulent in so many ways—we assumed that the Bank of England would watch carefully over all its activities. The Bank of England failed to carry out that elementary, continuing supervision. That was the burden on the Bank of England which it should have carried.

It is almost insulting to talk about all the treasurers of local councils and all the business men who were taken in when it was the Bank of England that was taken in. It is insulting to talk about those treasurers, including the treasurer of Westminster city council who is so close to all these events, being so naive, when the one body that was failing in its duty and was being naive was the Bank of England. We should understand that important point.

The Bank of England knew of the bank's actions on the other side of the Atlantic, yet it said nothing to anybody about them. The treasurers of our great local authorities and the business men of some standing assumed that such actions happened elsewhere. If the Bank of England thought that the actions would have these consequences, it should have done something there and then. It had a long period of notice that it was not dealing with ordinary bankers as we have traditionally come to expect them to be; it was dealing with people who were trying to make money for themselves and, at the very least, to bend the rules.

We cannot leave the matter as it stands. We know that the Bank of England had a greater responsibility than it now admits. We see that it is trying to dodge the responsibility that we always assumed and that we were told by Ministers at the time that it had. If the Bank of England is trying to dodge its responsibilities, we need new provisions in a new banking Act.

Sir Ian Stewart: I declare an interest as for most of my working life I have been either a manager or a director of a bank, except when I was a member of the Government. My reasons for wanting to speak in this debate are not so much because of that connection as because in 1978-79 I was the Opposition spokesman on the then Banking Bill and in the last Parliament I was responsible for introducing the Banking Act 1987, which has been much in discussion this afternoon.

I do not want to spend more than a moment on one or two of the issues raised about the relationship between banks and their customers, but I wish to take this opportunity to support the general purpose behind new clause 35. It suggests that banks should state on statements of account to their customers the rates of interest being charged and provide some explanation of bank charges. It is not necessarily time for that to be embodied in statute, but I hope that when my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer meets representatives of the banks shortly he will make it clear that there is a general feeling in the House that banks' customers have grounds for suspicion about how they are being treated by banks merely because such information is not readily available.

I shall give the House one practical example of that. Recently, a person came to me suspecting that the interest charges on an account were excessive. After I made some calculations, it looked as though the rate of interest was several per cent. above any reasonable rate that should have been charged on that account. I contacted the bank and after a considerable period it was established that the rate of interest had been much too high. It then took a great deal of time to work back over a long period to find out how much the bank had overcharged and to correct it. Had there been a simple statement on any of the statements of account in the interim showing what rate of interest was being charged, it would not have taken so long to resolve the matter. It is in the interests of the banks to avoid the misunderstanding and mistrust that can arise and to be more open with their customers about their charges.

My second point about the relationship between banks and their customers concerns the nature of the list of authorised banks. The very fact that some people can misunderstand the list to be some sort of guarantee of the automatic integrity of the banks listed suggests that some sort of health warning needs to be applied to it. I shall not suggest the form of words. In bare terms the list states that it is a list of the institutions authorised under the Banking Act. It would not come amiss if additional words made it clear that the statement did not go further than the bare words represented. There is no harm in giving people more information, particularly if a shortage of that information can mislead.

My third point about the relationship concerns the vexed question of deposit protection. My hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) has just made a speech about that and I agreed with much of what he said. I must confess that during the passage of the Banking Act I was responsible for trying to prevent the deposit protection arrangement being set at too high a figure, because I believed that if we were not careful a version of Gresham's law would apply to banking. Hon. Members will recall that Gresham's law states that bad money drives out good.

I fear that if deposit protection is too extensive, bad deposits will drive out good. The reason for that is simple and has been dramatically illustrated by events of the past few years in America where deposits of up to $100,000 have been protected up to 100 per cent. Therefore there was no greater risk to the depositor from placing his money with a badly run organisation that paid higher interest rates than there was from placing his money with a well-run organisation that paid lower interest rates. Therefore, in that sense, bad deposits could drive out good.

6 pm

The end result of the protection offered in the United States was that the deposit-taking institutions, which are the equivalent of our building societies—the savings and loans institutions—were faced with comprehensive bankruptcy. In order to pay higher and higher rates of interest those institutions had to take on riskier and riskier business until the whole financial sector collapsed. It was beyond that sector to provide any deposit protection and that obligation will fall on the United States' taxpayers. They will have to finance that problem for many years to come.

I caution those who say, for perfectly understandable reasons, that more and more deposit protection should be provided. If one enables depositors to place their money without disadvantage with an institution that is less responsible, one will end up taking serious risks with the banking system as a whole.

The BCCI case has raised a number of serious issues that have been aired this afternoon by a number of hon. Members. The big question that any supervisory authority must face is when it should act. When doubts have become apparent about an institution, at what point should the regulatory body move in and take disciplinary action? That will always be a difficult decision, but we must make sure that the necessary framework is available for the regulators to take such action when they deem it right.

From having read the published reports on the BCCI case, I believe that the Bank of England is to be greatly commended for mobilising international agreement at a difficult time on the contentious subject of the cessation of business in BCCI. However, one must ask a more difficult question—was it open to the regulatory authority to do something about the problem in the United Kingdom? It is especially timely to ask that question because we are about to be bound by the second European banking directive, which automatically extends mutual authorisation from one member state in the Community to all the others. I do not want to pick out Luxembourg as being particularly irresponsible, but the BCCI case has demonstrated that the regulatory authority in that country was not in a position to ensure that the worldwide business of a bank as complicated and as extensive as BCCI could be comprehensively and effectively regulated from one centre—let alone the smallest centre in the EC.

Once that second banking directive is implemented we must ask about its implications for branches of banks in countries other than those where those banks are authorised. We do not have long to think about that because the directive is coming in next year. The regulators and my right hon. and hon. Friends at the Treasury will have to think carefully about whether some adjustment must be made to our statute or whether we should propose some changes within the Community to ensure that we do not expose ourselves unwittingly to the risk of further problems with international banks where there is an obligation in this country or any other country to accept the authorisation granted elsewhere on grounds with which we may not be thoroughly satisfied.

I had a most unfortunate experience a few years ago because, in 1985, I was the Treasury Minister who had to look at the affairs of Barlow Clowes. At that time I wrote to the Department of Trade and Industry to say that, in my view, if the answers coming from that body were not entirely satisfactory it would be better to face the unpleasantness of a cessation of business than to risk collapse at any time. Those words were not drafted for me by any official in the Treasury and I wrote them because I felt so strongly. I felt that if one had a badly run company and if one knew that there were serious deficiencies in the way in which its business was conducted, it was likely that fraud would soon take place—if it had not yet taken place—because of the great opportunities to exploit inadequate accounts and a badly-managed business. In the financial sector that temptation is all the greater. Unfortunately, it seemed to me absolutely clear that it was right to close Barlow Clowes at that time. However, there was a natural reluctance on the part of the regulators and supervisors to allow things to be corrected. However, the danger is that by the time one gets sufficiently clear evidence that something is seriously wrong, it is too late to protect the money of investors or depositors. That serious problem has been highlighted again by BCCI.

By the time that one can prove anything, the time to act has probably gone, and yet how can one identify what intermediate action one should take? I commend the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) for his suggestions in new clause 37. I do not necessarily agree with them in the technical sense, as I do not know whether they would achieve the right result, but they certainly point to the crucial issue. How can one take intermediate action when one thinks things may be going wrong, when one does not have absolute proof that would stand up in a court of law?

It was because of my concern about such a problem that I pressed for the inclusion—I use those words carefully—in the Banking Act 1987 of a special provision, now section 12, for restricted authorisation. Under that section the Bank of England could impose conditions on the authorisation of a body about which it was unhappy without going to the length of requiring it to close its doors. At that time there was some resistance to the inclusion of that provision, but I had in mind exactly the sort of circumstances which have now arisen. In other words, a good deal of negative information would have been forthcoming that raised suspicion in the minds of those responsible for the regulatory system. Such information could be made available about any bank, but the fact that, in this case, it related to BCCI made things more difficult because that bank was not controlled directly in this country.

If the regulators are not satisfied with the answers that they are given in a particular country, they should be able to require that bank to incorporate in their own country so that there is an incorporated body that then comes under the direct control of the regulatory authority in the country concerned. If we have to "borrow" the authorisation made in other countries for the sake of our own control, we are never likely to be able to get all the information we need quickly enough about banks which have widespread business throughout the world, and which can move funds rapidly from one centre to another.

If a bank has dedicated capital in this country, an identifiable board of directors and management, and if its affairs can be supervised as intensively as those of any domestic bank, we could be more confident that the international banking system, as applied in this country, would not pose risks for depositors and investors of the kind that we have unfortunately witnessed in the BCCI case.

I believe that there are urgent questions to ask about the way in which anticipatory steps can be taken before we reach the point at which a deposit-taking institution is likely to go bust or to close its doors. I hope that the inclusion of section 12 in the Banking Act 1987 offers a route that could be exploited in such cases. In the fullness of time, I shall be interested to learn whether it was invoked in that case and, if not, why not. Perhaps it was my fault because I did not ensure that the section was drawn up in such a way that it could be implemented in such a case. If so, we should revise the statute. The thinking behind the section covered just the circumstances that have arisen in the case of BCCI, where the supervisors were left with the difficult balance of judgment to which my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester referred. We were not in a position to know all the relevant information because of the world-wide nature of the business concerned.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): This has been an interesting debate and I am sure that the whole House is indebted to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) for tabling new clause 37.

Two former Treasury Ministers have spoken—one on each side of the House. I wonder what advice they would have given to local authorities that said that they were about to invest in the Bank of Credit and Commerce International. It is all very well to be careful and guided on the basis of 20:20 hindsight, but a treasurer of a local authority, especially a small local authority—I see that the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) is in his place—would not necessarily ask two former Treasury Ministers for advice, but would ask the Bank of England. The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) was perfectly right to say—I hope that I am paraphrasing him correctly—that in this instance the organisation within the British constitution with a duty of care was the Bank of England. Local authority treasurers would have asked the Bank of England what sort of organisation BCCI was, given that it had been authorised to take deposits. The Bank of England has issued a long list—the hon. Member for Workington has trailed that list, of which we all have copies—and BCCI is on it.

Local authority members asking whether they should place such a deposit would be confronted with a treasurer who would consider the list as an indication from the Government's banker of organisations that have been examined and with which deposits can be placed. Although one should not put all one's eggs in one basket, and it is not for me to defend the actions of local authorities, the local authorities' public representatives, who are the custodians of local probity—local councillors —were placed in an extremely difficult position.

6.15 pm

Although new clauses 3, 35 and 37 have been linked on the amendment paper, they are not necessarily linked in reality, except in one sense. The Government have caused much of the difficulty. The Prime Minister speaks of a "duty of care" but the real thrust of the difficulties faced by the financial sector and small businesses relates to runaway inflation. The former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), used to say that inflation was a crime and that it was cheating. That is absolutely true. Small businesses are placed in difficulties by other institutions and organisations because of the high rate of inflation and the fact that money falls in value, especially when inflation is high. That is why small businesses often encounter difficulties when they are waiting for payment from those to whom they supply goods and services. Most large companies find that it is to their advantage to delay payment because the value of money 100 or 200 days later is less than it is at the present time. The higher the rate of inflation, the less that value will be. The Government have a responsibility in terms of duty of care.

I represent a Scottish constituency and the Scottish National party and I want to know what the Government's intentions are in relation to their duty of care. Will they rest on the Prime Minister's argument and say that local authorities should know that if a premium is offered on a rate of interest, the risk is higher and that that should have been taken into consideration by the local authority treasurers and others? If so, that does not seem to be a safe case, because a health warning should have appeared on the list issued by the Bank of England.

I recall what auditors have done in some of the institutions with which I have been associated, particularly the Co-operative movement. Without wishing to blame Price Waterhouse for all the difficulties, auditors have dodged their responsibilities. Their responsibilities are not simply to protect the shareholders. They have a wider responsibility, and it is not good enough for Price Waterhouse and other companies simply to say that they were investigating the matter and told people about the results of their investigation. I should imagine that if a local authority treasurer looked at the auditors' docket on any of those institutions, he would find that they had used the common accepted phraseology "a true and fair view". Although I would not go as far as saying that we should have an internal audit within a bank or joint stock company, we should examine the role of auditors further.

Enormous difficulties are involved in monitoring financial institutions because of the international electronic transfer of money. What resources do the Treasury and the Bank of England have to get ahead of the game? My knowledge on this matter is limited to the public print, but there seems to have been an enormous swindle going on for many years. It was deeply hidden within the organisation on an international scale. It is extremely difficult to get ahead of that game unless the House, through the Treasury and the Bank of England, has resources such as international collaboration to keep ahead of the game.

I trust that the Treasury will not simply rest on the Prime Minister's words about a duty of care. Local authority councillors and treasurers will have relied on a view expressed through the Government's publications. Therefore, although I do not expect the Government wholly to indemnify local authorities, I hope that, in consultation with local authorities, they will look at the burden that will be placed on poll tax payers within the local authority concerned if the Government wash their hands of that affair.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I do not want to say too much about the Bank of England now as I have the honour to sit on the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee and I am confident that next week we shall be making some inquiries of the Governor himself. It is easy, off the cuff, to say that it must be someone else's fault—that it must be the fault of the Bank of England. It may well be that the Bank of England will prove to have been somewhat at fault.

However, 20 years ago I had the pleasure of being the chairman of the finance committee of the city of Birmingham council. I followed that by being the chairman of West Midlands county council finance committee. All those years ago, we had rules and regulations. The sums that we had available then would amount to hundreds of millions of pounds today. We had rules about the sort of banks with which the money could be lent and the percentages of money that could be lent. If those rules were sensible then, surely they would be sensible today. To say that the county treasurers and finance directors depended, in all their innocence, on the wicked Governor on the hill in the Bank of England is nonsense because all those treasurers are members of the

[Mr. Beaumont-Dark]

Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, are all qualified public accountants, have all, I hope, been in other jobs before and all know about finance.

I am amazed that speakers in today's debate have used the word "authorised" by the Bank of England as though it were the same word as "guaranteed". It is not in any way. "Authorised" means that the Bank of England or anyone else gives a list; "guaranteed" means that, whatever happens, someone will make a guarantee.

In this country and in America there is a list—the Standard and Poors-Bank rating system—which gives a number of banks. There are two organisations in this country that list banks and their credit worthiness. I am a director and adviser of Touch Remnant, which is only an investment trust, not a great local authority dealing with other people's money. It deals with shareholders' money. At the board meeting every month a list of banks and their credit rating is produced and we discuss whether a million pounds here or there should be lent to such banks.

Are hon. Members trying to tell me that a public official who is paid £60,000 or £70,000 a year should not show the same propriety with public money as other people use with shareholders' money? It is nonsense to talk as though there were some wicked plot. In the case of the Western Isles council, it is either criminal or folly, or both, that someone could lend £23 million—£750 per head of community charge payers' money—to such an irresponsible organisation.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): I take my hon. Friend's point and agree that a number of local authority treasurers may well have made mistakes. I agree that to lend about half the council's total financial resources, as the Western Isles council did, seems to show a high degree of negligence. However, has not my hon. Friend read reports that, apparently, the auditors did not qualify the accounts but insisted only on an amendment to the first note to BCCI accounts, which normally deals with accounting policies and would be the last place anyone would expect to have to pay serious attention to a question mark about the company's financial health? Does not that suggest that there may be something a little wrong, and some treasurers may have been innocently taken in ?

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I rarely come across financial innocence, but I come across incompetence daily. Anyone in his right mind who heard what happened in Florida a few months ago, when Noriega drug money was talked about, who still thinks that a local authority should lend money in that way is incompetent in his job.

I was taught early, as an articled clerk, that one should never borrow long and lend short. That is precisely what some of the highly geared, fringe banks are doing, which is why they get into terrible trouble. Everybody should look not just at the bank balance sheet, but at the quality of the loan book—the rating system is involved when one checks the quality of the loan book.

I shall not say too much about BCCI because that has already been done and I agree with most of the comments. I shall deal with a suggestion that was mentioned last Monday. Many of us know that we cannot expect the ordinary bank depositor, particularly if there is a language problem, totally to understand the system. I am always frightened in foreign banks because I do not speak a foreign language. Many Asian investors and depositors have money in BCCI and under the bank deposit scheme they will get back 75 per cent., up to a maximum of £15,000, of it.

I hope that we can agree that the Government and the Bank of England could pay out money where deposits can be proved. That would help people in crucial difficulty and the money would then come back through the bank deposit scheme. The only loss involved would be the interest on the money—a small sum when set against the amount of suffering that could be caused. Such a scheme might also provide a saving in unemployment benefit. We could help distressed depositors in the short term in such a way without actually bailing them out. We would not be breaking rules or setting precedents, but would save many people a tremendous amount of the tragic suffering which, to my certain knowledge as a Member of Parliament, exists.

Ms. Mowlam: I shall try to be brief and not repeat the comments of many hon. Members, particularly the long list of questions of my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). We look forward to answers from the Economic Secretary to those questions.

Much of today's debate has focused on the nature of systemic risk to the banking system. The Opposition have made it clear that they understand the arguments about systemic risk and getting sufficient information to take a case to the Serious Fraud Office with the legal backing and status to make it stick. We also understand the time needed for the Bank of England to put together a sufficient case. There is no disagreement about that.

However, the Opposition believe that fraud at BCCI was possibly ignored for far too long while the importance of avoiding systemic risk to the system was considered paramount. The Economic Secretary must explain that this evening. It would also be helpful if, when responding, he could clarify a number of issues raised in the press. There has been nowhere else to debate the matter during the past four or five days.

First, can the Price Waterhouse report of March 1990 be made public? It seems that the *Wall Street Journal* has more influence and the American press have better copies of that report than we do on this side of the Atlantic. Secondly, in last Monday's debate the Economic Secretary said that information came to light at the beginning of this year. He referred to a manager in the bank and used the pronoun "she".

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Maples): I saw the record, and it was a mistake. I do not think that I said "she". I certainly did not mean to imply any gender.

Ms. Mowlam: What information was it that that genderless person, or person of doubtful gender, provided in January of this year? The press seemed to suggest that the Price Waterhouse report of March 1990 was a pretty damning indictment of BCCI. If the Economic Secretary could give the House that sort of information tonight, we would then know whether the Bank of England acted with due diligence or was too tardy in its behaviour. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) said, it would be useful to hear about why Ernst and Whinney, now Ernst and Young, switched to Price Waterhouse in 1987-88. That debate between the two big accounting firms has been reported in the press.

The bar protocol of 1983, the international banking settlement, gave the option for a college of regulators to be set up when a banking problem was pan-national. In relation to BCCI, that college was set up in 1987-88. If it was set up in response to the bar protocol of 1983, why did it take so long? If it was not, what was there about BCCI in 1987-88 that led to the setting up of the college of regulators? Such clarification would make a great difference to the debate.

6.30 pm

It would be interesting to know about the keenness of local authorities to get to the bottom of some of the difficulties. As I said in an intervention, the Treasury had a meeting with the committee on local authority borrowing on 10 May this year at the Treasury chambers in Parliament street. The minutes of that meeting show that a representative of the Bank of England, Miss Jean Noble,

"commented that the bank had a statutory duty to step in as soon as depositors' funds appeared to be at risk."

I am sure that the Minister will quibble over the word "appeared". The minutes continued:

"They acted on the behalf of depositors to minimise losses even though it might take time for depositors to get their funds back."

There is therefore a clear commitment by the Treasury that the bank should step in as soon as depositors' fund are at risk. At that meeting local authorities voiced their concern. The Association of British Counties said:

"They worried about the risks for smaller banks' liquidities if local authorities lost confidence in this area of small banking as they switched deposits in larger banks."

We should not blame local authorities if, as a result of the speech by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark), they shift their deposits to mainland banks and cause problems. Local authorities were aware of such problems and asked about them in May.

One issue has not been debated since 5 July. Local authorities, small investors and small businesses had money in BCCI. It is odd to say the least that none of the big clearers had any open exchange trade with BCCI at the time of its closure at 3 pm on 5 July. Why was that? Normally there are open exchange trades of deposits and lending between clearers and secondary banks. There have been no reports of any of the clearers sustaining losses. We can either conclude that the clearers had spoken to the Bank of England some time ago and were well aware of BCCI's problems and were not exposed in the same way as local authorities, or—a more damning indictment, although I am sure that the Minister will clarify the matter—the clearers were tipped off and told to get out by 5 July because there would be a closure and local authorities would be left to stew. I am sure that the Minister will tell us whether some of the clearers got out 18 months ago. If they did, the message that prompted them to do so should have been passed to others in the financial system.

Some Conservative Members spoke about the role of brokers. Does the Treasury intend to look again at the grey code governing brokers and their actions? Is there a need to look at the regulations on brokers or to publish the rates that brokers are paid? It would be useful to know whether the Minister proposes even to look at such matters. A Conservative Member said that auditors should have a duty rather than a right to report fraud or potential fraud. I put that question last week to the Department of Trade and Industry and was told that the Department had no intention of examining the issue.

As hon. Members have said, we are facing a serious banking crisis and some knock-on questions should be examined. Auditing and the question of duty versus right to report fraud is one of them. The other question relates to qualified reports by accountants on companies. The hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) nods. He raised that matter. Price Waterhouse is on record as saying that it could not qualify accounts because the whole system would crack up. Surely it is incumbent on the Treasury or the DTI to say that if qualifying will rock the boat the Government will look at an alternative way to send a signal to local authorities and others about problems with accounts. We either change the system and have another flag, another indicator, or say to Price Waterhouse that it has not acted within the present legislation and is at fault. The Minister cannot have it both ways. Either Price Waterhouse has not done the job properly or the Government's legislation is inadequate.

Hon. Members have spoken about the status of the bank list and the hon. Member for Selly Oak said that Opposition Members are arguing that that list should authorise the deposits of local authorities. Even if the hon. Gentleman had been here for the whole of the debate, he would not have heard one Opposition Member argue for that. Local authorities thought that that list had some meaning. Why should they not? The Department of the Environment sent it to them and it had the Department's imprimatur. I do not suggest that the list guarantees deposits, but it indicates which banks are authorised.

Surely the hon. Member for Selly Oak can see that there was confusion and misunderstanding. Local authorities thought that it meant more than the bank thought it meant. Plainly the bank did not think much of it because by June it had not removed from the list Chancery or Edington, although they were in liquidation or administration. As the right hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North (Sir I. Stewart) said, we should look at that again. We should also look at the quality of the advice that the Bank of England gives to local authorities. We are asking only that the quality of information on the list should be examined.

The right hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North raised an issue that has not been mentioned much in the debate or in the press, although it is crucial for the future, and that is the whole question of Europe. In a year there will be a single passport on banking, and banking systems in other countries may not have even the bare necessities of banking regulations that exist in Britain. The Minister must tell us whether he is prepared to support a push for the levelling of banking regulations throughout Europe so that we are not exposed to the weakest link in the European chain.

We must also examine compensation schemes throughout Europe. We do not say that they should all be the same, but there should be convergence and understanding and the present consolidated supervision directive on compensation throughout Europe, which is in the bowels of the Commission, should be brought to light and politically backed so that when we are in the single market we are not faced with banking problems.

My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) spoke about the compensation scheme. Conservative Members tried to portray us as if we

were saying that people should have 100 per cent. protection and that we would then get into the savings and loan position of the United States Government. Not one Opposition Member argued for that. The least that any of us has asked for is an increase in the investment protection scheme so that in real terms it will be at the 1979 level when the £15,000 maximum was set. That maximum was reintroduced in the Banking Act 1987 and the original maximum was set 12 years ago. Surely that should be index linked in line with inflation. That is asking not for 100 per cent. protection but for a basic improvement in the investment compensation scheme.

Small investors and Asian business people in particular have been exposed to great problems. If the Government are committed to small businesses, the least that they can do for small businesses, which are going to the wall as a result of this banking collapse, is to give them a package. They need more than helplines, which are merely a sign of blowing in the wind. The only sensible part of the speech of the hon. Member for Selly Oak was his call for a package. Such a commitment would mean something to people.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): I was not a member of the Committee that examined the Finance Bill, and I speak as a Member who represents a constituency that has been badly affected by the collapse and the crisis.

I was dismayed by the attitudes shown by Conservative Members, which were exemplified in the speech of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark). Labour Members and local authorities are not denying that mistakes and errors were made and that there were misjudgments, but, despite what the hon. Member for Selly Oak said, it has to be remembered that local authorities and their finance divisions are amateurs in the money markets. I do not know what the finance director in Selly Oak is paid. If it is £70,000, that is not the case in the Western Isles. The only people earning that kind of money of whom I know are those who are supposed to be running the Bank of England and looking after the interests of the depositors.

The professionals dealing with the money markets are the Bank of England regulators, who look after the interests of the public. As my hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) said, brokers who gave advice to local authorities in these matters have some responsibility as well. If it is a matter of surprise and concern that a local authority such as Western Isles placed £23 million in a bank like BCCI, what about the nature of the professional advice received by that local authority, particularly when it now emerges that the local authority expressed to its brokers doubt and concern about the bank? The brokers came all the way to Stornoway to persuade the local authority that BCCI was a legitimate bank and that it was all right to leave the £23 million in the account there.

It is no surprise that people whose day-to-day expertise is that of a director of finance in a local authority have had their fingers burnt in a crisis of this sort. The real surprise, and the cause for concern and dismay, is that the much-vaunted financial professionals in London and in Edinburgh also got their fingers burnt, and that their advice caused local authorities to get their fingers burnt.

There is a contrast between the attitude taken by local authorities in the middle of the crisis and that taken by the regulators, the Government and the brokers involved. In every local authority, there is a searching inquiry as to why things went wrong and money was lost, nowhere more so than in the Western Isles where there has been an honest admission of error, self-criticism and a determination to put things right so that such mistakes are not made again. However, the professional brokers who advised the local authorities have produced nothing but a stone wall of silence. There has been no hint of self-criticism or admission of failure or an apology for the bad advice that they gave. The Bank of England and the Government have exhibited the same stone wall of silence. It is not good enough for the Government and the Bank of England to wash their hands of the matter and to claim that it is up to the local authorities.

The people who will suffer if that attitude is taken will be the only innocents in this affair—the old folk who rely on home services, the children in schools who rely on continuing levels of expenditure to provide them with an adequate education, and poll tax payers. The impact of these losses will fall on their backs unless the Government take a more positive and constructive attitude. Somebody will have to pick up all the bills for this. Either the receivers of local authority services and poll tax payers will pay for all, or the burden will be shared so that the Government and the general public take on some of it. The Government will have no moral or political credit if they continue stonewalling in the way shown by the Prime Minister last Tuesday and Thursday and by Ministers today.

6.45 pm

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): There are several categories of losers from the BCCI collapse, and I believe that this debate has not sufficiently distinguished between them. One of the big losers is the Sheikh of Abu Dhabi. I have read that his father was accustomed to keeping his money in a suitcase under the bed. The present sheikh may wish that he had stuck to that. Another category is local authorities. I do not intend to repeat all that has been said about them, but I shall point out that the finance department of one local authority had the presence of mind, the expertise and the skill to withdraw its money from BCCI—that of the London borough of Lambeth. That borough is much maligned in the Chamber, so I am glad to put that fact on record.

A third category of loser is distinct from the first two categories. It encompasses ordinary small business men and depositors, notably Asian business men and shopkeepers. Conservative Members and those speaking from the Treasury Bench have adopted a sneering tone towards the depositors in BCCI. The hon. Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) said that anybody who had put his money into BCCI would need his head examined, and that everybody knew about BCCI. But how were ordinary shopkeepers in Southall, Bradford, east London and Glasgow supposed to know the gossip at City cocktail parties?

Furthermore, those people banked with BCCI not because they wanted a greater return but because BCCI, literally and figuratively, spoke their language. They received what they saw as a more welcoming and supportive service than that offered by the main clearing banks. It was not greed that led Asian small business men to bank with BCCI but the fact that they found it a supportive and understanding environment. Those shopkeepers do not go to the same cocktail parties as the

Economic Secretary or the hon. Member for Chichester. They were in the hands of the supervisory and regulatory authorities. And there is a growing suspicion among commentators and amongst Labour Members that those authorities failed this category of loser.

We have read in the newspapers today that, before this wave of Bank of England and Price Waterhouse investigations, United States regulators had complained about the Bank of England's reluctance to co-operate in investigations on BCCI. Last week, the Economic Secretary said that the Bank of England could not be expected to act on rumour. It cannot be stressed enough that BCCI's problems were not rumours. In 1988, it was indicted in the US for laundering drug money. It was indicted for fraudulently acquiring a US bank. There were well-documented connections with Noriega. Furthermore, as my colleagues have pointed out, Ernst and Young, the bank's former auditors, voluntarily gave up a huge account. As my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) wondered, did the Bank of England ask why Ernst and Young chose to give up BCCI?

This scandal raises a number of questions, and it is as well to put them on record again. One involves the role of the auditor. Several hon. Members have suggested that, in future, the auditor should have not just the right but the duty to point to fraud. There are questions about the role of the Bank of England and about the powers of the Serious Fraud Office, which can act only on referrals. There have also been questions about the deposit protection scheme and suggestions that it should be raised in line with inflation. Thousands of ordinary, hard-working Asian people throughout the country with small businesses put their trust in BCCI. They believed that if the bank had the support of the Bank of England it was safe to do so. These people have contributed greatly to our economy in extremely difficult times. We believe that they deserve more from the Government than an assumption that they should have known about City gossip.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): As the House will know, Wigan metropolitan borough council has been caught up in the demise of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International. Many Conservative Members represent banking, but they seem not to realise the damage that banking can inflict on local authorities by making short-term political attacks upon them. In this instance the local authorities do not, in the main, represent the political party with which banking is associated.

Last year, Wigan metropolitan borough council handled over £400 million, and it will probably handle even more than that this year. The only money that it will lose this year will be what it invested in BCCI, having taken the advice of brokers in the City and the advice contained in circulars submitted to local authorities by the Department of the Environment. Local authority treasurers act with professional integrity and give proper advice to councillors, but on this occasion they have found themselves misled and misinformed.

Only one class of person had the opportunity in the City to receive a nod and a wink or advice in advance about the position of BCCI. Local authorities, people with small businesses and other ordinary depositors are the innocent victims. Conservative Members argue that individuals have a duty of care and must be mindful of that responsibility. In terms of reasonable action, there is the individual depositor and the local authority treasurer who places moneys in a bank. Do Conservative Members suggest that if a marginally higher rate of interest is paid there must be additional risk? Why is it that every night on television the big four banks and building societies are advertising marginal increases in interest rates to encourage depositors to place their money with them? Is it suggested that anyone who deposits with the big four banks and building societies is running a risk?

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McCartney: I think that the hon. Gentleman has been downstairs somewhere looking at his deposits. I shall not give way to him. I normally allow others to intervene in my speeches, but I shall not give way to someone who has come into the Chamber at the tail end of the debate to cat-call hon. Members who are speaking on behalf of their constituents.

Surely it is not being suggested that a marginal increase in the rate of return is a sign that a deposit is less safe than it would be with any of the other 499 banks on the list submitted by the Bank of England. If the list that was prepared by the Treasury and the Bank of England and submitted to local authorities on 28 June was meaningless, why was it ever issued? Why was it not issued along with a letter from the Department of the Environment asking local authority treasurers to set out by return of post the investments made in the previous quarter with the banks on the list? Such a request would show that the Department of the Environment and the Treasury regularly seek information that is based on the banks on the list that is sent to local authorities. It would be reasonable for local authority treasurers to take the view that, on that basis, the risk of placing a deposit with a bank on the list would be minimal.

We are not talking about share speculation, when a share can increase in value or lose value. We are talking about individuals making deposits in a bank that was recognised by the Bank of England as one that was operating effectively, though we know now that it was not. As far back as 1987, shortly after the publication of the Banking Act 1987—section 12 is especially relevant—advice was being given to the Bank of England that showed that the BCCI was operating in a fraudulent manner, or that that could be so. Ernst and Young decided to stop acting for the bank. It decided that it would forgo £2 million a year because it was not prepared to continue with the cover-up of the bank's activities. In March 1990, Price Waterhouse suggested clearly to the Bank of England that there was serious fraud taking place within BCCI. It believed that in the circumstances it was unable to make such a statement in its report.

Individual depositors, local authorities and even finance directors of large private companies have to rely on information that is gained in the public domain when it comes to making deposits. Since 1987, the Bank of England has deliberately conspired to ensure that information that should properly be available in the public domain would not be disclosed. As my hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) said, that was done to protect the secondary banking system.

New clause 37, in the names of my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and others, provides an opportunity to protect the banking system from a bank or a group of banks when information

[Mr. McCartney]

that is made available in an investigation is found to be incorrect. The new clause would also provide protection for depositors, be they institutional depositors such as local authorities or individuals, such as people running small businesses. If the relevant information is available at an early stage, logical decisions will be made about deposits and the Bank of England will be able to step in to protect depositors.

At the end of the day, the Bank of England is the regulator, and it must be an effective one. Instead, we have seen a failure of regulation. Individuals, many of whom deposited hundreds of thousands of pounds, which was hard earned, have not been protected. As a result, they have seen their businesses fail and their lives have been ruined. Local authorities' trust in the banking system has been undermined. The Government must not underestimate the capacity of institutional depositors, such as local authorities, to remove their deposits from other areas of the secondary banking system, particularly when they are being vilified constantly by Conservative Back-Bench Members. Their integrity is being attacked as their banking practices are criticised.

If the attacks continue, there could be an immediate political response. Institutions could withdraw substantial funds from the secondary banking system, causing further problems for banking and the City. Surely Conservative Back-Bench Members are acting irresponsibly in what is already a crisis. They are making attacks on local authorities in the short term which in the long term will undermine the banking system and the way in which it is operated.

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): The hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) has been highly critical of the behaviour of local authority treasurers. Does my hon. Friend agree that under current regulations and legislation local authority treasurers have a duty to maximise the amount of money that is at their disposal? That applies especially to the Wigan authority, which is poll tax capped. It cannot raise any extra money because it is capped, so the borough treasurer, under the relevant reguations, has to maximise the amount of money that is at his disposal. That is precisely what he was doing when he invested in BCCI.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: It is not true.

7 pm

Mr. McCartney: Will my hon. Friend let me answer the hon. Gentleman who is heckling from a sedentary position? Perhaps he is on your deaf side, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

My hon. Friend said that local authorities have a duty to maximise their funds, and in 1990 the Government introduced capital finance regulations to ensure that that happened. At that time, my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition prayed against the regulations in order to allow the Opposition an opportunity to question the Government about their scope and effect and about whether the list of institutions issued on a quarterly basis by the Bank of England had some validity. However, the Government did not allow a debate and the regulations were put into effect without being publicly scrutinised, thus preventing the Opposition from questioning directly the consequences and practical effects of regulations which are now operated by local authorities, irrespective of their political colour.

I shall be brief, because many hon. Members may wish to make further contributions to the debate. If the Minister does not respond today, the Government need to respond at the highest level before the House rises for the summer recess. It would be intolerable—if not negligent—if the House did not consider further Government proposals between now and the summer recess but left over the summer not only local authorities, which will cope one way or another, but individuals who are affected by the banking collapse with no idea of what is happening. It will be intolerable if people have no idea whether there will be an investigation, why the failure occurred, no idea of the Government's position or of the decisions taken by the Bank of England and no idea whether the Government are prepared to mount a rescue operation such as that following the Barlow Clowes affair or to accept the necessity of protecting small business people for the sake of jobs and of the long-term future of communities and of protecting individuals who have other forms of deposit with BCCI, including deposits relating to their private dwellings. It is absolutely essential that those people are not left to sit—as it were—sweating until the House resumes in the autumn or until there is a general election and a change of Government—the new Government would never allow such a situation to arise.

Finally, those who are interested in protecting the integrity of the City of London or the banking institutions should look not to Tory bankers, but to the Opposition.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The collapse of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International has raised a number of awkward questions, not least that raised by the Economic Secretary to the Treasury who is now lounging on the Front Bench. If a bank is registered within the Common Market, it apparently has immunity to establish itself in any other member state and to rip off its customers. I do not agree with that and I suspect that many other people would be critical of such a view. It has raised some serious questions about the position of banks within the Common Market and, because of the greater integration proposed by the Government and the move towards 1992, something should be done quickly before it gets worse.

The list issued by the Department of the Environment has been mentioned several times, and rightly so. There is no point in the Department of the Environment sending out a list to seek information about how local authorities are investing their money unless some credibility is given to that list. Although the information was provided by the Bank of England, the list of approved institutions sent out by the Department of the Environment must have carried some weight with local authorities. Moreover, two banks on that list were in grave financial difficulties—and were known to be so—and were near liquidation, and yet they were incorporated in the Department of the Environment's list. There is a legitimate argument for saying that the Government should make a contribution to the local authorities that have been affected since they invested in BCCI because the Government implied that it was safe to invest in that institution. It was merely an indication, but the Government cannot escape the fact that if they issue a list of institutions, it is likely that those

institutions will be taken to be sound in wind and limb. The Government are at fault as far as local authorities are concerned.

I support new clause 37 because many people affected by the collapse are not professional investors. They are small business men and business women who are absorbed in the operation of their company, which arises as a matter of course in small businesses because the managing director is also the major shareholder, or the sole proprietor is also the marketing manager, the planner, the designer and the production engineer all rolled into one. Such people cannot be expected also to be financial experts. The provisions thrown up by the liquidation facilities to protect depositors are inadequate.

A Conservative Member said that it was not for us to pick up the pieces and that people must make their own way. That is arrant nonsense because the community as a whole picks up the pieces. If small businesses or medium-sized businesses—and I use the term "small businesses" in the sense of the Bolton committee report to mean companies employing up to 200 people—go into liquidation because of the collapse of the bank, the community as a whole picks up the pieces through unemployment benefit, income support and other benefits provided by the nation. The community will be called upon to save from abject poverty the people who are thrown out of work. It will not be good on the dole but at least it will not mean abject poverty. Why do not the Government consider whether they can save some of the small businesses and prevent them from going into liquidation by providing better protection for them and for small deposit holders? I am not suggesting a blanket indemnity—I am stating merely that if a lot of businesses go to the wall, the Government will have to provide support through unemployment benefit.

Another issue is what the Bank of England did. It is amazing that the people on telephone number salaries—such as the Governor of the Bank of England who recently received a 17 per cent. increase—never bear the responsibility when something goes wrong. That is certainly true in this case. Under the front page heading "CIA challenged on BCCI role", the *Financial Times* makes it clear that the information received from the United States Federal Reserve and the Bank of England about BCCI had been singularly lacking. It states:

"Mr. von Raab's complaints about official stonewalling have been echoed"—

Mr. von Raab is a former United States commissioner of customs—

"by Mr. Robert Morgenthau, the New York district attorney who for several months has vented his frustration at the lack of co-operation he has received from the US Federal Reserve and the Bank of England."

Why is that so? Why did not the Bank of England co-operate with the United States authorities to ensure proper and adequate scrutiny and information? Was it because the Bank of England wanted to keep the bank alive and dared not provide the information in case the United States authorities pulled the plug in view of the Bank of England's inactivity and in case it was exposed as being less than zealous in the performance of its duties?

Mr. Barry Porter *rose*——

Mr. Cryer: I will not give way, because I am sure that everyone wants to hear the Minister's detailed replies to all the points that have been made.

Curiously enough, it appears from a story on the front page of the *Financial Times* that there has been a degree of fraud even at one of the joint stock banks. Under the headline,

"Midland operated secret defence offshoot",

is this report:

"A trade finance arm of the Midland Bank, one of whose subsidiaries had secret links with Britain's security services, incurred losses of at least £75 million over the past decade. The losses arose in part from undisclosed fraud at one of the trade offshoot's customers."

It seems that fraud is to be found not only in the secondary bank system, but the Midland. Sir Kit McMahon's reign as chairman of the Midland bank was not exactly distinguished, and apparently he did not know of the existence of that subsidiary. Nevertheless, he left the bank with telephone number compensation. He was described as a marvellous banker, but they still got rid of him. The same has happened with other people—such as the former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher). The Government put their faith in the Bank of England, but it seems slow and unwieldy, and failed to take action for far too long.

In the case of BCCI's collapse, which affected thousands of people, the Government and the Bank of England were apparently taken by surprise, while auditors turned a blind eye. However, when it was suggested that two trade union officials were not handling comparatively paltry sums of money absolutely properly, there was an outcry. The Government told the certification officer to prosecute Arthur Scargill and Pete Heathfield and to leave no stone unturned. However, they were vindicated on every charge.

There is a stark contrast between the way that National Union of Mineworkers' officials were dragged through court after court, largely at the Government's instigation, and the attitude taken towards BCCI—where fraud was known of by Ministers, Government officials, the Bank of England, and Price Waterhouse. The fear was that if someone made a statement, the whole thing would collapse like a pack of cards. That is why there was so much inactivity for so long.

The Government must take some responsibility for that mess, and it is time that they exercised it in respect of small depositors, small businesses, and local authorities that took the Government's implicit advice. The lesson for anyone is, never trust a single word that the Government say.

Mr. Maples: We are all concerned about the stories we have heard in our own constituencies of the somewhat high-handed and insensitive way—to say the least—that many banks have treated their small business customers. As a result, the Treasury and the banks undertook a study. We are finalising our conclusions. That has taken time, but we expect to make a statement soon. I cannot say now what those conclusions are, but we have found no evidence of collusion, or any suggestion that the major banks are conspiring with one another to treat small businesses in the same way. Certainly most businesses received the 3·5 per cent. cut in the base rate up to last Friday.

7.15 pm

Although there have been many complaints, when one remembers that the banks have 4 million small business customers—about half of which are in credit, and half in debit—they still represent a small overall percentage. Nevertheless, there is clear evidence that some customers

have been treated insensitively, and perhaps even outside the terms of their contractual arrangements with their banks. We will address that problem in any recommendations that we make.

We also found in some instances that what the banks told us was that their policy has not necessarily translated into action at branch level. However, there is a fair amount of competition, and customers can move their accounts. I appreciate that at present, in the middle of a recession, it is probably impossible for a firm to move if it owes money to its bank. However, when that time ends, banks which treated their customers in a high-handed way will suffer for it. One must remember also that the relationship is the subject of a commercial agreement between banks and their small customers.

Mr. McCartney: Is the Government's intervention an indication that the banking ombudsman scheme is a farce and a failure, and has done nothing to protect individual depositors with complaints about their banks or individual branches?

Mr. Maples: As the hon. Gentleman may know, the recent Jack report recommended a code of conduct, and I will deal with that in the context of new clause 35.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): The Economic Secretary said that central bank policy may not have filtered down to branch level, but that is the very level at which businesses and individuals transact their borrowing. It is at that level that businesses and individuals suffer, if not malpractice, then unfair practices that penalise their interests. What explanation did the banks give in that regard? Why did they allow that breakdown in communications to affect their customers so badly?

Mr. Maples: If that is the impression that the hon. Gentleman gained, I could not have expressed myself very well. I meant to convey the information that we did not always find that that which head offices told us was their policy was happening on the ground. In some cases, activity at branch level did not accord with what the head office thought was happening or intended to happen. We shall draw such instances to the attention of the banks concerned.

New clause 3 would impose huge administrative burdens on banks, for little discernible benefit. Those burdens would inevitably be reflected in higher costs, which would have knock-on effects for the banks.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Maples: I have listened to the debate for three and a half hours. If I am not allowed to respond without an intervention every 45 seconds, we will be here for a very long time. The hon. Gentleman made an extremely long speech.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am sorry to press the Economic Secretary, but could it be that the targets set for bank managers are such that the only way that they can be met is by ignoring the advice given by their central offices?

Mr. Maples: It is for the banks concerned to diagnose the causes and decide what to do.

New clause 3 would impose expensive burdens on banks, and there is a likelihood that the added administrative burden of handling loans at higher interest rates might make banks unwilling to lend on riskier projects, which often involve small companies. Where information is needed, it can readily be gathered by the Government, and I hope that, on reflection, and in view of my following comments on the Jack report, the House will agree that it is not necessary to pursue that clause.

New clause 34 seeks an inquiry into competition. As I said, we have found no evidence of anti-competitive practices. However, as one of his duties, the Director General of Fair Trading constantly keeps an eye out for anti-competitive practices and behaviour. If he were to find any, I am sure that he would act. In the absence of convincing evidence, to undertake a study of the kind proposed would involve unnecessary time and expense. Again, I hope it is felt that enough is being done not to require a statutory inquiry into competition.

I have some sympathy with new clause 35 and the suggestion that bank charges should be more transparent. As the House knows, the Jack report recommended a code of conduct. The banks have published a draft, and expressed willingness to institute a code of conduct.

The banks are thinking again, and are talking constructively to consumer bodies. Although no timetable has been established, we regard the matter as important. If a satisfactory voluntary code is not forthcoming, we shall seriously consider implementing a statutory code: we feel that people are entitled to know how interest and bank charges are calculated.

I hope that those who tabled the new clauses will decide that enough is already being done to make it unnecessary to press them. Several of my hon. Friends spoke about new businesses. I hope that they, and Opposition Members, will forgive me if I do not deal with every point that was raised. I shall try to deal with most of them, but hon. members should let me know if they feel that I have left out anything about small businesses.

I think that the purpose of tabling new clause 37 was to institute a debate about bank regulation and BCCI. The BCCI fraud was complex and sophisticated, and took place within a group that operated in some 65 countries. Several companies sought to arrange the bank's affairs in a way that made it difficult to regulate. For a long time it had two auditors, and the arrangement was difficult to police. All that made the fraud easier to perpetuate than it would have been had the operation been limited to one country. It is not surprising that the auditors were fooled, and that it took a long time to discover the fraud.

We are not discussing whether a banking licence should have been granted. Under the legislation of the 1970s, the bankers were entitled to come to this country and open branches. We are discussing whether the licence should have been revoked earlier. As several of my hon. Friends have pointed out, the position is very difficult. We—or, at least, the Bank of England—should, apparently, have acted earlier; we are being criticised by many Opposition Members for not having done so. According to others, however—given that a restructuring arrangement was being negotiated, and given that the major shareholder had indicated a willingness to invest additional funds—the problems might have been sorted out if the situation had been allowed to continue for longer.

In such circumstances, we always hear the same conflicting arguments. If, however, the Bank of England goes to the extent of revoking a banking licence and applying for a liquidation order against a company, it effectively puts that company out of business. Once the step has been taken, the company cannot possibly be put

back on its feet. When they are in liquidation, a bank's assets nearly always turn out to be worth less than they are worth on paper. It is therefore difficult for a bank in such a position to be solvent. Action can be taken only when it is certain that the bank is insolvent, and there must be hard evidence, because the bank has the right to appeal against the Bank of England's decision. If its licence is revoked, it can appeal to a banking appellate body, and it has the right to a court hearing in respect of a liquidation order. The Bank of England has made it clear that it is satisfied that it acted as soon as it felt that it had the necessary evidence.

Mr. Sheldon: Why was the bank authorised to be covered by the Bank of England in the first place? During the passage of the Banking Act 1979, we were given specific assurances that nobody would be given such authorisation unless it was composed of fit and proper people—and these were certainly not fit and proper people. A further obligation was imposed: that of continuing supervision. Neither of those requirements was met in this instance.

The Minister said that problems would arise once it was known that a bank was acting fraudulently. But the position could have been dealt with much earlier. Why was it not?

Mr. Maples: The right hon. Gentleman says that there has been inadequate supervision. According to him, the failure of a bank may be a definition of inadequate supervision, but he could not possibly know what the Bank of England has been doing since 1974, or whenever BCCI set up in this country.

When the bank set up here, it did not need any authorisation. It had been authorised in another European country, and was entitled to establish branches here in the mid-1970s. Under the Banking Act 1979 its licence could have been revoked, but I have already mentioned the difficulties involved in providing the necessary evidence. I have heard no one suggest that there was any evidence at the time of the problems that have now come to light. Under the Banking Act 1987, the bank was "grandfathered", and, as a bank that was already in existence, it was entitled to continue in existence. I do not believe that the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) can have any evidence that the Bank of England has failed in its supervision.

Hon. Members have asked why no action was taken earlier. None of the earlier rumours, and none of the work that was done, brought any fraud to light; all that we were told was that the bank had made losses.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Maples: I cannot take an intervention in the middle of replying to an intervention from the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne.

All the questions that were raised at that earlier stage concerned whether the bank had adequate financial controls, whether it had bad loans, and the fact that it had made losses. It was felt that the losses endangered the bank's liquidity and its equity base. In every case, the shareholders injected further funds to deal with the problems. The Price Waterhouse investigation, whose findings were given to the Bank of England on 27 June, provided the first evidence of fraud. It was on that evidence that the Bank of England acted. It could not have acted on rumours, or on the basis that the bank was inadequately capitalised and that, whenever losses were made, additional capital was injected.

Mr. Davies *rose*——

Mr. Maples: I will give way, but I am afraid that this cannot go on. I am not getting around to answering any of the points that have been raised.

Mr. Davies: I am grateful. I do not know whether I should admit it, but I was the Minister responsible for the Banking Act 1979. Does not the Economic Secretary agree that, under that Act, the Bank of England had greater and better powers to police institutions such as BCCI than were conferred by the Act that followed it, which the present Government invoked to repeal the 1979 Act?

Mr. Maples: No, I do not agree. When the 1987 legislation was going through the House, every hon. Member agreed that it gave the Bank of England greater powers and tightened up the regime. I am not criticising the 1979 Act, which was a considerable step forward; indeed, I gave way to the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) because I knew that he had been a Treasury Minister at the time. The only difference of which I am aware is that, under that Act, the banks were not automatically "grandfathered", and the Bank of England was able to remove licences more easily than it could have done under the 1987 Act. Revoking licences involves problems, however, in relation both to obtaining evidence and to the consequences of such action.

Many people seem to think that the Government, or the Bank of England, can provide a guarantee. I am not ascribing that view to any specific Member, but some of the comments, especially those about local authorities, suggested that the Government or the Bank of England could guarantee that a bank would never go broke. It must be clear to the hon. Members for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) that that is not the case.

If it is accepted that a bank can fail, it must be accepted that people must bear the costs of that failure. The alternative is for the Government or the Bank of England to step into the breach and pay all the money—which is exactly the same as guaranteeing that the bank could not be insolvent, or go into liquidation, in the first place. If we accept that it can, and that it is not reasonable to expect public funds to guarantee every liability of every bank, we must also accept that the creditors must bear some of the costs.

Because that would have harsh consequences, successive Governments have introduced deposit protection schemes. The limit under the 1979 Act was £10,000, not £20,000; it was raised in 1987, partly as a result of overtures from Opposition Members, although the Government readily agreed to the move. Some could argue that the limit was too high, although others argue that it was too low. It could be said that a moral hazard must be created, and that the aim was to protect small depositors who could not be expected to be aware of the position. I believe that 75 per cent. of £20,000 is a reasonable scheme. We have no intention of making proposals to raise or change that sum. I am afraid that it is important that such a hazard is involved in doing business with banks.

7.30 pm

As several hon. Members have explained, there is a risk-reward ratio in dealing with investments. If the Government were effectively to underwrite a far greater percentage, or if we had an American system whereby the first $100,000 in an account was underwritten by the Government, people would place their money with the institution offering the highest rate of return knowing that it was guaranteed by the Government. The Government would not be allowing the market to create any distinction between banks running their affairs conservatively and well and those running their affairs irresponsibly and taking greater risks.

It has been said that the deposit protection scheme could be more generous. I have now explained the consequences of that. In my statement last Monday, I was asked whether we should have a scheme like the American scheme and I have tried to explain how that could create problems in the United States which we would not want to repeat here.

Other hon. Members suggested that the Government should be responsible for standing behind local authorities. We cannot be. Others asked whether the scheme should be made more generous, and I have tried to explain why it cannot be. We should all realise that the collapse of any bank, particularly one with as many customers as BCCI, is clearly a tragedy for the customers, for the businesses doing business with them, for the depositors and for those who borrowed money, because I suspect that they will be called upon to repay it sooner than they expected.

The deposit protection scheme will be activated as soon as is conceivably possible. The Bank of England is taking steps with the full co-operation of the liquidators to compile lists of depositors and their addresses even in advance of the liquidation order. The bank has an accelerated hearing for the liquidation order; it will now be heard on Monday 22 July. That is about as soon as it could conceivably have been heard. If it is granted—and I have no reason to suspect that it will not be granted, but it is a court order that is being sought—letters and claim forms will be sent to depositors as soon as possible. It should therefore be possible to pay the vast majority of depositors extremely quickly. I cannot give a timetable because we do not know how many people are involved. It may amount to 100,000. Clearly there is a logistical problem in processing 100,000 applications.

Ms. Abbott: Will the Economic Secretary give way?

Mr. Maples: This is an important point. If the hon. Lady will allow me to deal with it, I will give way later.

I have made it clear to the Bank of England that the utmost priority should be given to dealing with the claims as soon as possible and that the bank should have the necessary temporary staff to deal with the applications. I am confident that the bank will do that, and I will stay in touch with the operation to ensure that everything is being done as fast and as efficiently as possible. However one looks at it, it will be difficult to process 100,000 applications and it will take a little time.

There will also be some difficult cases. The vast majority of the cases will be simple. People will have one account at one branch, that person's identity will be clear, that person will not have other borrowings or dealings with the bank and the account will not be held in trust for someone else. That kind of person can be dealt with quickly. As we found with the British Commonwealth merchant bank case, in other cases there will be complications. We do not expect more than a minority of the depositors to be involved in such cases, but there will have to be investigations in some cases.

With regard to small businesses, I outlined on Monday a scheme which the Bank of England was trying to establish. Considerable progress has been made with that and at least one clearing bank has nominated several of its branches specifically to help former customers of BCCI, to deal with their applications, to process with the liquidator the status of accounts, how they had been run and whether it is possible to release security. The best way to deal with the problem is to arrange for other banks to step into the breach. So far as I am aware, the attitude of the other big clearing banks is positive. Undoubtedly some extremely good businesses banked with BCCI and they offer good business opportunities for the other banks. As I have said, the Bank of England is actively helping to establish those arrangements.

Ms. Abbott: The Economic Secretary has spent considerable time answering arguments that Opposition Members have not put to him. Does he have any intention of answering our specific questions, particularly about the auditors? Why is the 1990 Price Waterhouse report not to be published? Did the Bank of England ask Ernst and Young why it gave up the lucrative BCCI account of its own volition?

Mr. Maples: If the hon. Lady would allow me to make my speech in my own way, she will discover that I have a raft of answers for the points that were raised. If I may say so, the hon. Lady made an intemperate intervention. Most of the points that I have answered were raised, if not in this debate today, then in the newspapers. There was considerable discussion on the Opposition Benches about whether the deposit protection scheme was adequate and whether the Government should stand behind local authorities.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): Will my hon. Friend acknowledge that there will be a widespread welcome in the country for the restatement of the Government's resolve not to bail out BCCI's creditors in any other way than is already provided for by statute? Does he accept that local authorities, such as Lichfield district council, which have been prudent and have forgone the extra one eighth of 1 per cent. in order to ensure that they are investing in proper institutions understand that if the Government were to follow the Opposition's advice that would simply encourage imprudence on a wide scale and penalise the authorities that have looked after their charge payers' money?

Mr. Maples: I agree with my hon. Friend. I tried to make that point earlier.

I want now to deal with some of the specific points that were raised. The compensation scheme under the Financial Services Act 1986 is more generous because, in general, ordinary investors tend to have larger sums invested in unit trusts, investment trusts or pension funds than in bank deposits. Paying a percentage of £20,000 is probably the right way to deal with bank deposits with its slightly more generous scheme for investors.

I was asked about the 1990 Price Waterhouse report. I understand that there have been a number of reports in recent years relating to the financial condition of BCCI. The response to those reports was a need for additional capital, usually at the prompting of the supervisory authorities, and that capital was always forthcoming and the bank was always adequately capitalised. At least, when a request for additional capital was made, it was forthcoming. Those previous reports related to financial controls, bad debt, and the bank's operating losses. They stated that in all cases the problems could be corrected through the bank being adequately capitalised and additional capital was forthcoming.

None of the earlier reports contained evidence of fraud or other wrongdoing of the kind that prompted the action which the regulators took earlier this month. That was the first occasion when there was hard evidence on which the Bank of England could act.

Mr. McCartney: What about the soft evidence?

Mr. Maples: I explained earlier the need for hard evidence. If there is no hard evidence, the Bank of England would lose the case on appeal and would essentially have ruined the bank because it would not be able to continue to operate.

Mr. Wallace: The Economic Secretary has been very good at giving way. I understand what he said about hard evidence and the difficulties about rumours of fraud. However, how did the Bank of England react to the guilty plea in the American courts in connection with serious charges involving drug trafficking? When the matter was raised in another place, we could get no answers from Ministers.

Mr. Maples: I dealt with that issue last Monday. The bank pleaded guilty in the United States because in America companies can be vicariously liable for the criminal acts of their employees. It was thought at the time —it may be true, and I do not know that any evidence to the contrary has since come to light—that those activities were confined to the Tampa branch of the bank and that the people concerned were not associated with the senior management of the bank in London. There was no evidence of fraud. There was evidence of illegal activities in laundering drug money, but there was not evidence of what has given rise to the revocation of the bank's licence, namely, that the bank was being systematically defrauded of funds by its senior executives. No evidence of that was contained in those matters in the United States.

I was asked some specific questions by the hon. Members for Workington and for Redcar. Mortgagees have a liability to continue to pay, but they will be entitled to have their property back once the deed has been paid off. They are simply debtors of the bank, and part of the liquidators' task will be to collect the assets of the bank —of which mortgages will be one.

I was asked why Ernst and Whinney gave up the audit. I do not know and I cannot speculate about that. I know that the regulators in various countries wanted one company—in this case Price Waterhouse—to take on the whole audit. They were worried that there were two separate auditors—a situation that was deliberately created and perpetuated by the bank itself. The fact that there were two separate auditors must have made it far easier to conceal the frauds because money could be moved from one section of the group to another when an audit or inspection was taking place.

I was asked about the insurance company CCL. I am told that, although BCCI acted as one of the company's principal bankers and as one of its appointed representatives for the sale of life policies, CCL held no shares in BCCI and is not a subsidiary of BCCI. I cannot give the hon. Member for Workington any further information about the connection. Neither is a subsidiary of or a shareholder in the other. The regulation of insurance companies is a matter for the Department of Trade and Industry, which is fully aware of all that we know about the problems surrounding the bank and is looking into the matter. As the hon. Gentleman knows, under the Policyholders Protection Act 1975, policyholders would get compensation up to a high level of any liabilities of a failed insurance company. There is no evidence that it will be necessary to invoke that Act.

I was asked why Chancery and Edington remained on the list. Whether that was unfortunate and misled anyone or not, there was no way in which either bank could have taken deposits. Both were in administration at the time and had had their licences suspended. I understand that they were not removed from the list because their licences had not been cancelled and, at some stage in the future, they could have been reauthorised or had their licences reactivated. That could not have endangered any depositor's money because the banks could not have taken deposits at that stage.

It was a most peculiar suggestion and I cannot understand why I was asked whether the Foreign Office tried to stop the Bank of England launching a section 41 inquiry earlier. I am told that the answer is categorically no. I was asked about the investigation of money brokers and their commissions.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The Pakistani insurers.

Mr. Maples: I do not know the answer to whether the insurers of the bank's liabilities are active. The liquidators will look into that. If those insurers are active, that will be a source of some protection for the depositors. I am afraid that I have no knowledge of that.

The hon. Gentleman raised the question of the money brokers. Money broking is a deregulated area of the market, so people are entitled to negotiate their own commissions. If money brokers pushed depositors, especially local authorities, towards the bank because they were being paid over-the-odds commissions and were not disclosing that to the local authorities, and if the local authorities had reason to think of the money brokers as their advisers, local authorities may have some recourse against their money brokers. I do not know. I am, on the whole, in favour of the disclosure of commissions. That makes for a much cleaner market and cleaner arrangements between people. However, local authorities could have asked the money brokers to disclose their commissions. If they had refused to do so, the local authorities would have had some cause for complaint.

I was asked about the college of regulators. It was not really set up under the formal Basle procedure. It was the first example of an international college of regulators being put together, and it was put together by the Bank of England. Whether it could have been put together earlier or whether it could have waited slightly longer are difficult

[Mr. Maples]

questions. I do not know the answer. The bank would say that it was put together as soon as it thought that it was appropriate to do so.

I have dealt with most of the points that were raised in debate. If any hon. Member feels that there are points with which I have not dealt——

Ms. Mowlam: The Minister did not answer one important point. When the bank was closed on 5 July, the local authorities were in and the small investors were in. However, there seems to be no sign that the clearers had any exchange trading going on. Why did the clearers seemingly not get caught too?

7.45 pm

Mr. Maples: It has been commented that anybody would realise that people paying slightly over the odds were incurring a higher risk. The other clearers may have been a more sophisticated group of counter parties. The premise of the hon. Lady's question is not necessarily true. It is not the case that there were no outstanding transactions with the clearers. There must have been many outstanding transactions in the market because the bank was closed in the middle of the day. Some of the clearers may have been on the other end of the transactions. It is clear that people could assess the risks of dealing with different counter parties. I know that large banks and large financial institutions, as my hon. Friend said, have rules about the exposure that they may have to particular institutions. I expect that their permitted exposure to BCCI was fairly small.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The Minister said that he would answer all outstanding questions. May I remind him of what they were? We asked him about the £2·3 billion offered to the bank by Ghanem Al Mazrui from Abu Dhabi in the hours immediately before the closure. Is that correct? We also asked about the £375 million which was sent to the bank by Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan al-Nahayan two weeks before the closure of the bank. We also asked about—[HON. MEMBERS: "Come on."] These are very important matters. The Minister asked us to set out our position. I also asked about the distinction being drawn by Westminster city council between lending and deposit making. I asked about the statement made by Ian Brindle of Price Waterhouse. He said that Price Waterhouse repeatedly informed the Bank of England of irregularities.

Mr. Maples: I have already dealt with the question of irregularities. I said that they were all related to loan losses, lack of financial controls, and the need for additional equity capital which was injected on every occasion on which it was required. The first hard evidence of fraud emerged in the Price Waterhouse inquiry, the report of which was delivered to the Bank of England on 27 June.

In my own mind, I am aware of no distinction between lending to a bank and making a deposit with it. I do not know what the treasurer of Westminster city council had in mind. I am responsible for many things, but not for what he says.

There were certainly additional injections of equity capital. I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman's figures are right. There were several occasions on which additional injections of capital were requested and made. It is not for me to comment on what the shareholders might have done if the restructuring had gone ahead. Additional injections of capital might have been made. However, the evidence of fraud was so pervasive and involved the senior management of the bank to such an extent that the regulators came to the conclusion that there was no way in which the management could be allowed to operate, whether additional capital was injected or not.

If there are points with which hon. Members think I have not dealt, I hope that they will write to me and I will seek to answer them. In the circumstances, I hope that they will feel that at this stage it is not in the interests of banking regulation to pass new clause 37.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): This has been a good debate, although it is a pity that the response from the Economic Secretary was so very inadequate. He gave few answers to the many Opposition questions. It is clear from the response of Conservative Members to those answers that they are only too anxious to mull over them in the course of a good supper.

The Opposition, however, recognise only too clearly that the Minister's responses provide particularly thin gruel for the many deposit holders who are concerned about interest rates and about bank charges. We believe that the answers provide very thin gruel indeed for those who have suffered as a result of the collapse of BCCI. We want our questions to be answered.

It was instructive to hear the Economic Secretary's response to the important points that were raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon). It revealed the arrogance and, I am bound to say, the complacency—I use those words with a degree of sadness—that have characterised the Government's response throughout the BCCI farrago. The response from the Economic Secretary was that my right hon. Friend did not know what the Bank of England had been doing since the 1970s. That is precisely our point. This House does not know what the Bank of England has been doing since the 1970s, although we have a pretty strong suspicion about what BCCI has been doing since the 1970s.

We ask—we reiterate our demand tonight—that in the interests not only of the many small business men throughout the country who have suffered as a result of the collapse and whose lives are in ruins, not only in the interests of the people who have been put out of work and whose homes and security have been threatened by the collapse of the bank, but on behalf of all those who are concerned about the probity of our banking sector, the way in which it is regulated and the way in which our supervisory system works, that there should be a full inquiry into the collapse of BCCI. Nothing less will satisfy the House or the people of this country. Then, perhaps, we shall have the answers to the questions that my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) so eloquently asked when speaking to his new clause 37. They are important questions that need to be answered. We intend to continue to ask them day in, day out in the House until they are answered to the satisfaction of the House and the country as a whole.

I turn now to an examination of the important new clause 3, which, unfortunately, has not received the attention that it might have, for understandable reasons. There is a crisis of confidence among the customers and consumers of the banking sector about bank charges and the transparency of the market in banking services. That

crisis is due to the banks' failure to come clean about the impact of their charges and costs on the ordinary consumer. Our mailbags provide evidence of that, as do the columns of both popular and serious newspapers. Again, the public are entitled to reassurance.

Having set the hare running and sought to obtain a scapegoat for their own abysmal economic performance and the impact of high interest rates, the Government have sought to blame the banks for the suffering of the many small businesses that have gone under during the past six months. Small businesses failures are at a record level and are more than 50 per cent. higher than the level at this time last year.

The Government's response has been to set in train a Treasury study, of which they have leaked the conclusion without making the body of its findings available to the public or the House. We want those findings to be made public and to be the subject of a debate in the House. It is interesting that, as our proceedings draw to a close and we look forward to the recess, we are told that we shall have the report "some time". Why can we not have it now? Why can we not have a clear undertaking from the Economic Secretary that we shall have the report before the end of the Session? If we had it, we could ensure that it receives the full glare of public scrutiny that it deserves. What have the Government got to hide? Why are they not prepared to have an open debate? They do not like it, do they?—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] No, they do not like it, but by jove we shall make sure that this one does not get away. We want a clear and unequivocal undertaking tonight that there will be a debate on this issue. Is that too much to ask?—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] No, and that is what we are asking for, and we shall ask again and again.

One important point to which all those outside the House will want to hear a response is the issue of the new banking code. It was put out in draft form by the banks and received a unanimous thumbs down from consumer groups. The National Consumer Council described it as wholly inadequate. A whole range—a "raft" to use the Economic Secretary's word—of consumer-oriented bodies is seeking amendments and changes to it. When will the code be published? If we do not have a clear undertaking from the banks that it will be published before the end of the summer, let me make one thing crystal clear: after the next general election, a Labour Government will introduce a statutory banking code to protect the interests of consumers——

Mr. Maude: More regulations.

Mr. Boateng: The Financial Secretary says, "More regulations." Yes, we shall regulate when it is necessary to protect consumers. It is the absence of proper, prudent regulation which has led to the current abuses. Yes, we shall regulate to ensure that there is full consultation on any change in the terms of an overdraft facility or account. Customers should not have to discover by accident that their margins or charges have been raised. If that requires regulation, we shall introduce such regulation. Any change in the terms that customers are obliged to endure should be fully justified. They should not have to pay higher margins because of an increase in risks across the bank's loan book, and we shall introduce regulations to ensure that they do not. There should be a reasonable time for the repayment of an overdraft or loan. How many of us, of all parties, have received letters from small business men protesting about the way in which they have suffered at the banks' hands in this regard? How many small businesses have been brought to an end needlessly because the business man has not been given an opportunity to deal with the problem of the overdraft or loan?

If the banks do not put their own house in order, we shall put it in order for them—no one should be under any illusions about that—and the sooner, the better.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 213, Noes 316.

Division No. 209] **[7.58 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*	Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Allen, Graham	Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Anderson, Donald	Fatchett, Derek
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Fearn, Ronald
Armstrong, Hilary	Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Fisher, Mark
Ashton, Joe	Flannery, Martin
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Flynn, Paul
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*	Foster, Derek
Barron, Kevin	Foulkes, George
Battle, John	Fraser, John
Beckett, Margaret	Fyfe, Maria
Bell, Stuart	Galloway, George
Bellotti, David	Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	George, Bruce
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*	Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Benton, Joseph	Godman, Dr Norman A.
Bermingham, Gerald	Golding, Mrs Llin
Blair, Tony	Gordon, Mildred
Blunkett, David	Gould, Bryan
Boateng, Paul	Graham, Thomas
Boyes, Roland	Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Bradley, Keith	Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*	Grocott, Bruce
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*	Hain, Peter
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*	Hardy, Peter
Buckley, George J.	Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Caborn, Richard	Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Callaghan, Jim	Henderson, Doug
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	Hinchliffe, David
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*	Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.	Hood, Jimmy
Canavan, Dennis	Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Carr, Michael	Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Cartwright, John	Howells, Geraint
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*	Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*	Hoyle, Doug
Clelland, David	Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann	Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Cohen, Harry	Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*	Illsley, Eric
Corbett, Robin	Ingram, Adam
Corbyn, Jeremy	Janner, Greville
Cousins, Jim	Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Cox, Tom	Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Crowther, Stan	Kilfoyle, Peter
Cryer, Bob	Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Cummings, John	Lambie, David
Cunliffe, Lawrence	Lamond, James
Dalyell, Tam	Leadbitter, Ted
Darling, Alistair	Leighton, Ron
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*	Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*	Lewis, Terry
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*	Loyden, Eddie
Dewar, Donald	McAllion, John
Dixon, Don	McCartney, Ian
Doran, Frank	Macdonald, Calum A.
Douglas, Dick	McFall, John
Dunnachie, Jimmy	McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Eadie, Alexander	McKelvey, William
Eastham, Ken	McLeish, Henry
Edwards, Huw	McMaster, Gordon

McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Thomas McAvoy.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'th's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Sir Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine

Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Sir Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Sir Teddy
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 9

CAPITAL ALLOWANCES

'In section 24 of the Capital Allowances Act 1990, for subsections (2)(a)(i) and (ii) there is substituted "33⅓ per cent. of the qualifying expenditure per annum."'.—*[Mr. David Shaw.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Hon. Members who are leaving the Chamber should do so quietly so that the hon. Member can be heard.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): Buzz off.

Mr. Shaw: I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) who has assisted in quietening the Chamber.

New clause 9 would change the rate of corporation tax allowance from a current writing down allowance of 25 per cent. on a reducing balance to a one third per annum allowance on a straight line basis. That would mean that all fixed assets purchased by business would be written off over a three-year period instead of the current arrangement whereby the writing down allowance goes on virtually for ever if the asset remains in the business.

The proposal would help in particular the shipping industry, which was the subject of another amendment, manufacturing industry, farming and small businesses, all of which in one way or another depend on purchasing capital items. As the proposal is worded, it would not be a subsidy to investment. The old allowance of 100 per cent. in the first year was recognised as a subsidy for certain types of investment, although in the case of shipping there was a strong argument that it would not be a subsidy. Certainly, a one third per annum allowance would not be a subsidy for investment.

The new clause is necessary because it would be an incentive to invest in the United Kingdom. We have a problem, because although we are competitive internationally in the rate of corporation tax, we are no longer competitive in the writing down allowances that are given for investment in British industry. The basis on which I rely for that statement is a research paper produced by the Federal Reserve bank of New York. It completed a considerable piece of work on comparisons between the United Kingdom, Japan, Germany and the United States of America. We were immensely competitive in capital allowances until the changes in the mid-1980s. Since then we have become less competitive. It is necessary to restore that position.

One may be tempted to ask why we are uncompetitive in capital allowances. It is because of a ridiculous attitude in the Inland Revenue that goes back some years. I spent some time as an auditor in the 1970s trying to understand this. It is a strange attitude. In the United States of America the capital allowance regime works on the principle that, whatever the company decides should be its accounting depreciation rate, the Internal Revenue Service will go along with it. In some companies that means that the tax allowances are up front nearer to the time when the investment is made, and in other companies they are deferred. Industry has the option of determining its own allowances according to the conditions within the business. Any company in this country would probably enjoy that sort of tax regime and the Government should consider it, because it fits in with the free market philosophy. If a company is writing off its investments at a certain rate, surely the tax system should also accept that rate.

8.15 pm

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): My hon. Friend's remarks are extremely interesting, but I have been concerned for some years about a particular point. The Government, rightly, reduced corporation tax on the argument that that would give more money to industry to invest as it thought fit. At the same time, we have the lowest percentage of investment in manufacturing industry among the G7 countries. We vie with the United States of America for the lowest figures and we are considerably behind Japan, Germany and France. How can we overcome that without some form of direct tax incentive to make sure that people invest?

Mr. Shaw: I agree with my hon. Friend and he makes a strong point. International comparisons for investment are not favourable, although they are favourable for the corporation tax rate. It is certainly necessary, when we

[Mr. Shaw]

consider that the United Kingdom has been going through a recession and is, I hope, in the first stages of coming out of it, to look at how we can encourage businesses to invest, not only to bring us out of the recession more quickly, but, funnily enough, to prevent inflation from recurring. If we do not invest, we will not have additional capacity. If there is a shortage of capacity, inflation will return. It is necessary, in coming out of a recession, especially one induced to prevent inflation, to encourage more investment. There are several reasons why it is appropriate to change the capital allowances rate. My argument is that a one third, one third, one third principle would be a highly desirable change.

One must also consider the cash-flow cost of investment, which is incurred on day one. The current tax regime defers tax allowances for that investment over many years. It goes too far into the future to act as an incentive for the industries that need to be helped.

My proposal would cost nothing in terms of tax revenue. Ultimately the tax would be repayable to the Treasury. The only cost to the Treasury would be that of tax deferral as a certain amount of tax would be deferred into the future. There are various estimates of how much that interest cost will be. For the shipping industry the estimate is thought to be only about £30 million or £40 million if there were 100 per cent. allowances in year one.

Dr. Marek: The hon. Gentleman must remember that some years ago his Administration reduced the rate of corporation tax and that as a quid pro quo there was a much more stringent policy on capital allowances. Does he believe that that policy was wrong? If not, how much revenue would be forgone by the Treasury as a result of his proposal, for which I have some sympathy? One cannot consider the proposal in isolation.

Mr. Shaw: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that I have never believed that the Government's changes to capital allowances and the corporation tax rate were wrong in principle, but, having had time to study how capital allowances are operating relative to the corporation tax rate, I think that the change, although right in principle, went too far in practice. We need a straight line basis for writing off capital allowances. That is what my proposal would achieve.

As I understand it, the proposal would cost nothing. I am not proposing that industry should be given any tax subsidies; nor am I proposing any hand-outs for industry. I am proposing a deferral of the tax being collected on the basis that in any case British industry must pay 100 per cent. of the cost of the investment up front.

British industry is already paying out in terms of the effect on its cash flow. I ask the Government to help British industry to overcome its investment problems by accepting that it should have a deferral on its cash flow receipts. At the moment, British industry has a cash flow problem when it invests because it must pay that money up front.

I should like to draw attention to the way in which the new clause would help shipping—the subject of another new clause that was not selected. If the Government are averse, as suggested in Committee, to 100 per cent. capital allowances for shipping, they should seriously consider the benefits that would accrue from my new clause by accepting a one third, one third, one third write-off for tax allowances on British shipping. Although the new clause would apply to all British industry, it would provide a significant benefit for British shipping.

The Government have been through two wars—the Falklands and the Gulf. It should be apparent to everyone that the defence needs of our country are greatly assisted by the merchant fleet and the many people who serve in it who are prepared to support our Navy in one form or another. It is apparent that we must maintain a considerable defence requirement. It has been suggested that that should be achieved through a private subsidy to assist the maintenance of certain types of ships. I do not believe that that would be sensible, as it would encourage the shipping industry to invest in a particular type of ship which is solely suited to military purposes or has a heavy bias towards military purposes. It would be more appropriate to have a tax allowance to ensure that for most of the time we could use normal merchant ships, which could be adapted for defence needs.

Shipping also contributes some £5 billion per annum to our balance of payments. It is a highly successful business, although in recent years the British merchant marine fleet has been forced to contract. That has been caused by factors that are often beyond Government control, such as the UNCTAD—the United Nations conference on trade and development—code. That code means that our shipping must compete with foreign shipping lines which are encouraged by those countries involved in the trade between the nations subject to that code. The opportunities for outsiders to trade with those countries has been severely limited in recent years as a result of the UNCTAD code.

The average age of the United Kingdom fleet is 14 years, which is older than the world average. In addition to that, 75 per cent. of the United Kingdom's shipping fleet will need to be replaced by 2000. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the means by which the British fleet will be able to replace its ships in the next few years. It is important that some form of capital allowance changes are made. My new clause would greatly help the shipping industry, as well as the rest of British industry.

The international competition in shipping and shipping allowances means that the United Kingdom is unfavourably placed in relation to Norway, Denmark and Germany, where it is possible to have limited partnerships. It is also unfavourably placed in relation to Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy and Sweden where the capital allowances are 25 per cent. or better. My new clause proposes a one third, one third, one third principle which would bring the United Kingdom's shipping industry into a favourable position relative to those countries. Greece has no corporation tax on shipping. Therefore, it is necessary to consider capital allowances and the way in which individual industries are handicapped on the international market.

My new clause was discussed briefly in Committee and the argument used against it and the new clause on shipping was that 90 per cent. of tax reliefs are obtainable in seven to eight years. I put it to the Minister that that period is too long. Anyone who has done any form of discounted cash flow calculations will know that, after seven or eight years, £1 then is worth only 50p today. Therefore, the tax relief has changed from the days when 100 per cent. capital allowance existed and when £1 of relief was available on day one. In some cases £1 of tax

relief is worth only 50p. The shipping industry and British industry in general would benefit from a change to a one third, one third, one third regime.

I was disappointed that the argument in Committee was not based on the serious effect on British industry of the current tax regime, which results in a cash flow disadvantage. The new clause is desirable, because failure to take action and to implement a better capital allowance regime will probably delay recovery from the recession. It will cause disadvantages to those United Kingdom companies that trade on the international market and to those companies in the United Kingdom that face international competitors. At the moment, companies must borrow much more money than they might otherwise in order to make capital investment.

If 100 per cent. allowances obtained, more of the investment costs could be drawn from a company's resources rather than from borrowed finance. Even if a one third, one third, one third allowance existed, British industry would not have to borrow so much and therefore its cash flow position would be healthier.

Mr. Ted Garrett (Wallsend): If ever there were two industries that have been casualties of the ideological warfare that has taken place in this Chamber during my time in it they are the shipping and shipbuilding industries.

We now have just three major yards left in the United Kingdom that could build ships of the type that are required as a result of the depreciation of our merchant fleet. The hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) is right to say that the average age of the British fleet is 14 years. As a ship gets older the insurance rates increase.

I shall not detain the House for long, but I believe that the new clause is an opportunity for the Government to redeem themselves and their interest in the shipbuilding industry. It is a fact that we are now down to just over 900 ships registered under the British flag, which is extremely unsatisfactory.

The hon. Member for Dover also referred to the Falklands and Gulf wars. Those wars proved that we had to pay enormous charter rates. We were held to ransom by allegedly neutral or friendly countries when we had to charter ships to get our equipment and manpower to the correct place at the correct time.

Swan Hunter, the shipbuilding yard in my constituency, built the Atlantic Conveyor. Basically it is an air-support ship, but it does an enormous amount of work trading the oceans carrying containers.

The new clause presents an opportunity for the Treasury and the Ministry of Defence to get together to ascertain whether it is possible for them to provide support for British shipping through a proposal that would ultimately give additional finance to the British shipbuilding industry. To that end, I warmly support the new clause.

8.30 pm

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): I support this sensible amendment and, if the Government have any common sense, they too will support it. Not to do so would be stupid and irresponsible. I have often criticised Government policy and I hope that the Government will apply common sense on this occasion.

May I speak briefly about the effect that the amendment will have on shipping? If we allow shipping to decline, jobs will be lost throughout the country. We would then be unable to defend our national interests and that would not be patriotic.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is straying too far away from capital allowances. If he would keep his remarks more general, he would stay in order.

Mr. Redmond: I shall certainly seek your guidance on that, Madam Deputy Speaker. The amendment mentions a 30 per cent. capital allowance. If that allowance is not applicable to the shipping industry, it affects that and other aspects of productivity. Although it is applicable throughout industry, I wish to emphasise the impact that it would have on shipping. I am well aware that Mr. Speaker declined to accept an amendment on the shipping aspect——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. That is why I shall not allow a debate on shipping.

Mr. Redmond: And rightly so, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Unless the Government take the necessary steps to bring about a change and accept this sensible amendment, the country will run into trouble. Our competitors abroad are not inhibited by protection of their national interests. Allowances for all industries, including shipping, will enhance the country's economic future. If the Minister says that he is prepared to accept the clause, I shall congratulate him on his common sense. I regret that the Government operate market forces, which are fine except when the national interest is at stake. If the Government were to accept the same philosophy as Japan, America, Germany and other countries throughout the world, we would at least be in with a chance to compete on the same terms as those countries that seek to demean the British people. I do not know why the Government should seek to shy away from taking a step that would help to build up the British fleet.

Reference has already been made to the impact of the Falklands and the Gulf wars because of lack of investment. The clause would enable British ship owners to make investments that would bring about improvements in that industry. One of the consequences of the Government's lack of help to industry is that companies tend to try to reduce their losses. If the Government were interested in uplifting the British economy, I am confident that they would accept this sensible amendment but, I regret, I do not see the Minister having that little bit of common sense.

I do not normally support amendments tabled by Conservative Members, for a variety of reasons that I shall not go into. However, because our national interest is at stake, I feel that the whole House should support this new clause. I hope that the House will divide to ensure that people stand up to be counted so that industry knows precisely where it can lay the blame.

Mr. Denzil Davies: I, too, support the new clause. After 12 years of Tory Government it is refreshing to have a Conservative Member introduce a new clause, albeit modest, that will provide some support for British industry. He may have got there by the route of shipping —I do not object to that—but the new clause relates to all plant and machinery. The manufacturing industry uses far more plant and machinery than the service industry, the financial sector or the property industry. As the hon.

[Mr. Denzil Davies]

Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) said, in the long term the Inland Revenue will not lose any money. However, because it thinks only in annual terms, it feels that it may lose money. The cash flow of the manufacturing industry may be slightly improved and, as the hon. Gentleman rightly said, there will be a reduction in the reliance on borrowing which has been the scourge of British industry, and the service, financial and manufacturing industries are now paying the price.

The hon. Member for Dover also asked why we do not adopt the American system if a company wishes, for accounting purposes, to set off its depreciation against its profits in year one or year two. Why not allow the same for investment allowances? I suspect that the Inland Revenue does not like that suggestion. I remember years ago when Trafalgar House bought P & O, and I suspect that it did so for investment allowances. *[Interruption.]* I am sorry, the company that it bought was Cunard. I knew that it was a shipping and building company. Perhaps the Inland Revenue does not like the idea because it presents opportunities for avoidance. However, the new clause seeks simply to bring forward relief if a company so wishes. The Chief Secretary may argue against the amendment but I do not see what he can say against it. He may argue that it will cost more money in the first year, but he cannot be sure that it will because he does not know how the companies will react.

I shall not introduce the EC into the debate because you would rule me out of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. National taxation and investment allowances may soon be the only way in which the House can support the manufacturing industry. We have read about the problems that the French are having with subsidies to their computer industry and there are EC regulations in that respect. However, in this area of taxation—probably the last one left to us—we are still able to assist our manufacturing or any other industry by providing allowances.

I hope that my hon. Friends on the Opposition Front Bench will support the new clause. I do not want to berate the hon. Member for Dover—I am happy that he proposed the new clause—but it is a slight admission that the blanket reduction in corporation tax, covering all industries, whether they invested in plant and machinery or not, helps service and financial sectors more than the manufacturing sector. Perhaps that blanket reduction in corporation tax was not entirely wise.

The Opposition do not want to support manufacturing industry because they like dark, satanic mills and do not like the service sector. However, while, we do not have a common currency, to pay its way in the world the United Kingdom has to sell its goods abroad for foreign currency. The service industry and the financial sector in the main do not provide the revenue that we need to pay our way in the world. That is why the Opposition want to provide some modest assistance, and I think from what he has said that the hon. Member for Dover agrees with that.

I would have thought that, in this new age and with the new world order emerging from No. 10 Downing street —which is different from the order that we have had during the past 12 years—the Government would want to help manufacturing industry a little. The Government would be wise to do so because that is the only way that we, as a country, will balance our books.

I am sure that the Chief Secretary has a large "no" written by the Inland Revenue on his brief, but he should throw away his brief. I am sure that he would love to do so, especially with his public expenditure brief, which he does not have with him at present. Despite the fact that the Chief Secretary's constituency is Putney, where there are few manufacturing industries, he should take the larger view of the subject, compliment the hon. Member for Dover on his splendid new clause and accept it.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): I had not intended to speak in the debate. I have previously given my support to the shipbuilding industry, especially the merchant fleet, and felt that my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) could do with some support from other Conservative Members. As I listened to Opposition speeches some doubts were sown in my mind as to whether I was on the right course. However, I realise that I would be straying from the realms of order if I were to talk too much about merchant shipping.

There comes a period in every industry's history when it needs some stimulus and help from Government. The measure, modest though it is, would be of considerable help, particularly to the merchant fleet. As our defence commitments are being reduced—which is a matter for great joy—and as our forces are being cut back, nothing could be more important than having British ships on the world's oceans. The Merchant Navy has one of the greatest histories and reputations in the world for the way in which it carries out its duties. I believe that a measure of help is particularly appropriate now because of the aging fleet, as was described by my hon. Friend the Member for Dover. Therefore, I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chief Secretary will be able to say something tonight that will help the merchant fleet.

8.45 pm

Dr. Marek: I am amazed that the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) can table such an amendment because it was only a few months ago that I remember him as being so far to the right that, if we had a wall chart with a spectrum of people from the left of the Conservative party and the right of the Conservative party, he would be off the chart on the right. He was more Thatcherite than the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher). Clearly, he has been on the road to Damascus. I wonder why he was on that road. I do not think that I should dwell on that matter for too long but leave it to hon. Members to make up their own minds.

I shall make two succinct points. First, we as a country will not survive unless industry prospers and manufactures. For that to happen, there is no doubt that industry must invest. Secondly, it is absolutely vital for us to have a shipping industry and help must be given to allow ships to be built in British shipyards, ships to be flagged with the British flag and ships to retain British crews.

The new clause would go some way towards fulfilling both those aims. I do not completely accept the seductive and good speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies). He was partly right, but we need a package of measures to achieve all the ends, not just one clause alone. Therefore, I wish to suspend judgment and make the plea that more must be done for industry to

invest. We must safeguard our British fleet, but I wonder whether the new clause would be appropriately targeted. How much would it cost to implement the new clause and how well would it be targeted?

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. David Mellor): First, I thank all those who have participated in the debate, not only for the eloquence of their speeches, but for the brevity and discipline with which they made them. I appreciate that and shall seek to emulate it. The points that have been raised are important and I am certainly more than willing to give an account of myself at the Dispatch Box, although the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) will be sad to know that I am as attached to my brief as Linus is to his blanket.

It was a particular pleasure to hear the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett); I hope I shall not embarrass him too much if I say that he is one of my favourite Members of Parliament. I understand why he said what he did because, in his lifetime, he has seen tremendous changes in a great industry. I assure him that we are well aware of what that means. The difficulty—as I shall seek to demonstrate—is that well-intentioned arrangements designed to deal with the problems do not and will not necessarily do so, and we must be fairly rigorous in our analysis of what is proposed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) acknowledged that the Government took a conscious decision in 1984 to alter the rules on capital allowances and move from a 100 per cent. first-year system to one allowing investments to be written off over seven to eight years—a provision that is still generous as most pieces of equipment last for longer than that. We have heard much about the shipping industry—rightly so as it is important. I know that many hon. Members feel strongly about it. I do not want to stray out of order, but it is worth considering that most ships have an average life of 15 to 20 years, so the capital allowance system, even as it exists, is not ungenerous, particularly when one considers that there are special rules to deal with the depreciation of short-life assets.

In 1984, a decision was taken to move to the new system. There was a striking quid pro quo for that change in the dramatic cut in corporation tax from 52 to 35 per cent., which the Budget proposes to reduce further to 33 per cent., thereby restoring this country's claim to have one of the keenest corporation tax rates in the world.

We must not underestimate the tremendous benefits that have come from that change. In the last three years of the 1980s there was an increase in investment of more than 40 per cent. I shall not recount all the statistics and weary the House with them tonight, but they all show that Britain's exceptionally good performance in the 1980s made it the country of choice for the investment of a large amount of money from key industrial overseas countries, with one third of Japanese investment world wide coming to the United Kingdom, two thirds of American inward investment coming into the European Community and a European Community total of inward investment from outside of almost 40 per cent. That is well ahead of countries such as France which has 14 per cent. and West Germany which has 2 per cent. That was a tremendous boom in investment. Even with the recognition in the Budget statement that investment will fall this year, it will still be about 58 per cent. more than it was at the beginning of the last decade. In constant money terms, business investment has risen from £35 billion at the end of the 1970s to £55 billion or £56 billion at the end of the 1980s. That is a tremendous increase.

Against that background there would have to be a striking and compelling case for moving back to capital allowances. To do that would be enormously expensive. I do not criticise my hon. Friend the Member for Dover for not having access to figures. I would not have them either were it not for the service provided by the Inland Revenue.

The hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) asked about cost. For the reasons given by the right hon. Member for Llanelli from his experience as a Treasury Minister I can give only an estimate. The Inland Revenue's best estimate for 1992-93—bearing in mind that in the new clause the enhanced rate of allowances would apply not only to new investment but to unrelieved past expenditure—is £2·15 billion; for 1993-94, £1·95 billion; for 1994-95, £1·6 billion; for 1995-96, £1·4 billion; and for 1996-97 £1·25 billion. That is a total of about £8·5 billion over five years. The right hon. Member for Llanelli suggested that I should throw away my brief. To do so would be an expensive chuck.

I do not want to stray out of order, but I should like to deal briefly with shipping. The new clause would not necessarily help British shipbuilding because capital allowances are available wherever ships are built and cannot be restricted by European Community and other rules to the United Kingdom. One hundred per cent. capital allowances would open a whole range of potentially attractive dodges. For example, a bank in Britain could buy a ship made in Japan, obtain the allowances, and lease the ship to a company in Korea or Taiwan where it would compete with British ships. I am anxious to look after the best interests of the British merchant marine, but this is not a guaranteed way to help. There were 100 per cent. capital allowances in the decade from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s and the British merchant fleet shrank from 32 million tonnes to 13 million tonnes. That statistic straddles two Governments, so it is not partisan.

Where we can help we do and we have. For example, important changes were made in 1985 to the rules on writing down allowances, and in 1986 the business expansion scheme was extended to include ship chartering. Clause 44 of the Bill makes further changes to the tax arrangements for British seamen, increasing the number who can qualify to pay no tax as a result of being out of the jurisdiction for the qualifying period of the year. That is an attempt to make it more economical to employ British seamen.

Undoubtedly, some issues on the United Kingdom register need to be addressed because any ship that benefited from the capital allowances scheme proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Dover would not have to be given a British flag but could be flagged out. Therefore, the problems of flagging out need to be addressed separately. They are being addressed, and the report of a technical working party is being carefully studied. An important defence issue is being addressed by Ministers and in due course more can be said about it.

Mr. Den Dover (Chorley): Will the Minister confirm that the reduction from the 1970s to the 1980s in the British fleet from 30 million tonnes to 13 million tonnes owed more to flagging out than to the availability of capital allowances?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. We are straying far from the point, as I know the Minister appreciates.

Mr. Mellor: I do, and I am grateful for your guidance, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman is not as appealing as you, Madam Deputy Speaker, but provided that he allows me to stay in order I shall give way to him.

Mr. Brown: I shall not debate whether I am as appealing as you, Madam Deputy Speaker, because there is absolutely no contest. I found beguiling the Chief Secretary's point about ships taken up from trade. That is an important issue because it affects the merchant fleet. May we expect a statement on the issue before the House rises or will we have to wait until the autumn?

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman refers to defence. The matter is being considered and a statement will be made when a proper conclusion is reached. I cannot say whether that will be before the House rises but I wanted hon. Members to know that the defence issue, which is unrelated to these fiscal matters, has the serious attention of Ministers.

I am sorry to give my hon. Friend the Member for Dover a somewhat dusty answer. It is important for these matters to be ventilated, but in moving to a low corporation tax regime and away from capital allowances we are, in the longer term, doing the business man a great favour. We have allowed him to retain the resources to make his own investment decisions rather than distorting matters by a system of capital allowances. Under our regime it is the quality of the investment that matters and not the amount, which is the case under a regime based on capital allowances. Having properly ventilated the matter, I hope that my hon. Friend will agree to withdraw his new clause.

Mr. David Shaw: It is often said in the House that short debates are among the best, and this debate has given the issue a wide airing. I regret that I did not have access to Treasury counsel in drafting my new clause, but such is the problem of the Back Bencher in drafting detailed amendments. I would certainly have intended it to be only for new investment to assist industry at a time of recession. Therefore, I accept that the cost would probably be much higher than the clause intends.

The Chief Secretary produced figures to show a cost of £8 billion. He should be careful to separate the interest costs in terms of tax deferred from the actual cost of tax, because in the long term there is no loss of tax revenue. I notice that he stopped his example at year five. Had he gone on to year 10, the cost must be significantly reduced, and reducing towards zero.

However, I accept that the new clause as drafted is not perfect. When the economy is such that the Treasury counts every pound carefully, putting my new clause to the vote would be inappropriate. Therefore, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 10

DEVELOPER'S SELF-SUPPLY

'.—(1) Schedule 6A to the Value Added Tax Act 1983 shall be amended as follows.

At the end of paragraph 6(2)(b) there is inserted—

"except that, if the supply is treated as made on or after 1st April 1991, the value of it shall be calculated so that, to the extent only that grants and other supplies were made to the developer before 1st April 1991, the tax payable in respect of those grants and other supplies shall be calculated as if the supply had taken place on 31st March 1991.".'.—*[Dr. Marek.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Dr. Marek: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take new clause 36—*VAT: Developer's self-supply (No. 2)*—after paragraph 6(2) of Schedule 6A to the Value Added Tax Act 1983 there shall be added

"6(2A) Where the supply is treated as made by sub-paragraph (1) above, on or after 1st April 1991, the value of that supply shall exclude the value of all grants and the value of all taxable supplies set out in sub-paragraph 2(a) and (b) above, where those supplies were made to the developer before 1st April 1991.

6(2B) Where sub-paragraph (2A) applies, the value of all grants and taxable supplies referred to in sub-paragraph (2)(a) and (b) and excluded from the value in sub-paragraph (1) by sub-paragraph (2A), shall be deemed to be supplied for the purposes of sub-paragraph (1) on 31st March 1991.".'.

Dr. Marek: The Opposition have tabled these new clauses to remedy a fault that has occurred as a result of the increase in value added tax from 15 to 17·5 per cent. in the last Budget. It may be for the convenience of the House if I cover a little of the background so that it can appreciate the aim of the clauses.

The European Court judgment in June 1988 did not cover building land, although it covered non-domestic buildings. The then Economic Secretary, the right hon. Member for St. Albans (Mr. Lilley), who is now Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, in the Committee that considered the Finance Bill in 1989—I remember the occasion well—decided to abolish land exemption once it was clear that, as a result of the European Court judgment, the Government would be required to tax new domestic buildings. As a result, the developer's self-supply charge provisions were born and are now paragraphs 5 and 6 of schedule 6A of the Value Added Tax Act 1983.

9 pm

Those paragraphs provide that, on completion of development, the self-supply charge is triggered and output tax is paid, based on the historic cost of land, together with the value of all goods and services. I have some quibbles about the historic costs of land which I believe should be on a different value, but that is neither here nor there in the debate on the new clauses. In practice, VAT is imposed only on the land element as goods and services output tax can be offset by an input tax rebate. The VAT levied on the charge may be treated as input tax subject, for example, to partial exemption and to the capital goods scheme provisions. However—and this is the crux of the problem—the increase in the VAT rate from 15 to 17·5 per cent. has given rise to an anomaly in cases where developers are exempt—for example, those

developing schools and hospitals—and where work on those projects has taken place on either side of the 1 April 1991 deadline, when VAT was increased.

The land cost will be subject to VAT at 17·5 per cent. if the self-supply charge is triggered after 1 April 1991, but so will the goods and services. That is fine if the service was performed on or after 1 April 1991, as input tax can be reclaimed at the same rate. However, that is not the case if the goods were delivered or the services were carried out before 1 April 1991. Then VAT can still be reclaimed, but only at 15 per cent., while output VAT has to be paid at 17·5 per cent.

Mr. Denzil Davies: This is extremely complicated and I do not understand it. However, my hon. Friend said that developers would benefit. What kind of developers does he mean? I hope that it is not nasty property developers.

Dr. Marek: I seek not to make any distinction between nice and nasty developers. It is simply a question of equity, and the equity has always been that any developer, as a result of the introduction of the self-supply regime, ought to be able to recover his input tax for goods and services, and then have to pay output tax when the self-supply charge is triggered. The problem is that, because VAT was increased to 17·5 per cent., the amount of output tax may be greater than the amount of input tax.

My right hon. Friend may also care to dwell on the fact that if a future Government decided to reduce VAT the amount of tax that could be recovered by developers would exceed the amount of tax that they had had to pay. That would cause a general uproar as it would be manifestly unfair. The Opposition believe that it is unfair that allowance should not be made for this problem—which was probably unforeseen when the Government decided to increase VAT only a few days before the Budget was delivered, or so we are given to understand—for developers whose goods and services straddle both sides of 1 April 1991.

I do not want to prolong the debate because I am aware of the many new clauses and amendments with which we must deal. That being so, I shall be concise.

What is the solution? Happily it is a straightforward one, and the answer is apportionment. The Opposition, ever wanting to please and to help the House, have tabled not one new clause but two. I invite the Government to take their pick. The two clauses are worded differently, but they seek to achieve the same object. I hope that one of them will be acceptable to the Government. That being so, I hope that the Minister will regard one of them favourably and will accept it.

The Minister of State, Treasury (Mrs. Gillian Shephard): I accept that the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) has a point, and I am grateful to him for drawing it to the Government's attention. I wish to help, but this is a hideously difficult subject. I understand that that is accepted by the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies).

The self-supply charge was introduced only in 1989, so it is not surprising that there may be some teething troubles. I think that I am right in saying that the developers who are subject to the charge are the only people who pay value added tax who have, or have had, no choice about their tax point, which to my mind is probably the nub of the matter.

I am sure that the hon. Member for Wrexham will understand that the new clauses are not quite right. I do not criticise him for that, because if one thing is clear it is that the self-supply charge is extremely complex. As the new clauses are drafted, they would apply a 15 per cent. rate of VAT to all land acquired before the Budget, no matter how far in the future the land comes to be developed. I am sure that that was not the hon. Gentleman's intention. It would make no more sense to do that than to say that land acquired before June 1979 should always be liable to VAT at 8 per cent., whenever it comes to be developed.

The new clauses would apply only to the change in the VAT rate that has just occurred. That may or may not be the intention of the hon. Member for Wrexham.

Dr. Marek: It is not the Opposition's intention that a VAT rate of 15 per cent. should be retained for land. If the VAT rate changes, the rate on land must change. I hope that my intervention clarifies the issue.

Mrs. Shephard: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that clarification. He will wish to know, however, that I am advised that there are other, more technical, problems with the drafting of the new clauses. As it happens, it would not be necessary to introduce primary legislation to amend the self-supply rules. The Government have the power under section 35 of the Value Added Tax Act 1983 to amend the rules by order. It would be sensible, of course, to take time to try to get these matters right.

If the House is content, I am prepared to consider the subject again, and to write to the hon. Member for Wrexham. I cannot give a commitment, but I am happy to say that if we can be convinced that it would be fair and reasonable to amend the self-supply provisions governing the construction element of the charge, if it proves technically possible to do so and if—this is important—that need not upset other relationships within the tax system, I would propose to bring forward an order. If for any reason we come to the conclusion that that could not be done, I undertake to explain that fully to the hon. Gentleman. I hope that on that basis he will be prepared to withdraw the new clause.

Mr. Denzil Davies: I am slightly worried about my Front-Bench colleagues. I hope that they are not backsliding from the faith. A previous new clause was designed to support manufacturing industry, and my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) slightly—I do not know whether this is possible—poured cold water upon it. The new clause that is now before us seems to support the property industry, which is quite dominant in Britain and which has done well over the past 10 or 12 years. I know that it is facing some difficulties now, but I shall not weep if it has over-borrowed or geared too much—I think that "geared" is the vogue word for borrowing. That is a matter for the industry. The Minister has promised some action, as I understand it, and if the new clause is refined and accepted it will support the property industry.

I have nothing against the property industry, but I wonder which pressure group briefed my hon. Friend. Whichever group it was, it did not draft the new clause very well according to the Minister, but it must have been a group representing property interests. I am rather worried. I read in the newspapers about the debates on Lloyd's in the Standing Committee on the Finance Bill.

[Mr. Denzil Davies]

Clearly, we do not believe everything that we read in the newspapers, but I hope that my hon. Friends on the Front Bench are not accepting the new age—or the new vogue—of market-based economies which, we are told, will solve our problems in the 1990s. I should have hoped that my hon. Friend would give more support to the new clause that favoured the manufacturing industry and that he would not have been so keen to support this new clause which, as I understand it, is aimed at and will eventually give some money to property interests.

Mr. Den Dover (Chorley): I support the new clause. I do not agree with the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) that there are good and bad property developers and that to chase and make a profit is necessarily bad in itself. Property development brings enormous investment into this country across the range of property—industrial, residential and commercial. It is a high-risk industry and, although profits have been made, there are also enormous losses and high interest charges, despite the reductions of recent months.

I welcome the attitude of the Opposition Front Bench in trying to create circumstances that are fairer for the property industry, and I must declare my interest. I am delighted that the Opposition are trying to correct an anomaly. I also welcome the Minister's constructive response. In addition to some of the changes that she is thinking of, I ask her to simplify the legislation. I also ask her and the Inland Revenue to be sensible about imposing misdeclaration penalties. The Chancellor mentioned that in the Budget, but self-supply is a legislative minefield for construction, development, land and buildings and I hope that the Minister will try to simplify the taxation regime in her future efforts.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): I wish to probe what the Minister of State, Treasury said. She mentioned three possible scenarios adding to each the phrase "if technically possible". She will know that I am not wholly happy at the way in which Ministers are forced to accept the views of officials who deal with value added tax. For example, they—and not Ministers—have decided that VAT is to be imposed on Jaffa cakes, because they believe that they are not cakes, but biscuits. Ministers have no control over that. I ask my hon. Friend to take the decisions and not to let the mindless bureaucrats in Customs and Excise impose this decision on her.

Dr. Marek: I hope that my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) will accept that we are passionately in favour of British manufacturing industry and of providing the prosperity that the country needs to survive, but I hope that he will also accept that we are equally as passionate about trying to be fair. From what the Minister says, I hope that we can leave the matter in her hands and that if anything can be done, she will see that it is done.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: It would be a pity not to mention the domestic dispute on the Opposition Front Bench—let us hope that it simmers elsewhere. I thank my hon. Friends for their contributions and I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) that Jaffa cakes are never far from my mind.

Dr. Marek: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 13

TAX EXEMPTIONS FOR CERTAIN SPORTING AND RECREATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

'(1) Where—

(a) an Association which has as its object the encouragement, development and governance on a national level of any sport or other form of recreational activity (or which has as its object the representation of such Associations) is approved for the purposes of this section by the Secretary of State; and

(b) the memorandum of association or other similar instrument regulating the functions of the Association precludes the direct or indirect payment of transfer to any of its members of any of its income or property by way of dividend, gift, division, bonus or otherwise howsoever by way of profit,

there shall, on a claim in that behalf to the Board, be allowed in the case of the association—

(i) exemption from tax in respect of income, and

(ii) exemption from tax in respect of chargeable gains.

(2) In Sections 338 and 339 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988, "qualifying donation" shall include a payment under a disposition or convenant made by a company in favour of an Association approved for the purposes of this section under subsection (1) above.

(3) The conditions specified in paragraph (b) of subsection (i) above shall not be deemed not to be complied with in the case of any Association by reason only that the memorandum or other similar instrument regulating its functions does not prevent the payment to its members of reasonable remuneration for goods or facilities supplied, or for services rendered, of reasonable interest for money lent, or of reasonable rent for any premises.'.—*[Ms. Hoey.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

9.15 pm

Ms. Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I feel like saying, "Here we go again", because this issue comes up year after year. New clause 13 narrows the focus of our attempts to meet points that have been made in the past, when debating Finance Bills in Committee and on the Floor of the House, in arguing against exempting governing bodies of sport from corporation tax.

The amendment refers specifically to national governing bodies, and does not relate to sports clubs or to any organisations other than governing bodies. It is important to stress that, because, in the past, Ministers asked whether it was our intention also to exempt tiddlywinks clubs, and so on.

Ultimately, I should like to go further and to examine the business rate burden on sports clubs and all the other problems that they encounter. However, tonight's debate concerns only exemption for national governing bodies. The new clause seeks also to avoid any involvement in charity law, because—as was said by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) in Committee—attempts to make legislative changes in that regard can be a nightmare.

After consulting national governing bodies and the Central Council of Physical Recreation, we devised a new clause that will allow the Secretary of State to decide which

governing bodies would benefit. In the event of any dispute, and if the CCPR's ruling proved unacceptable, the Secretary of State would have the final say.

The new clause is aimed at boosting the morale of sport and at ensuring that the money raised by governing bodies in different ways can all be used to benefit sport. At present, some of it must be paid to the Government in corporation tax. Sometimes the amount is small, but sometimes the sum involved is fairly large.

The Minister and other hon. Members may dispute the cost of such a change to the Exchequer. We calculate that it will be in the region of £10 million—which, in the context of the Treasury's national revenues, is not a large figure. The amount saved in the case of the Amateur Swimming Association, for example, would be £15,000. Why should that organisation be required to pay that sum when the moneys that it raises do not profit any individual but are used to fund swimming?

A large proportion of the profits from next autumn's forthcoming rugby union world cup will go in corporation tax, but no other country competing in that event will be similarly taxed.

The corporation tax paid by the British Olympic Association is raised largely through voluntary effort and donations. People work extremely hard to ensure that our Olympic team has the necessary support. It is quite a large amount—some £2 million—but it does not seem so much in the overall context of the sum that is taken from sport.

The Lawn Tennis Association pays about £1 million. I am not talking about Wimbledon; I am talking about the need to promote and improve grassroots tennis for young people, so that we can produce some future Wimbledon champions.

The Minister may say that the money that has just been taken from the football pools will be given back to sport. In the past, the Government have always said that they want people to be able to decide for themselves how to spend their money. We shall debate later the way in which the new sports trust has been set up; let me say now, however, that we should not take with one hand and, with the other, try to give indirectly, in a different way. That would not enable the governing bodies to spend the money in the way that they consider best to develop sporting activities.

The Minister may feel that some of those bodies would not spend the money in the way in which the Government would like them to spend it. My new clause, however, would not preclude the Chancellor of the Exchequer from deciding on a criterion that might exempt, for example, the Lawn Tennis Association, on condition that the resulting savings were spent in a way that would improve tennis at a basic level—on improving coaching, for instance. There is no reason why that should not be defined, if the Government work closely with sporting bodies.

Last autumn I went to see the Financial Secretary, along with a cross-section of the governing bodies. The results were disappointing. We were received quite well; the Financial Secretary seemed to be listening to what we said, and it appeared from some of the questions that he asked—some of which were followed up through the Central Council of Physical Recreation—that the door was beginning to open. Informal conversations with the Minister for Sport suggested that he felt that a concession would be made. Then, just before the Budget, we suddenly heard that nothing would be given.

I ask the Treasury to reconsider. The amount concerned is not huge, and it would boost morale to a significant extent, allowing the governing bodies to expand the self-help that they are already carrying out.

After all the work that has gone into Sheffield, the world student games are going ahead, and we shall try very hard to get the Olympic games to Manchester. A boost for the governing bodies would convince people that the Government and Members of Parliament care about sport, rather than being interested only when the finale of a tournament is taking place, involving a specific team or event. Many Ministers and other Members support such events, but I am thinking of the ordinary, day-to-day work that is done by people who really care about sport at grassroots level. I hope that the House will support the new clause.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): I am delighted to support new clause 13, which was moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Ms. Hoey), who is widely respected in the sporting world for her expertise and diligence. She is one of sport's finest friends.

The Government are keen on instructing people to stand on their own two feet. However, in respect of corporation tax for sport, the Government are clobbering sport with a late tackle on the referee's blind side. According to the Sports Council, sport generates an income to the Treasury that is five times the figure that the Government spend on sport. It is not as if sport is freeloading from the Treasury's coffers. It is a net contributor many times over to the provision of its own general funding across the country.

The present situation is full of anomalies. Some sports such as cricket are subject to look-through status whereby the national governing bodies are not subject to taxation, as is rugby. The burden falls on clubs and that is what the new clause seeks to redress.

Having referred to rugby, I want to use that sport to make my case. Of the 16 countries involved in the rugby world cup this autumn, only England, Scotland and Wales have substantial tax assessments against them. One wonders whether that is part of the reason why our rugby teams, particularly over the past weekend, have not been doing brilliantly in international terms. That must be a contributory factor.

Perhaps I should dwell for a moment on the problems facing Wales. I hesitate to do that, although my friend Ron Waldron is an excellent coach who has coached Neath to great success over the years. However, after Wales were defeated 71 points to 8 by New South Wales, I searched for the name of the Economic Secretary to the Treasury among those who scored the nine tries against Wales. The taxation that the Government are exacting from the Welsh Rugby Union is punitive to say the least. The WRU must pay VAT which is currently projected at £440,000 for this year; it must also pay an exorbitant business rate bill of £220,000 this year. On top of that, the WRU must also pay corporation tax of £330,000.

The WRU is not a profit-making organisation. None of its members is seeking to join Lloyd's. They do not expect dividends or benefits from the income generated by the sport. There is no personal gain in rugby in Wales or elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Why should the WRU be subjected to corporation tax in this anomalous and punitive fashion?

[Mr. Peter Hain]

In effect, the WRU's income from international matches is its sole source of surpluses. That income is severely raided by the Treasury through corporation tax. As a result of that, there is underprovision and the WRU is unable to invest the resources that it wants to invest in local clubs. Given the way in which the game in Wales has slid over the past few years, that is a real issue.

I hope that Conservative Members and, preferably, Treasury Ministers will address the crisis facing our school and youth sports. It is not surprising that British sports men and women face problems in competing successfully abroad in rugby and other sports, given the crisis in school sport.

I have two young sons. If it were not for the diligence of a few amateur voluntary helpers outside the school, the facilities for them would not be the same. The Government have destroyed teachers' confidence and morale and their commitment and willingness to work all hours under the sun for little or no reward while their professionalism was attacked from left, right and centre. That has created a crisis at school level whereby it is difficult to get the training, support and resourcing that school sport so desperately needs.

For years, schools in Wales were virtual factories for rugby. Now the burden in youth rugby falls on local clubs. The WRU has to sponsor and invest in those clubs. The £330,000 that the Treasury is nicking—if I may use that colloquialism—from the WRU's income this year is preventing it from investing that money in the provision of youth sport and club sport, which are the backbone of the game in Wales and throughout the United Kingdom.

9.30 pm

We must consider how rugby is organised in Wales. It is organised by volunteers who are not out for personal gain. They put in long hours with no reward and with virtually no support from the Government. Indeed, there is an attack on their resources. My local club, Resolven rugby football club, suffers from the problem of lack of Government support and it has to pay exorbitant water charges. A new pipe has been put in for some new showers. As a result of the way in which water charges have catapulted upwards since privatisation, the connection charge for a 1-ft pipe connecting one pipe to another is £850, compared with the £30 which it would have cost when Welsh Water was under public ownership a couple of years ago. The club faces business rates, and exorbitant and punitive water charges. Those involved in the club have no personal gain and are determined to provide the best possible facilities for young people in particular. Surely with the rising rate in youth crime——

Mr. Robert Hayward (Kingswood): I ask my question as, I think, the only qualified rugby referee in the House. Will the hon. Gentleman concede that he did far more damage to the sport of rugby than the Government and the proposal on corporation tax ever have?

Mr. Hain: I was wondering when such a constructive intervention would be made by a Conservative Member. The changes now occurring in rugby and in sport generally in South Africa are a vindication of the strategy that many of us pursued of forcing those changes over the years.

The hon. Gentleman's intervention was an attempt to divert us from the central point. I hope that he does not belittle the real issue which I sought to address—the burden under which local rugby clubs work and suffer, which has been imposed by the Government's financial regime. I sought to make an important point about one of the real problems that we face as youth crime virtually gets out of hand and as young people roam listlessly round the streets because they have nothing to do. With a small concession by the Government, we could assist the Welsh Rugby Union—and this applies to other sports as well—and its local affiliates to provide the resourcing and investment necessary to inspire an interest and sense of enthusiasm in those young people.

My hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall reviewed the way in which the debate has progressed over the years. The new clause is different from the one moved last year and the one moved the year before. It does not seek charitable status for national governing bodies, as has previously been sought.

Equally important—I hope that the Economic Secretary will address this point in his reply—is the fact that the new clause gives the Secretary of State considerable discretion to determine what is or is not an eligible sport. On 13 April 1991, the Financial Secretary wrote to the secretary of the Welsh Rugby Union:

> "There is, however, no agreed definition of what constitutes a sport".

Frankly, that is weak. I invite the Economic Secretary or the Financial Secretary to talk to the Neath pack and to ask its members whether they are involved in a sport or are playing at model making for the Treasury. What is and what is not a sport is quite clear to those involved in rugby or any other sport in the United Kingdom.

If there is any doubt, the new clause provides the Secretary of State with that discretion and gives him the opportunity to draw a ring fence around legitimate sports to ensure that nobody can get away with a slipshod definition of sport. I fail to understand why all those mandarins and officials at the Treasury, who, with the parliamentary draftsmen, spend long hours devising clauses and regulations to ensure that people cannot escape the scope of the definitions relating to taxation and the financial sector, cannot provide a suitable definition of sport when the thousands, if not millions, of people who enjoy sport every day of the week could do so. Or is this an excuse so that the Government do not have to act to give relief, not only to rugby in Wales and elsewhere but to sport in general?

Finally, the cost of implementing the provisions would be minimal. It has been estimated by those in the sporting world who are expert at such things as being between £10 million and £12 million, which is nothing compared with the £2 billion that the Exchequer takes from sport every year.

The new clause provides a small concession, but, properly directed and targeted—to use one of the Government's favourite words—it could give considerable support to those sports, and especially to rugby, which desperately need it to provide them with the resources to make the investment that they could not make otherwise.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): The House will want to record its admiration for the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) for coming here, so soon after the events in Australia, to advocate the cause of Welsh rugby. His anxiety to ensure that yet more funds are channelled into the cause of Welsh rugby may have been directly

stimulated or provoked by those events in Australia. Hon. Members representing English constituencies should not feel any great sense of comfort, because the result obtained by their team on the same day was hardly any more comforting.

This debate has become something of an annual fixture in the sporting calendar. It is noteworthy that two former Ministers for Sport are in their places. I hope that one or other of them may feel compelled to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Three years ago, in a useful debate on this subject, the then Economic Secretary, now catapulted to fame as Chancellor of the Exchequer, made a sympathetic response to what was thought to be a constructive debate. To some extent, the form of the new clause that we are debating is less relevant than the principle that it seeks to establish. Different amendments, in different forms, have been tried over the years. Last year, in the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1990, which one may think an unlikely vehicle, we tried to persuade the Government to accept that sport in Scotland at least should have charitable status. That must have followed too hard upon the success of the Scottish team at Murrayfield, when they won the grand slam, to succeed in persuading everyone on the Treasury Bench that it was necessarily a good idea.

The issue comes to this—to what extent are the Government willing to recognise the importance of sport in many people's lives and its contribution to health? That is an element of the work of the governing bodies of the sports associations to which insufficient regard has been ascribed until now. It is also noteworthy that the philosophy of the sports councils has become less to direct governing bodies and more to regard them as independent bodies with more devolved responsibilities and powers. If that is so, surely it would be only right and proper to release to governing bodies a far greater level of resources than they presently enjoy.

As the hon. Member for Neath hinted, since the disruption in schools both north and south of the border, the opportunities for individuals to take part in school sport have been substantially reduced. That is why the Scottish Sports Council, under the prompting of the Minister of State, Scottish Office, who has responsibility for sport in Scotland and provided the funds, has launched a campaign the purpose of which is to fill the gap that has been created. That gap must be filled by the governing bodies of sport.

Some governing bodies are extremely professionally run. They have paid administrators and substantial staffs. They are sophisticated about attracting sponsorship. They know their way around government. They know how to lobby. But in many cases governing bodies are run by unpaid amateurs who devote their whole life to their particular sport and often run the affairs of the United Kingdom national sporting association from a spare room at the top of their house. In many cases the effort of a governing body is entirely amateur. If that effort was not produced in the committed and energetic way in which it is, those governing bodies would either not exist or at least would operate at a much lower level of activity than at present.

The issue is not so much the precise substance of the new clause. I have looked back at the *Official Report* of similar debates on previous occasions and I have no doubt that the Treasury Bench will take refuge in some didactic, nit-picking point about the form of the new clause. However, the issue is one of principle. How far do the Government recognise the contribution of sport? The Prime Minister seems to be an enthusiast for sport. The Minister for Sport appears to be someone whose red rose may not be in the right place, but whose heart is certainly in the right place.

This is an opportunity for the Government to recognise and acknowledge the extraordinary contribution that sport makes and the tremendous efforts of unpaid individuals who work, as the word "amateur" necessarily implies, for the love of their sport. How much more redoubled will their efforts be if the Government say generously this evening, "You no longer have to pay corporation tax"?

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): I rise to speak briefly particularly in response to the last few sentences uttered by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell). As he mentioned, I and my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), as former Sports Ministers, have subscribed very much to the principle of new clause 13. As he said, two or three years ago we received a favourable and sympathetic response from my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont), the present Chancellor of the Exchequer, who was then a junior Minister at the Treasury. That response was the result of several years of lobbying Treasury Ministers. We lobbied a whole series of my right hon. and hon. Friends who occupied various positions at the Treasury. They received us courteously and, indeed, gave us good reason to believe that one of these years the philosophy behind the new clause might just be accepted.

This year, as you know, Mr. Speaker, this new clause has been tabled by the hon. Members for Vauxhall (Ms. Hoey) and for Neath (Mr. Hain). At an even lower scale in terms of cost, new clause 8, which unfortunately you were not able to select, was tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw), the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) and me. It called for some tax relief for the British Olympic Association—one specific sporting body which should most certainly receive some tax relief in line with every other Olympic committee in the world. I want my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury to know that this philosophy is accepted across the parties in the House. It would have been wrong for me not to put that on the record tonight. In his response, will he give us some idea of which direction we should be going to achieve tax relief for sport?

As I said, we have presented the minimum position with the British Olympic Association. The new clause tabled by the Opposition asks for rather more. Surely the time has now come for the Treasury to give some indication of when we can hope that sport's governing bodies can gain tax relief.

9.45 pm

Mr. Maples: Before my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) intervened, I was going to say that it was nice for an Englishman to get a word in, if only to remind the House that we do not have to go quite so far back in history to find an occasion when we won the grand slam. It is not surprising that if one wanted an example of a sport in a terrible mess, one would pick the Welsh Rugby Union. If one is to chuck public money around, even the Labour party now believes in throwing money at winners, not losers.

[Mr. Maples]

This is a difficult problem to solve. There is no easy solution. The fact that over the years people have tried to find a solution but none has been found shows how difficult it is. The relief proposed by the new clause is both extremely generous and wide ranging. The new clause would give complete exemption from corporation tax to any recreational association organised nationally which did not distribute its profit. Compare that with the current position where the only bodies wholly exempt from corporation tax are local authorities and health service bodies. Even the exemption enjoyed by charities is conditional on income being applied solely to charitable purposes. There is no such restriction in the new clause.

One must realise that such an exemption would confer an unfair advantage on these bodies. Where, for example, they sold sports equipment or refreshments, they might well be in direct competition with other local traders who do not enjoy similar tax privileges. There is no definition of "sport" or "recreational", and it would be almost impossible to devise a satisfactory one.

It is hard to see any good reason for granting an exemption to sport but not to other equally worthwhile activities. Therefore, any such relief would create considerable pressure for an extension to other bodies and could give rise to endless disputes about whether particular bodies or activities should qualify.

The new clause goes further than one might have expected in containing provisions designed to allow tax relief on covenanted donations or on donations under gift aid to such bodies. Relief on that sort of payment is designed to benefit charities. It is well established that sport is not a charitable activity. Charities would be deeply concerned at a proposal which threatened to divert money from them to new bodies.

The Government have considered possible reliefs for sports or sport's governing bodies several times, but it has been difficult to identify an acceptable proposal. Any exception would be arbitrary and difficult to confine, and it would not be possible to accept the new clause. I understand the problem, but there is no acceptable or easy solution to it, although we have looked hard for one.

If it is any consolation, the sports and arts foundation, which has been set up in association with this Budget, will provide valuable help for sport. We expect it to distribute some £250 million over the next four years. At least two thirds of that must go to sport, so there should be £160 million or £170 million from that, as well as all the other resources going into sport. I am sorry that it is not possible for the Government to accept the new clause.

Ms. Hoey: I rather expected that response from the Economic Secretary to the Treasury, because, as the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) suggested, it was unlikely that we would hear anything new. We have simply had a repetition of what has been said, ad nauseam, in Committee after Committee, year after year. I am disappointed that the Minister said absolutely nothing new. He continues to say that the Government have tried, but that they cannot find a way round the problem. However, if Back-Bench Members can come up, year after year, with new ways in which to tackle the problem, how many more ways do we have to find before the Government, with all their machinery of civil servants and support, can find a mechanism to accept the principle?

I should have been happy if the Minister had even accepted the principle and said that the Government would like to find a way in which to provide money. However, there seems to be no give from the Government and, therefore, I want to press the new clause to a vote.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 68, Noes 252.

Division No. 210] **[9.50 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Bellotti, David
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Blunkett, David
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Cohen, Harry
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Dalyell, Tam
Dixon, Don
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Fearn, Ronald
Fyfe, Maria
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grocott, Bruce
Haynes, Frank
Hood, Jimmy
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Loyden, Eddie
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morley, Elliot
Nellist, Dave
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Redmond, Martin
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rooney, Terence
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Trimble, David
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Ms. Kate Hoey and
Mr. Peter Hain.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry

Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Sir Anthony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
McCrindle, Sir Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown, and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 15

FINANCING OF BRITISH FILMS UNDER BUSINESS EXPANSION SCHEME

'Where a company carrying on a trade qualifying under section 297 of the Taxes Act 1988 is engaged throughout the relevant period (for the purposes of that section) in the production of relevant films within the meaning of section 3(7) of the Films Act 1985, subsections (1) and (4) of section 290A of the Taxes Act 1988 (restriction of relief under business expansion scheme where amounts raised exceed permitted maximum) shall have effect as if for the amount there specified there were substituted £5 million.'.—*[Sir Anthony Durant.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Sir Anthony Durant (Reading, West): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I begin by declaring an interest: I am the chairman of the Back-Bench committee on the film industry, which is why I am moving the new clause.

The new clause seeks to exempt film companies from the upper limit for tax relief in the business expansion scheme. The current limit of £750,000 is inadequate for would-be investors in film production—the average cost for a medium-budget film is closer to £5 million. The new clause aims to make it easier and more attractive to invest in British films. That is an urgent need. Investment in our film industry has slumped badly.

Film is increasing in importance—there were about 100 million attendances at the cinema last year. People are watching films on television, satellite broadcasts and videos, both bought and rented. In the past 10 years, expenditure on video alone increased from less than £100 million a year to more than £1,000 million a year.

The British film industry has expertise and creative talent. Blockbusters such as the "Indiana Jones" trilogy and "Batman" were made in this country with largely British crews and "The Last Emperor" was written and produced by British talent. But because there is no finance and investment from the United Kingdom the profits from those films returned to the countries which put up the money.

The British film industry is too small to compete effectively with our European rivals. The decline in investment has, of course, affected production levels. Last

[Sir Anthony Durant]

year fewer than 30 films were made here and that total is set to go down still further this year. This low level of production does not provide enough throughput for an industry with a high risk factor, uncertain returns and high unit costs.

The industry comprises many small production companies, each incurring development costs without economies of scale, trying to produce prototypes for an unpredictable market. Sustained commercial success depends on being able to produce a continuing flow of films over a wide range of styles and audience appeal, so that the few successes pay for the ones which do not cover their costs. Other countries with small domestic markets bridge the gap with a range of subsidies, fiscal incentives and investment schemes which ensure a reasonable product flow and create a mass of film activity. There is therefore an overwhelming case for some form of Government action through tax incentives.

The stakes are high. Film is a key British industry with the ability to create products which can succeed in the European market place and can reach across the Atlantic to the American market. After 1992, the single European market will be larger than the US market and Britain will need to be well placed to exploit the opportunity. Presently, the United Kingdom cannot participate in European co-productions because we have no money to bring to the negotiating table. However, given that success often depends on selling one's film to the Americans, we have the advantage of language which should make the United Kingdom a natural partner in most European co-productions. We have the entrepreneurial and creative talent, the facilities and the commitment to make the industry successful. We can be certain that the film industry has the potential to compete effectively in Europe and in the USA. It could be as important to the United Kingdom's economy as Hollywood is to the US Exchequer.

The amendment is a simple but effective step which the Government could take to assist and stimulate the industry. It is one of the suggestions that arose from the former Prime Minister's working party following the meeting at No. 10 Downing street. I shall listen with interest to the Financial Secretary's response to my new clause.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): I support the new clause which the hon. Member for Reading, West (Sir A. Durant) so eloquently addressed. This is a crucial time for the film industry and the new clause would ease and encourage the industry. However, I think that the hon. Gentleman would be the first to concede that the new clause could be regarded only as a first step.

The new clause appears not a minute too soon. My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) and I served on the Standing Committee dealing with what is now the Films Act 1985. That followed a declaration by the present Home Secretary, at that time one of the many Ministers responsible for films at the Department of Trade and Industry, who said in responding to an Adjournment debate that the Act would lead to the renaissance of the British film industry. We have not seen a renaissance, quite the reverse.

Last year's Downing street seminar was regarded by many as highly successful. It is a great pity that it has not been followed up. The Minister may have some more information for us this evening. There were high hopes at that time, encouraged by the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), but since then there has been little encouragement for the British film industry.

It is important that we address these problems because we have seen the industry weaken badly. In 1985, £272 million was invested, but in 1989 it was only £79 million. No industry can withstand that lack of investment, of training and of opportunity. This was once a great industry, and it is an industry that still offers enormous potential. In many ways *The Observer* yesterday told us a great deal. It said that there is to be a new version of the film "Wuthering Heights". This was given enormous prominence in that such a film would boost the British film industry. That is splendid news. We all welcome it, but it is a sad reflection on the state of the industry and it shows how little we have achieved and how few films there have been that a remake is greeted with the excitement that *The Observer* understandably thought was appropriate. It said:

"Paramount's decision is the most important for the British film industry for many years."

However, a great deal more needs to be done. Scotland also has reason to be worried, for only one feature-length film has been made there in the past 18 months—"Tickets for the Zoo" by Brian Crumlish. It is the only Scottish film to be shown at the Edinburgh film festival.

I hope that, if this worthy new clause is accepted, the Minister will ensure that it encourages investment in this vital industry. As the hon. Member for Reading, West said, the industry is facing a great deal of change and competition, not all of it fair. The new Europe that will come in 1992 is all about competition and opportunities. The Department of Trade and Industry is letting the world go by in the film industry. It does not seem to realise that there are splendid opportunities there and that we should be encouraging indigenous talent within Britain and Europe, in competition with the United States, in an industry that has been sadly neglected for several years.

In 1990, United Kingdom film production was at its lowest level since 1981. A strong film industry influences overseas earnings and the balance of payments, and that is quite apart from the attraction of seeing a vibrant film and cinema industry. Whereas blockbusters like "Superman" and "Batman" were made with British expertise, over the past two years there have been times when there has been no major film production in the United Kingdom. Both as a source of new features and as a service centre for making foreign films, the industry is in a parlous state. We are reaping the cost of neglect.

As the hon. Member for Reading, West courageously suggested, our Government, unlike those of other countries, have treated film as an interesting luxury rather than as an industry and a producer of wealth. They have done this in the face of some unfair competition. The fiscal policies of other European Governments do not match ours and the concession that the new clause would introduce would help us to meet such competition from Europe and elsewhere. That is the very least that our filmakers are entitled to expect.

Even if the new clause is accepted, as it should be, there should be more encouragement for the film industry. The new clause is a first step in revitalising an industry in which there has not been a strategy for many years. The industry is facing the reality that many people are out of the habit of going to the cinema. Attendances have, I am happy to

say, increased in recent times but the trend not to visit the cinema is one that we must try firmly and steadfastly to reverse in the interests of this indigenous industry. For the most part we rely on fiscal incentives, and that is why the new clause is so important.

10.15 pm

There has been an absence of strategy. With the Films Act 1985, which is mentioned in the new clause, we rightly abolished the Eady levy. It had had its day. It was appropriate to patterns of cinema-going when it was in operation, but we have not replaced it with a modern approach to film production in Britain now or in future. I believe that it is vital to introduce a realistic replacement.

When we come to think of the future of the industry we must think also of those who use it. In the days of the Eady levy we thought that those who went to the cinema to see a film should make a contribution to the production of the next film. It seems remarkable, especially given the Government's fiscal policies and demands on a difficult industry, that television contributes so little to investment in the film industry and to film production.

I do not believe that there is a need for a permanent subsidy for our film industry, and I know few people who think otherwise. However, films should be recognised as the products of a key British industry. The industry should have the resources to create products that will succeed in the European market place. When we talk of Europe it is vital that we remember eastern Europe and the new influence that it will have on our ability to export and to make a contribution in a wider European scene. Our industry should have the potential to reach into the United States market and to reap the rewards that are available there. We have the talent and I believe that we have the commitment. The industry has the potential to be as important to the United Kingdom industry as Hollywood is to the United States' Exchequer.

Given incentives and a commitment by the House to some of the best film talent that is available anywhere in the world, progress can and should be made. By encouraging that we would see restored to Britain a once-great industry that would still give joy and pleasure to many millions.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I support the new clause of the hon. Member for Reading, West (Sir A. Durant) and the remarks of the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke).

You will know, Mr. Speaker, that many celebrated feature films have come from popular television programmes. After the televising of the proceedings of this place for some considerable time now we might be seeing as competition to Superman III and Rocky IV, House of Commons V or even, dare one say it, Mr. Speaker VI. I say that merely to highlight the fact that there are many programmes on British television, apart from the proceedings of the House, and many aspects of British life that have been dramatised for television that lend themselves to British film making.

As Oscar ceremonies have shown in recent years, we in the United Kingdom have proportionately the richest array of talent of any country in the world. We have actors who can stand with the best. We have writers who are sought after in the United States to write films for Americans. We have the best film music makers, ranging from the traditional to the avant garde. We have photographers, camera people and editors who have won prizes for the very best of films. We have directors who are in daily demand throughout the world.

British film excellence applies not only to blockbusters which were mentioned by the hon. Member for Reading, West; British directors have produced films which are perhaps of minority interest but which would have great potential if they received just a little more funding. We have produced film makers such as Peter Greenaway who is regarded as being among the best in the world even though he has hitherto made his films on a small budget.

It is perhaps also worth noting that for shipping companies the business expansion scheme limit has been raised to £5 million. Therefore, what the new clause seeks is not exclusive to the film industry. We are asking for something which is perhaps analogous to the shipping industry—the opportunity to invest more favourably in an industry which, like the shipping industry, was once very large and great but which has declined significantly in recent years for economic reasons and because of competition from elsewhere.

The new clause does not seek short-term measures. The idea behind the raising of the BES limit is to enable the film industry in the United Kingdom to regenerate itself over a period of years. My understanding of the proposal is that the film industry hopes to establish a £100 million fund for film making channelled through 20 BES production companies, each with a £5 million budget. The five-year plan would merge the 20 companies at the end of that period into one over-arching film production business with large investment funds and a "slate" of 25 films a year.

Although one might not see the BES funds on the approved list of funds in which local authority treasurers should invest their local government money, they would nevertheless catch the imagination of the public. There is plenty of evidence from the video boom and from the increasing attendances at many cinemas that the British public still want to see films. I believe that the British public would take pride in seeing more British films and that, above all, they would be prepared to invest in more British films. The French film industry is, relatively speaking, thriving and it produces many excellent films. That is an example of just one film industry elsewhere in the world which is galloping away from the British film industry.

People are prepared to invest in schemes as chancy as football pools and horse racing, and the BES is certainly a better bet than they are. I believe that the public would regard investing small amounts of money tax free in the film industry as well worth the gamble and if it is, indeed, a gamble it would be one which for some would bring the highest possible rewards imaginable if a British film became a blockbuster success at the box office.

The BES is tailor made for financing an industry such as the film industry, although I hope that the Minister will agree that it is self-evident that the present financial limit would not buy one fifth of a decently financed film which means that it is not a reality for the British film industry in its present form.

Mr. Chris Smith: As the joint secretary of the all-party group on the film industry, I support the new clause which was moved so ably by the chairman of that group. As always on these occasions, I must declare an interest, because the Association of Cinematograph, Television and

[Mr. Chris Smith]

Allied Technicians, now transmogrified into BECTU, makes an annual contribution to my constituency Labour party.

For many years, I have criticised the Government for neglecting the British film industry. It is ironic that at the very time when British cinema attendance is flourishing, investment in British-made films has effectively collapsed. In 1985, the figure was £220 million. In 1989, it was just £79 million. As a result, film production in this country is at its lowest level in a decade. Overseas earnings have fallen from £104 million in 1986 to a mere £42 million in 1988, and the figure is still falling.

It is not that we do not have the talent to make good films in this country, but that sufficient investment income is not available to allow that talent to be put to good use in film production.

Labour wants to create a long-term British film fund for the purpose of investing in domestic film production, matched by private sector finance. That would provide certainty of funding, which would assist producers to plan and to raise private capital. It would also allow production on a sufficiently large scale to overcome the problems inherent in making films for a market as small as that of the United Kingdom.

Much of the money required for such a fund could come from the industry itself. However, the proposal in new clause 15 to introduce business expansion scheme funds, with tax incentives, as part of a much larger scale strategy to aid British film production would go a long way to ensuring that the fund could get off the ground and operate effectively.

The fund's income would need to be matched by private capital from outside the industry, which is why fiscal incentives are so important.

Lords Commissioner to the Treasury (Mr. Irvine Patnick): At what cost?

Mr. Smith: The Conservative Whip mutters from the Treasury Bench.

Mr. Boateng: And somewhat incoherently.

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend is right. The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) would do well to acknowledge that 30 per cent. of film production costs return to the Treasury through value added tax, PAYE, and corporation tax. Before the hon. Member for Hallam jumps to any rapid conclusions about the supposed cost of such a proposal, he should do his sums more carefully than Conservative Members appear to have done so far.

My hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) stressed the importance of expanding the British film industry's geographical base. At present, the industry is heavily concentrated in London. Labour local authorities in places such as Birmingham and Sheffield understand much better than the Government the potential role that the film industry has to play in the economy, and they have introduced media development agencies that encourage and assist the growth of film making in their areas. Those are innovative ideas, and we would do better to build on them nationally.

The Scottish Development Agency has already helped to establish Scottish Screen Locations—which attracts film makers to Scotland for individual productions. I hope that will help to reverse the decline in Scottish film making to which my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West rightly drew attention.

The Government should also realise that training is a vital factor in the recovery of our film industry. The industry has traditionally depended on loose apprenticeships in which people have learnt on the job, earning little or no pay. A number of initiatives have helped—not least the establishment of the North East Media Training Centre, which has pioneered new courses as part of an ambitious attempt to use the audio-visual media in regional development. The Labour party is committed to a training policy allowing employers to invest in their work forces, as they should in other parts of British industry.

10.30 pm

The new clause proposes exactly what Labour proposed when we debated last year's Finance Bill: the raising of the business expansion scheme limit for investment in the film industry from £750,000 to £5 million. What is good enough for private property under the present Government should be good enough for the film industry. It is very difficult to make a feature film for £750,000—extremely difficult, for any film maker worth his salt. A more reasonable BES limit should be introduced. If it is good enough for shipping and for private rented property, it must surely be good enough for the film industry.

Our film industry ought to be one of the most flourishing parts of British industry as a whole. We have the talent, the audiences, the traditions and the people—people with skills, ready to make the films. The new clause would provide the finance that would ensure that the industry could indeed flourish.

Mr. Maude: I sympathise with many of the sentiments expressed in this short debate. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West (Sir A. Durant) on the way in which he presented the proposal. Many tributes have already been paid to the skills, talents and abilities of those who work in the British film industry; let me pay my own warm tribute to those people, whose performance —as has been mentioned—has been regularly recognised in various award ceremonies.

What should be done to assist the industry, and, in particular, to encourage British investors? We would all applaud an increase in British investment. The new clause proposes an increase in the business expansion scheme limit from £750,000 to £5 million. As far as I am aware, no investment in films through the BES has been prevented by the existing limit, although I should be glad to hear from hon. Members who have any evidence to the contrary. The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) implied that there was a huge, dammed-up demand for investment, which had been frustrated by the limit.

Mr. Chris Smith: Surely the Financial Secretary realises that the present level is so low in relation to the normal costs of producing a film that the great majority of film-makers would not begin to consider establishing a BES fund. The problem is that the limit acts as a disincentive. If the limit is raised, I suspect that we would see more interest in using the BES as a vehicle.

Mr. Maude: The hon. Gentleman may well be right. I can say only that before the £500,000 was introduced in

1988, there was virtually no investment in films through the BES. That may be different now and I do not reject the interesting proposition.

When my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer presented his Budget in March, he said that we could not introduce any specific taxation measures to help the film industry, but that we recognised the strength of the case and would look sympathetically at any taxation propositions by the industry and a proposition has now been made. As I have said, we are not fundamentally out of sympathy with the approach. There may be a means, through the proposition, of tapping into funds that would otherwise be funnelled into the film industry, but which are being prevented or discouraged from doing that at the moment.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Nineteen eighty eight was three years ago. Some of us believe that the reference to that in the Chancellor's speech was a slip of the tongue. I do not know whether that was the case, but will the Financial Secretary tell us about the progress made by the Department of Trade and Industry's working party? If he cannot, the high hopes that were raised at the Downing street summit will have been dashed. We have heard nothing in the debate so far to offer us encouragement.

Mr. Maude: The hon. Gentleman will hear plenty about the work of the Department of Trade and Industry working party from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. I cannot report to the House about that this evening. I can report to the House about the state of the Government's mind on taxation issues and I am ready to do that.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer said that we would continue to pursue and discuss with the film industry what taxation measures might be introduced to assist the industry. It appears that the industry would support the measure. As I have said, we are not fundamentally out of sympathy with it. I am prepared to look carefully with the industry at the possibilities to discover whether the proposition offers an answer.

Sir Anthony Durant: My hon. Friend the Financial Secretary's response was not as forthcoming as I had hoped, but at least there was some sign that the proposal would be examined as part of the general examination of fiscal measures to help the industry. On the strict understanding that the proposal will not be lost in the discussions, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 16

UNITED KINGDOM AUTHORISED UNIT TRUSTS

'Authorised unit trusts: unfranked income trusts

468G—(1) This section applies where—

(a) as regards a distribution period ending after 31st December 1991 a dividend is treated by virtue of section 468(2) as paid to a unit holder (whether or not income is in fact paid to the unit holder), and

(b) all or part (in this section the "appropriate portion") of the dividend is paid from sources other than franked investment income, and

(c) the dividend is treated as paid by the trustees of a unit trust scheme which is an authorised unit trust as respects the accounting period in which the distribution period falls, and

(d) arrangements with the Board as provided in section 468H are in force in respect of such unit trust scheme.

(2) Where this section applies, if the unit holder to whom the dividend is treated as paid is not resident in the United Kingdom for the whole of the year of assessment in which the dividend is treated as paid and is resident in a qualifying country, he shall be entitled, on the payment (or deemed payment) of the appropriate portion of the dividend, to payment by the trustees of such unit trust scheme of the tax credit (if any) to which an individual resident in the United Kingdom would have been entitled had he received such dividend, and no United Kingdom tax shall be payable in respect of such dividend or the amount of the tax credit so paid.

(3) For the purposes of subsection (2) above, a person shall be treated as not resident in the United Kingdom and resident in a qualifying country for a year of assessment if this is proved on a claim in that behalf made to the Board.

(4) Where units are held under a trust and the person who is the beneficiary in possession under the trust is the sole beneficiary in possession and can, by means either of the revocation of the trust or the exercise of any power under the trust, call upon the trustees at any time to transfer the units to him absolutely free from the trust, that person shall, for the purposes of this section, be treated as the unit holder.

(5) The trustees shall certify in writing to the investor the appropriate portion of the dividend together with the amount of the tax credit referable thereto and to which a recipient is entitled to a payment as provided in this section.

(6) In this section "qualifying country" means any country which is at any time during such year of assessment a member state of the European Economic Community or any other country which is for the time being designated for the purposes of this section as a qualifying country by order made by the Board.

Authorised unit trusts: payment by trustees

468H—(1) The trustees of an authorised unit trust may enter into arrangements with the Board in respect of unit holders who would, if such arrangements were in force, be entitled to payment of the associated tax credit under section 468G.

(2) Under such arrangements where a dividend falling within section 468G is treated by virtue of section 468(2) as paid to unit holders in respect of whom the arrangements have been made—

(a) the trustees may pay to such unit holders the amount of the associated tax credit in respect of the appropriate portion of the dividend (the "additional amount"); and

(b) all additional amounts so paid shall be set against advance corporation tax which the trustees are liable to pay for the return period in which the dividend was paid and shall discharge a corresponding amount of that liability.

(3) The Board shall not make arrangements under this section unless they are satisfied that the payment of the additional amounts shall not enure to the benefit of persons other than those entitled thereto.

(4) The effective period of such arrangements shall begin with the date on which the arrangements are made, or such later or earlier date as may be specified in the arrangements, and shall end with the date on which either party receives notice in writing from the other terminating the arrangements, or such later date as may be specified in the notice.

(5) The trustees shall render the Board an account at such time, and containing such particulars relating to the dividend as the Board may require.'.—*[Mr. Watts.]*

Mr. John Watts (Slough): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

New clause 16 would introduce two new sections into the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988—468G and 468H. I am moving the clause on behalf of the Unit Trusts Association, although I have no financial interest in that association.

[Mr. John Watts]

My hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury will have seen the same new clause in the Committee of last year's Finance Bill. I will therefore be brief in rehearsing the arguments because they are well known to him. I am moving the new clause again tonight to elicit what progress has been made in the discussions between my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary and the unit trust industry about changes in the tax regime to improve the competitive position of the British unit trust industry in the export market, particularly in the European Community. I know that my hon. Friend has an aversion to the phrase "level playing field", so I will avoid using it. The whole underlying purpose of the new clause is to provide a better basis on which the United Kingdom industry can compete and sell into what is an important investment market.

Without going into the detail of the drafting, which is unnecessary, the new clause would allow a foreign investor in a United Kingdom unit trust to receive dividends gross without deduction of tax. Such investors, perhaps in France or in Germany, would already be entitled to a tax credit and would be able to recover at a subsequent date tax deducted at source. If they invested in a domestic vehicle—in a French or German fund—they would not suffer that initial deduction. From the point of view of cash flow, the investor is better placed if a United Kingdom fund is able to pay dividends gross than he is under the present taxation arrangements. I know that in the past the Treasury has argued that that is a small part of the United Kingdom unit trust industry's business and that there is insufficient justification for changing the law to provide a better tax regime.

The industry, of course, argues that one of the reasons why it is currently a small area of business is that the existing tax regime is unfavourable to the development of the business and that if the changes that I propose were made it would be far easier for it to sell its products into the European market and to add to our invisible export earnings. The industry argues that it would generate additional revenue for the Treasury because, although the investment vehicle itself would not generate tax income for the Treasury, the management activities of the unit trust managers would be more profitable and, therefore, they would pay more tax.

I have described the argument in essence. At present, the industry cannot compete in international income funds on the same terms as some of its European competitors. That sector of funds is critical to United Kingdom fund managers' export success because it combines the strengths of London as an international fund management centre with the increasing demand in Europe from the aging population for such investment vehicles which means that there is a large and growing market. I hope that my hon. Friend can give some encouraging reply to the debate today.

Mr. Maude: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr. Watts) for raising the matter in the way that he has. I know that he has had a long-term interest in the matter and has, with my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith), pursued it consistently and effectively. All hon. Members share my hon. Friends' concern that United Kingdom unit trusts should be able to compete effectively with their continental counterparts.

The special lower rate of corporation tax which we introduced for unit trusts in 1989 removed a serious disadvantage faced by unit trusts. The main beneficiaries were bond funds and it is encouraging to see recent advertisements for newly set up unit trusts investing in bonds. Moreover, an individual in this country who wants to invest in a collective investment fund cannot generally do better than to invest in a unit trust.

In the rest of the European Community, unit trusts investing in United Kingdom equities and in international equities growth are in a good position to compete with their continental counterparts. That is important given that those unit trusts account for the bulk of existing funds under management. The United Kingdom industry has most experience of running equities funds.

I recognise that the Unit Trust Association is concerned about the competitive position of unit trusts invested in bonds, and those that are invested in international equities for income. As I understand it, the new clause is aimed at improving the competitive position of these funds by allowing them to pay income to continental investors free of United Kingdom tax.

10.45 pm

The benefits, however, would not be as great as has been suggested. First, Britain is already a better place to set up income funds in international equities than Luxembourg, which is often seen as London's main competitor. However, in some cases a home country fund of this sort, for example, a French fund for a French investor, can produce a better return for investors. That would remain the case even if the new clause were adopted.

Second, taxpaying investors in other European Community countries, such as France, which give full credit for British tax would not end up with any more income from unit trusts after tax. They would simply end up paying extra home country tax that would cancel out the British tax that was saved.

Third, it is far from clear that tax is the main constraint on more sales by unit trusts on the continent. There are also the problems of the unfamiliarity of the trust vehicle in many Community countries and the difference in pricing methods. The Department of Trade and Industry is considering the case for company law changes to permit open-ended investment companies which might be more familiar to continental investors. But, as my hon. Friends accept, that is a complex exercise which will inevitably take some time.

The new clause is lengthy, and I fear it would be lengthier still once some extra parts had been added to make it workable. The end result would inevitably be a more complicated tax regime for unit trusts. It would mean a greater administrative burden for unit trust managers.

Overall, therefore, the new clause's disadvantages outweigh any benefits that it might bring, which might be more limited than has been suggested.

One of the disadvantages would be that there could be problems over foreign tax for equities funds on income from abroad which, in an extreme case, could mean that United Kingdom investors were worse off.

I know that the UTA is shortly to respond to an invitation from the DTI to put forward suggestions as to the form open-ended investment companies might take. It seems to me that the best way forward would be to see whether my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for

Trade and Industry decides companies of this sort should be allowed. If so, we can then move on to look at how open-ended investment companies should be taxed, once we know what they look like. At that stage, we would of course be glad to have the industry's views on their tax treatment, including any comments on how continental investors should be dealt with.

I assure my hon. Friends that this is something that we take seriously. I have discussed this matter personally with the UTA on at least one occasion, if not several. It is certainly not something that we are allowing to go by default. We are concerned that British fund management, which is, after all, a great British success story, should not suffer competitive disadvantages by comparison with competition elsewhere in the European Community.

Mr. Watts: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his acknowledgement of the importance of the role of the unit trust movement and his clear willingness to continue to examine with it the ways in which its competitive position might be improved.

On that basis, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 22

CAR TAX: AMENDMENT OF CAR TAX ACT 1983

'For section 52(2) of the Car Tax Act 1983 there shall be substituted the following:

"(2) Car tax on any vehicle shall be charged for vehicles recording a touring fuel consumption in the following categories:

(a) 40 m.p.g. and above—zero
(b) 30 m.p.g. to 39 m.p.g.—5%
(c) 25 m.p.g. to 29 m.p.g.—7½%
(d) zero to 24 m.p.g.—10%

(2A) For the purpose of determining the Touring Fuel Consumption, official Government economy figures will be used as follows:

50 per cent of urban cycle
25 per cent of 56 m.p.h.
25 per cent of 75 m.p.h. steady speed cycles.".'.—*[Mr. Roger King.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this, it will be convenient to consider also new clause 31—*Car tax: reduction where pollution control devices fitted—*

'—. After section 1(2) of the Car Tax Act 1983 there shall be added

"(2A) Where a chargeable vehicle other than a caravan is fitted with a catalytic converter (or such other pollution control device as the Treasury may specify in regulations made under this section) at the time car tax falls to be paid under section 5 below and that time is not earlier than 1st July 1991, subsection (2)(b) above shall have effect as if the reference to 10 per cent. was a reference to 7½ per cent.".'.

Mr. King: It will come as no surprise to my hon. Friend the Minister that I rise again in a Finance Bill debate to raise the issue of the special car tax, which has been with us for many years—since value added tax was introduced—and which is a strong bone of contention with the motor industry belt of the west midlands where we feel that this element of taxation, which is unique to one type of product in the United Kingdom, detrimentally affects the sales of our products within the United Kingdom. At a time when the car industry is facing a downturn in its home market, we believe that the special car tax is long overdue for some reform.

A study of taxation of cars throughout Europe shows that in the United Kingdom the present level of taxation on a new car is in excess of 27 per cent., compared with 14 per cent. in Germany and about 22 per cent., which is falling rapidly and will fall further shortly, in countries such as France. Elsewhere the level of taxation is lower than in the United Kingdom.

Recently, car production in Britain has enjoyed a record level of output. That is because the industry has found a ready market overseas, principally in Europe, because of the improved quality of the product and its desirability in the marketplace. But it must be remembered that in connection with competitive pricing terms in the European market, the industry needs a strong home market. A strong home market gives it viability and competitiveness in the export market. While it is possible to make up for a shortfall in the home market by diverting products to the overseas market, that is not a long-term solution.

In addition, the retail sector is feeling the effects of the prolonged recession to a greater degree than perhaps any other industry, save the construction industry. Many retail businesses have gone out of business as a result of the downturn in United Kingdom sales, which are expected to fall this year to 1·5 million or even 1·4 million, from a peak of 2·2 million in 1989.

Another factor that we must bear in mind is the Government's desire to improve on the green aspect of their policies. We all understand and applaud that. The trouble is that if one does not tackle the problem of the car, one's green policies are somewhat suspect. If we do not encourage the sale of new cars in the United Kingdom, we shall be left with a growing elderly fleet of cars which, by their nature, are obsolete in design and have inferior emission standards. So it is in every one's interests to ensure that there is a ready market for new environmentally acceptable motor cars in the United Kingdom. That means that we should do what we can to stimulate sales.

There is no doubt that, along with manufacturers, the retail sector is playing its part in reducing prices as much as possible and offering financial incentives to encourage those important sales. But whatever the retail sector and the manufacturers do, we are still left with the 27 per cent. level of taxation.

We understand the Government's problems in eliminating the 10 per cent. special car tax. The tax brings in a large sum of money. However, this year that income will be much reduced as a result of the downturn in the United Kingdom market. But we see some clear linkage between providing environmental incentives and reducing the 10 per cent. special car tax.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Transport put it clearly on Tuesday 9 July. He called on car makers to produce more fuel-efficient engines because

"We cannot waste any time getting to grips with this challenge . . . It is, of course, for the Chancellor to decide whether any further changes in motoring taxation are appropriate to encourage greater fuel efficiency.

But fiscal incentives are a flexible instrument which require no new bureaucracy for their administration.

They leave motorists with complete freedom of choice while providing an incentive for them to choose economical cars and drive less aggressively.

At the same time they concentrate the minds of vehicle manufacturers on the importance of fuel economy."

We understand that fact. He was alluding there to possible changes in duty on fuel, but there are other ways. The 10 per cent. special car tax is one matter to which we should address ourselves. New clause 22 goes a long way to giving a clear indication of how the Government should think about encouraging the use of more environmentally friendly, fuel-efficient motor cars. We accept that it may not be possible to do something this year, but due consideration should be given in the next Budget to tackling the particular difficulty of the 10 per cent. special car tax.

We have devised a formula and a method to implement it. It establishes a touring fuel consumption using the Government's fuel figures, which are well known and well documented, to categorise cars into four fuel-consumption classes. Cars that achieve 40 miles to the gallon and above on the formula would attract a zero rate of the 10 per cent. special car tax. The car tax would rise to the level of the car that achieved only 24 miles per gallon or below, on which the full 10 per cent. special car tax would be payable.

The formula has the attraction of linking new car sales with environmentally acceptable vehicles, which it is the Government's aim to achieve. The Government have set themselves the target of restricting CO_2 emissions to present levels in the year 2005. Given the growth in motor transport, that will prove very difficult indeed. If we can make a sea change in the marketplace by attracting drivers to buy more fuel-efficient cars, the levels that the Government seek to achieve can be met by the motor car industry. Naturally, the Government must also take steps to deal with emissions from power stations, factories and so on, but, given the potential growth in road traffic, this formula is the one way in which the Government can in a businesslike way set about attracting consumers to buy more fuel-efficient cars. In that spirit, I commend the new clause.

Sir Hal Miller (Bromsgrove): It gives me great pleasure to second the new clause so ably moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King). Indeed, we consulted on its terms.

I have previously described the Budget as an unhelpful and unpleasant surprise for the motor industry—unhelpful in that the industry was singled out for additional taxation, whether through national insurance contributions on company cars and fuel, the increase in taxation on company cars or the unique impost arising from the special car tax uprated to 27 per cent. by the increase in VAT, which no other consumer durable bears.

Tonight I wish to approach the subject in a more constructive spirit. On Friday I said:

"The motor industry is anxious and willing to make its contribution to improving the environment for all of us, as well as giving us the advantages of mobility and security." —[*Official Report*, 12 July 1991; Vol. 194, c. 1271.]

I said that the industry needed targets towards which to work. This is not just a sudden rush to green the industry. I was personally responsible for the motor industry's contribution to the Government's original White Paper. I arranged discussions between the Secretaries of State for the Environment, for Transport and for Energy and Treasury Ministers, and the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders. Since then we have been trying to obtain from the Government some targets to give the White Paper teeth. The only targets that we could light on were fiscal ones, which we believe are necessary.

I welcome the proposal of the Secretary of State for Transport in his recent White Paper on the environment and transport that market signals and incentives, apart from regulation and the provision of infrastructure, are the routes to adopt to improve the environment. Since the publication of the White Paper, my hon. Friend and I have been trawling all those Departments, seeking methods to improve the environment.

The first line of approach that we adopted was the suggestion that, in the short term, the only way to achieve the Government's target of stabilising CO_2 emissions was by the wider use of diesel engines until further research had been undertaken to make cars running on alternative fuels practicable. There has been some recent publicity about the potential of the hydrogen cell. However, its use is still 10 years away on the most optimistic forecasts, or perhaps 20 years away on a more realistic time scale.

In the meantime, how do we cut CO_2 emissions? The catalyst cannot help because it aggravates the problem. The new clause tabled by the Opposition is a case of Johnny-come-lately. Their attempts to persuade the motorist that they are on his side are laughable in view of the remarks made by their spokesman on the environment in the debate on Friday. The Opposition's proposals are of no practical purpose because manufacturers have already made arrangements to meet the statutory requirements for the installation of catalysts in cars in the next model year. There is nothing to be gained from the Opposition's new clause.

11 pm

We are still trying to enable the industry to undertake the contribution that it is willing and anxious to make towards environmental improvements. My hon. Friend the Member for Northfield was rebuffed in Committee on the use of diesel fuel, which would have been a significant help to the environment. However, I understood from the various Secretaries of State I met that that option was their preferred choice. That is why the Budget was an unpleasant surprise.

Now we are trying to introduce targets and inducements for people to purchase more economical cars to cut down on the use of carbon. The use of diesel is much the quickest way to do that, but the Treasury has apparently developed new-found environmental skills that have eluded other Departments and it claims that diesel does not contribute towards reducing environmental harm. The Government's reasoning is obscure, but, even accepting the Treasury at its own word, we have presented yet another proposal to reduce the use of carbon. We aim to switch the public preference to more economical cars, which means more economical driving. At the same time we seek to reduce the obvious bias against the motor industry in our taxation system.

I am sorry to have to take issue with Treasury Ministers at this time of night. I have warm personal regard for them, but some of the correspondence I have received recently from the Treasury is so ignorant as to be breathtaking. One cannot sustain the assertion that our cars are not more heavily taxed than those on the continent. That is not true except for a few luxury models. As my hon. Friend the Member for Northfield has established, that assertion flies in the face of the facts. However, I do not wish to be vindictive.

We are trying to make our contribution towards improving the environment. We need to have targets. Tonight we are talking about fuel consumption as opposed to emissions, but I have suggested targets for improving the quality of fuels. In the past I have asked why we are wasting time trying to deal with what comes out of the engine instead of what goes in.

I have argued for greater research on alternative fuels, but there are things that we could do now in this Budget, and certainly in the next, to improve the position. What is incomprehensible is the fact that every time one tries to make that effort the Treasury dreams up some ill-founded reason for opposing it. That goes against the thrust of Government policy as set out by the Prime Minister in his speech on Monday last, as set out by the Secretary of State for Transport in his White Paper, and as set out in the White Paper produced by the Secretary of State for the Environment to which the motor industry—through my agency—made a significant contribution. We are not harking back, being vindictive or trying to rub people up the wrong way; we are trying to make progress. I hope that the Minister will say something to show that that effort to

improve the environment and provide signals to purchasers and drivers of cars is understood and will go some way towards being accepted.

Dr. Marek: If those Conservative Members who have spoken really want to do something for the environment and limit carbon dioxide emissions from motor cars, an obvious way to do so is to insist that every car has a governor to stop it going more than 70 mph. I do not know whether that suggestion would find much favour in the House, but if it were adopted, big cars simply would not be bought. Legally, no one should travel at more than 70 mph.

Sir Hal Miller: In America, where speed limits are lower than in this country, people still buy large cars.

Dr. Marek: That may be to do with the fact that petrol in the United States is much cheaper than in this country.

I sympathise with the new clauses. Although new clause 31 represents no commitment by a future Labour Government, it seeks to show a commitment to caring for the environment, which will be at the forefront of the actions of the next Labour Government. There is a deadline for catalytic converters anyway, and if a general election is delayed for too long, that deadline may overtake events.

I wonder whether the new clause is properly targeted. it must cost many hundreds of millions of pounds. There must be a certain amount of special pleading by the Conservative Members who have spoken——

Mr. Roger King: What?

Dr. Marek: The hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) is laughing and pretending to look nonplussed, but I think that he realises what I am saying.

I need to be convinced that the targeting of the new clause would achieve the environmental benefits better than any other method. There are other ways of achieving the same aim. The new clause would result in a major loss to the Revenue but would not have much effect on the environment. However, I remain to be convinced and if the Minister of State thinks that I am wrong I hope that she will say so. I insist that we need to pay more attention to the environment. There is no doubt that carbon dioxide problems are important. We may have to get rid of the car tax eventually anyway because of European legislation. If so, I should like to look at that because our car industry should not have to compete at a disadvantage with other European car manufacturers. This country will be prosperous and healthy only if the British car industry is properous and healthy. However, I have some doubts and reservations about the new clause and shall be interested to hear what the Minister has to say.

Mr. Wallace: The intention of both the new clauses in relation to improving the environment is laudable, and to that extent we should support them. I always think that if we were serious in our intent to tackle environmental problems involving cars, the first step that we could take within the powers of the House would be to change our mileage allowance scheme, which currently gives a greater incentive to those who run bigger cars. It is interesting that their Lordships did so—I think that they have a standardised mileage allowance, regardless of the car's size —*[Interruption.]* I can see to what controversy such a proposal would give rise. However, if we wish to be serious about the problem, and to be taken seriously about it, we could set that example.

I do not think that there is too much dispute about the car's contribution to pollution. Although leaded petrol may be on the decline, road traffic produces carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxides, hydrocarbons and carbon monoxide. Road traffic accounts for 18 per cent. of Britain's emissions of carbon dioxide—a major greenhouse gas. Nitrogen oxides—of which 45 per cent. of total emissions originate from cars—are a major cause of acid rain.

Clearly, this issue must be tackled, but I fear that if it is to be tackled in an effective way, the consequences will be difficult for any political party to face. Over time, tackling the problem will lead to an increase in petrol taxation. The sooner that all parties face that and plan for the solution over a period, rather than allowing the solution to be forced on us by sheer force of circumstances, the better it will be for the consumer.

We should not forget the costs to the average household of traffic congestion. An estimate from the Confederation of British Industry showed that each household pays £10 a week extra for goods and services as a result of traffic congestion. The growing traffic congestion on our roads has not only an environmental effect, but a general effect in terms of the cost to industry.

I said that the measure was modest, and I suspect that, in the longer term, vehicle excise duty may be more geared to the environmental friendliness of a particular car. We should enter into discussions with car manufacturers and other interested organisations to develop specifications for achievable levels of fuel efficiency and emissions of pollutants. Those specifications should become stricter over a period, and perhaps it would be possible to vary the vehicle excise duty according to the degree of specification cars attain and abolish it for cars that meet a high specification.

We must be alert to the problems of rural districts, where a car is not a luxury, but often an essential. Many car drivers in rural regions already tend to drive smaller models. While it is often thought that the mileages are higher, many of them are necessary. If we were to switch from vehicle excise duty to petrol tax, it would not necessarily be as disadvantageous as is sometimes thought.

One of the main reasons for higher petrol prices in rural districts is that the throughput of traffic at many rural garages is low, so the mark-up for the retail petrol has to be that much greater. Value added tax is put on top of that price and on top of the duty. To some extent, the Government are receiving revenue through the disadvantages with which many motorists in rural regions have to cope.

I do not think that the new clause will be put to a vote, but I think that we are discussing the initial stages of something that, over a period, will have to be dealt with by something more radical than any proposals made this evening.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I pay tribute to my hon. Friends the Members for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) and for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller), both for their contributions this evening and for their continuing, vigorous support of the British car industry. They advanced valid arguments about the need for green measures and said that such measures could encourage the

home market for cars. I hesitate to take issue with either of them because they are such experts in their field, but I am told that Holland, Portugal, Spain, Ireland, Greece, Denmark and Belgium all have roughly equal or higher rates of tax on non-luxury cars. If my hon. Friends know otherwise, I would be pleased to look into it further.

Sir Hal Miller: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mrs. Shephard: My hon. Friend is about to tell me.

11.15 pm

Sir Hal Miller: I said that Treasury officials have speciously seized on luxury rates of tax for larger cars. For volume cars in the middle range the taxation is demonstrably factually much higher in this country.

Mrs. Shephard: I said that I would look into the matter further, and I certainly shall. I should be grateful to receive those exact details from my hon. Friend.

There are some problems with the proposals set out by my hon. Friends the Members for Bromsgrove and for Northfield. First, there is no conclusive evidence that reducing car tax rates would lead to consumers switching to more fuel-efficient vehicles because only switching at the lower margin of each tax band would incur a tax incentive.

One of the major problems is cost. Car tax yields £1·3 billion a year and the proposal in new clause 22 would cost about £880 million. Obviously, it would be necessary to discover how that might otherwise be raised. Some 95 per cent. of cars are in the 25-miles-per-gallon or better category, so there would be a considerable dead weight in the proposed tax incentive.

As I have said, the current car tax yield is £1·3 billion. That is a large amount of revenue for the Government, and careful thought would have to be given to finding the nearly £1 billion that would be given over by the clause. Both my hon. Friends the Members for Bromsgrove and for Northfield said that fuel consumption was determined by the type of vehicle and driving conditions. The manner in which the vehicle is driven is also significant.

The Government have not been inactive in the introduction of green measures for motoring. The difference in pump prices between leaded and unleaded petrol is more than 18p per gallon, and 40 per cent. of all petrol that is sold is unleaded. There is also a considerable difference at the pumps between the price of diesel and leaded petrol. I note what my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove said about diesel. There is no doubt that diesel is certainly more efficient than petrol. Diesel-powered cars can travel more miles per gallon than their petrol-driven counterparts. However, my hon. Friends may be prepared to concede that there is some evidence that the emissions from diesel may be as polluting as those from petrol vehicles.

Sir Hal Miller *rose——*

Mrs. Shephard: I have trailed my coat again.

Sir Hall Miller: Because the efficiency and economy of diesel are so much greater, the environmental advantage of emissions is about 20 per cent., quite apart from the carbon consumption.

Mrs. Shephard: I certainly accept that diesel-driven cars are more efficient. I conceded that.

In response to the Opposition clause, I can do no better than quote from a Finance Bill debate of two years ago. The hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) said:

> "As we must change our exhaust systems and introduce catalytic converters in a few years' time, what is the point of having an incentive?. . . There is no question of providing an incentive to fit catalytic converters. It has to be done. We have agreed it with the EC. There are cases for incentives in certain circumstances, but they should be argued on their merits." —*[Official Report,* 11 July 1989; Vol. 156, c. 902.]

I could not make a better argument in answer to new clause 31 than he did then about financial incentives for fitting catalytic converters.

The Government recognise the importance of the motor industry and wish to see the advances made in the past few years maintained. The market situation is not easy, and it is a tribute to the industry's strength and flexibility that it has been able to increase production this year compared with last year, despite the downturn in the domestic market. Production is up 6 per cent. in the first four months of 1991 over the same period last year. There has been a massive surge in exports, with a 101 per cent. increase in the number of cars produced for export over the same period.

I thank my hon. Friends the Members for Northfield and for Bromsgrove for their contributions, for their continuing effort and for their vigorous support of this important industry. They will know that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has said that he will look carefully at the impact of this year's measures on the industry when he is considering next year's Budget. I am sure that they will encourage him to do so.

Mr. Roger King: We all listened with great interest to my hon. Friend's comments. We shall inwardly digest what she has said. There is no escaping the fact that embracing environmental incentives—the Government have done so admirably with their policy on leaded fuel, which has cost the Exchequer considerable sums of money, although leaded fuel has gone up in price to compensate —it costs a great deal of money. We are well aware that the motor car is one of the main contributing factors to pollution and if we take up the challenge of containing that pollution, we have to look at arrangements such as those suggested in new clause 22. The challenge will not go away and until the Government produce a programme of environmental incentives along the lines of that which we have set out, I am not sure that they will meet the targets that they have set.

The challenge will be an expensive one to meet. However, our proposals will not be as expensive as my hon. Friend the Minister suggested. Not everybody will buy an economy car in year one or year two. Plenty of people will still wish to buy cars in the other bands. Given the downturn in the market from 2·2 million to 1·5 million, and below, this year, the Exchequer has lost an enormous amount of money. The modest tickle up of the industry that we are suggesting may be just what the Chancellor needs to bring money into his coffers.

As I said in my opening speech, we are probing, pushing, trying to find a way to encourage the Government to move along the lines that we are suggesting. We shall renew our attempts next year. Therefore, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 25

EQUITY RELEASE PRODUCT

'. In section 656 of the Taxes Act 1988 the following subsection shall be inserted after subsection (4):—

"(4A) Where—

(a) the entire consideration given for the grant of an annuity consists of an amount payable on the death of the person purchasing the annuity,

(b) that person has attained the age of 65 years at the date of the grant, and

(c) the aggregate of that amount and of all other amounts (if any) payable on the death of that person and falling within this subsection does not exceed £100,000,

the value of the consideration given for the grant of the annuity for the purposes of subsections (2) and (3) above shall be deemed to be the amount payable on the death.".'—*[Mr. Norris.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The new clause addresses a serious problem facing many elderly people. I start by declaring an interest as a director of Haven Services Ltd, a company which manages sheltered housing for more than 4,000 elderly people and their families. The company is 49·9 per cent. owned by Commercial Union, which has provided me with the technical information in this brief.

We live in an aging society. The number of people who were over 75 in 1985 was 3·8 million. In five years' time, there will be 4·2 million over 75, and when we are a short way into the next millennium, this will have risen to nearly 5 million.

Many of those elderly people will rely upon the state for their welfare. Some of the more prudent will have tried to provide for themselves in retirement, but they will have seen their savings eroded by the passage of time or by inflation to a point where their entire upkeep will have been thrown on to the state. There are some who do not have families on which they can rely, and there are some families that are not in a position to provide for their older relatives.

An OECD conference three years ago identified three principal ways of funding the rising costs of aging populations. First, it suggested that state benefits could become larger. Secondly, it was suggested that we could keep people at work longer. Thirdly, it was suggested that we could encourage elderly people to provide better for themselves, and the new clause is designed to provide that encouragement. It would ensure that a way was opened to enable an elderly person's own resources to be used better to provide cash for living.

As pressure on public funds grows, every effort must be made to allow those who could help themselves to do so. That in turn will allow public funds to be used to help those who have no other resources and more immediate needs. The Government recognise that need through the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990, which envisages more private funding of care and the greater provision of care in the home.

We all know how much old people would prefer to stay in their own home. That was made clear in the Griffiths report of 1988, which led to legislation in 1989. Many elderly homeowners sadly become frail or lose their mobility, but they could stay in their own home if nursing and other relevant care were available to them. All too often, tragically, they cannot afford that care and they lose their independence far more quickly than they need. The tragedy is that when the need is at its greatest, the wherewithal to meet the need is not available in ready cash. The huge irony is that many elderly people own their own houses. Currently 46 per cent. of retired people are in that position, and the percentage is increasing. Incidentally, most of the properties of these people are owned outright.

The house that is owned by an elderly person may represent a sizeable capital asset. It makes eminent sense to use its value while still allowing the elderly person to live in it. That encourages self-reliance, and it is consistent with the Government's policy to encourage privately funded age care. In present circumstances, however, these people —classically asset rich but cash poor—are compelled to sell up and part with their chief asset, losing along the way the increasing value of their property, of course, or they are forced to become a drain on their family or on the state.

There are options already. There are mortgages that are linked to annuities or investment bonds. There are home reversion schemes where the house is sold and the occupant continues as a tenant. There are roll-up loans, where a mortgage has its interest rolled up until death. All these are known broadly as equity release schemes, but each of them currently suffers considerable disadvantages.

As the Building Societies Association said in 1988, the low take-up of the schemes, in spite of the keen interest in them, was due to the limitations of the mechanisms rather than a lack of underlying demand. More seriously, recently two companies were expelled from FIMBRA for effectively promoting unworkable schemes. There are instances, sadly, of participants ending up paying out more money than the scheme delivers back to them.

With a minor change to the tax rules—this is the subject of the new clause—an equity release scheme that would be truly valuable could be available. In essence, the scheme would work as follows. An elderly householder would promise an insurance company that after his death a sum agreed between the two would be paid to the insurance company. The promise could be secured on the house or on other assets. In return, the insurance company would pay a regular and increasing amount to the participant. Companies operating such schemes would fund the payments from the pool of funds reverting to the company after the deaths of the participants. The key is that no borrowing is involved, hence there would be no interest payments to participants. Such schemes are immune to interest rate fluctuations and are therefore dependable and effective as a source of income.

If such schemes are to work, current tax rules need alteration. The new clause widens their scope to make it entirely clear that a participant would receive no interest element in his equity release income. The income is, in effect, an advance repayment of his own capital—that is, part of his estate. Technically, the participant will use part of the value of the house to buy a monthly sum until he dies, which amounts, in effect, to an annuity.

Such a scheme is therefore governed by the tax rules on annuities and the new clause would modify the relevant section—section 656—of the Taxes Act 1988. The payments received by the participant are in two parts—first, capital because it returns to him his purchase price over time and, secondly, income representing interest on the capital before it is paid back to him.

If the new clause were accepted, it would allow for schemes that would give participants predictable payments for their lifetime.

11.30 pm

Mr. Charles Wardle (Bexhill and Battle): Is my hon. Friend aware that his proposal would be especially attractive to people who retired before 1978 and the introduction of the state earnings-related pension scheme? As he will know, in Bexhill in my constituency 46 per cent. of the population is 65 years of age or over. Many people retired before 1978 and the average statistic of an uplift in income over the past decade of 23 per cent. above the rate of inflation does not apply to them because they do not have additional earnings over and above their basic state old-age pension. My hon. Friend's scheme is especially attractive to people who wish to stay in their houses but do not have that additional income.

Mr. Norris: My hon. Friend is entirely right. He recognises the desperately sad phenomenon in his constituency of people who are asset rich and cash poor, who are keen to stay in their homes and who could have the wherewithal to do so if the Government were minded to consider the new clause with favour.

If the new clause were accepted, it would allow for schemes that would give participants predictable payments for their lifetime, which would increase at a rate expected to exceed inflation. Participants would retain full ownership of their assets and not be at risk of losing them. They would also benefit from the rising value of their house during their life.

When the present law was drafted, no one had contemplated such a scheme. Its wording enables the Inland Revenue to interpret part of the payment received by the participant as coming from interest and thus be subject to tax. I submit that no interest is involved and, subsidiarily, that such a tax liability would make the scheme decidedly unattractive and, in effect, unworkable.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Will my hon. Friend be kind enough to explain what would happen if the new clause were accepted and if a person in either sheltered accommodation or in his own property—which is what the new clause would provide—had to go into residential accommodation and had to sell his property?

Mr. Norris: I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me, because I can give him only what should be a long answer. In brief, however, what happens in general is that, sadly, the entire value of the asset is consumed by local authority charges in a relatively short time. One of the ironies is thus that, in the end, the public purse must contribute far more towards the eventual upkeep of the elderly person than if the insurance company funded what remained of his life out of the pool of participants' income. If insurance companies were able to offer such a tax-efficient scheme, my hon. Friend's constituent in sheltered housing would be infinitely better off as would the local authority which would otherwise have to fund the person.

The Economic Secretary and the Financial Secretary were extremely helpful to me when I discussed the outline of the proposal with them. The Exchequer would not lose revenue if the new clause were accepted. It involves a zero interest annuity, no income is involved and only capital is paid out. As I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason), there is a potential for substantial public sector saving of community care costs, and the proposition is also in line with Government policy on encouraging independence. It is especially appropriate in dealing with the elderly who can manage in their own homes and whom we clearly want to encourage to do so.

On that basis, I invite the Minister to consider the advantages of extending the relief as I have outlined.

Mr. Maples: My hon. Friend's proposal is extremely interesting. I have considerable sympathy for the idea of enabling elderly people to release equity from their homes so that they are not, to use my hon. Friend's phrase, asset rich and cash poor. However, his amendment would create considerable possibilities for tax avoidance. I will not go into detail, but my hon. Friend is aware of them because we have discussed them.

It would be necessary to include in any such provision safeguards against such practices. I am, therefore, unable to accept my hon. Friend's new clause, but we will examine his proposal further, without commitment, to ascertain whether there might be worth while public expenditure savings if the proposed new annuity became available. I will ask the Inland Revenue to discuss the possibilities with bodies representing the insurance industry.

Mr. Morris: I take my hon. Friend's point concerning tax avoidance. I have no desire to see the scheme used as an avoidance device, but I believe that a mechanism could be devised to prevent that from happening, which would cap the amount made available under such a scheme.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary for his otherwise constructive acceptance of my general proposition. The concept of allowing people to release the large amount of equity that they have stored up for their own benefit, to provide for themselves in their old age, is an important one. In view of my hon. Friend's assurance, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 26

RELIEF FOR DISABLED PERSONS

'(1) The following section shall be inserted after section 265 of the Taxes Act 1988—

"265(B).—(1) Where a disabled person who is self-employed requires the services of a personal assistant or assistants in order to undertake his employment, any payment to that assistant or assistants shall be deducted from or set-off against the income of the said person from that employment.

(2) For the purposes of this section person is a person in receipt of an attendance allowance, a care component of a disability living allowance or a constant attendance allowance under the industrial injuries or war pensions schemes.".'.—*[Mr. Alfred Morris.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The Government's acceptance of new clause 26 would be a small but significant step in enriching the lives of a number of severely disabled people by enabling them to live independently in their own homes.

It is good to see the hon. Member for East Hampshire (Mr. Mates) in his place, and I hope that he will catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as the debate proceeds. I understand that it was the issue of principle raised by a case involving a constituent of the hon. Member for East

[Mr. Alfred Morris]

Hampshire that first led the legal and parliamentary committee of the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation to press for the change in the Taxes Act 1988 for which new clause 26 provides.

RADAR has liaised very closely with me over the drafting of the new clause, which has its full support. I refer the House to the details of the case brought to my attention by RADAR to exemplify the need for the new clause. For many years, the disabled person concerned —a mouth artist—was a resident of Le Court Cheshire home. Originally, he was able to pay his fees out of his earnings, but with rising inflation he was unable to continue doing so.

That individual's local authority refused to sponsor him, and consequently the charity had to foot the deficit. Eventually, the health authority agreed to sponsorship—which was more satisfactory, as its rules for the treatment of earned income are more beneficial to him than those of local authorities.

About five years ago, the individual in question—like so many other disabled people—decided that he wanted to leave residential care and to live independently. His work as an artist flourishes, but he has to pay £17,000 a year in fees to a nursing agency, which he believes should be treated as a work expense.

If that individual gave up his work, all his care costs would fall on the state, and the Treasury would receive no income tax. Equally, if the new clause encouraged other disabled people to set up in business, the state would gain considerable sums. For the Treasury to ignore the unavoidable extra costs of disabled living is unjust and self-defeating. For disabled people, hardship is piled on hardship as they try to compete with non-disabled people whose living costs are much lower than their own. The new clause is supported not only by RADAR but by the Disablement Income Group, Arthritis Care and many other admirable organisations of and for disabled people that are held in the highest regard by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

On 12 February, the Chancellor said that he could not then be expected to comment on the case for the change in the law that I am proposing owing to the proximity of his Budget statement. That was five months ago, and the Budget did nothing to remove the injustice to which the new clause is addressed. I urge him now to accept what is —as he must surely agree—a modest but none the less important amendment to the Bill.

Mr. Michael Mates (East Hampshire): I am pleased to be able to support the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris). I do not feel that this is a party matter; it is, above all, a human matter.

The right hon. Gentleman outlined the case of my constituent, Mr. Albert Baker, who, because of a very severe handicap, has been institutionalised all his life—latterly, during my time as his Member of Parliament, in the excellent Le Court Cheshire home. Five years ago, because he had developed such a tremendous skill in painting with his mouth—he cannot use his hands, his legs are in calipers and he is practically immobile without help —he decided that he wanted to lead an independent life. His income from his painting would just allow that. Accordingly, he moved out, and we all raised a cheer: that was precisely what the Government wanted. He is now on the point of having to return to institutional care, because he simply cannot afford the cost of care, with which he is receiving no help. Moreover, he cannot claim it as an allowance against his income.

Five or six months ago, I spoke to the Financial Secretary about the matter. He promised that he would examine it closely, and he did so. However, he brought back the answer that—alas—we hear so often from the Treasury: "I am full of sympathy, but it is too difficult."

If nothing is done, my constituent will have to go back into institutional care, and then—oddly enough—it will be the Treasury that loses. My constituent is making an income, paying his taxes and doing what we want all disabled people to do—living as much in the community as possible. He has that most precious of things, his independence.

It is not enough simply to say, "It is too difficult. If we make an exception in this instance, we shall open the floodgates to others." There must be a way in which to define those who are so severely disabled that they must have full-time care, thus giving some allowance to people such as my constituent, who is doing his best to make his own way despite his dreadful handicaps. We should help such people, rather than shutting the door on them by making the tax regime under which they suffer much less fair than it is for the rest of us.

Mr. Maples: I am sure that we all sympathise enormously with the case that has just been described to us. In normal circumstances we would want to encourage those who have the guts to try to look after themselves, and to assist them, but there are difficulties in this instance.

I am afraid that I am going to say exactly what my hon. Friend the Member for East Hampshire (Mr. Mates) says that he is fed up with hearing from Treasury Ministers. There are some rules governing what can be deducted by self-employed people in business—expenses that are wholly and exclusively incurred for the purpose of their trade. If a self-employed person in the circumstances that my hon. Friend has described—whether disabled or not —employed someone wholly and exclusively in connection with his business, any payment made to that person would be deductible, but relief for expenses that are purely personal are not deductible.

However, if a disabled self-employed person employed someone who provided him with assistance—both personal assistance and assistance with his work—and if it was possible to define the proportions in which the expenditure fell, the Inland Revenue would be prepared to allow a deduction for the appropriate proportion when computing the business profits.

Mr. Mates: I did not raise that argument, because I was trying to be brief. However, according to that argument, people are encouraged to cheat. There is an invitation to deduct 10, 20 or 30 per cent. We do not want to go down that route. We want to be able to define such severe disablement so that care is an essential part of that person's making a living. That care is related to work, because the person to whom I referred cannot work without that care.

11.45 pm

Mr. Maples: To the extent that expenses are incurred in enabling him to do that work, they would be deductible under the normal rules that apply at the moment. I was

about to say that the proposal extends wider than the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) and my hon. Friend the Member for East Hampshire suggested.

The new clause is confined to people who are self-employed. I am not sure whether that is logical. Why should the proposal not apply to employees as well? Why should it be confined to a personal assistant and the services of an individual who essentially works for the disabled person? Why should it not apply to other forms of expenditure such as special equipment, a car or special adaptations to a home?

The issue of the kind of expenses in which disabled people become involved to enable them to work could range much wider than new clause 26. We would quickly find ourselves in other areas. I wonder whether a tax relief of the kind proposed is the way to address the problem.

The right hon. Member for Wythenshawe and my hon. Friend the Member for East Hampshire should consider the wider issues. I do not believe that it is possible to deal just with the self-employed and personal assistants. If we believe that the tax system can be amended to help those people, we must be prepared to consider a wider group of costs and people. Although I make no commitments, perhaps we could consider that.

I understand that the problem is very important to those involved. However, by definition, perhaps only a relatively small number of people would be able to take advantage of the proposal. If the proposal were available, other people could take advantage of the other things that I said might be made tax deductible and we would no doubt face calls for those. If we were to face the problem, we would want to face the whole issue and not just a part of it, only to find that someone raised another aspect next year.

There are difficulties with trying to deal with the problem through the tax system. On the other hand, no one could fail to be full of admiration for the people referred to by the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe and my hon. Friend the Member for East Hampshire. I invite them to consider whether all the areas that I mentioned could be brought together in some way and I would offer to look at the matter again. There are difficulties, but I cannot offer to accept a proposal focused on the narrow area of a self-employed person employing a personal assistant. I would be prepared, without commitment, to consider the wider aspect to see whether something more generally could be done for disabled people to enable them to work and look after themselves, whether or not they are self-employed and whether the expense was related to personal assistance or otherwise.

Mr. Alfred Morris: The Economic Secretary will not be surprised to learn that we find his response very disappointing. He seems to argue at one and the same time that perhaps the new clause does not go far enough and yet it goes too far. He has agreed to look at what he calls the wider area. I am grateful for any further consideration that he is prepared to give to what is a very important amendment.

I am sure that the House was moved by the statement of the hon. Member for East Hampshire (Mr. Mates) about his constituent.

The Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation is well deserving of consultation by the Treasury. I hope that the Minister will consult RADAR and other appropriate organisations.

It is not my intention to press the new clause tonight, but I emphasise again that it is unjust and self-defeating of the Treasury not to help people who are trying as hard as the constituent of the hon. Member for East Hampshire to achieve the dignity of staying as a taxpayer instead of moving towards the dependence of social security payments.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 27

AMENDMENT OF FINANCE ACT 1990

'.—(1) The Finance Act 1990 shall be amended as follows:

"(2) In section 25(2)(g) leave out £600 and insert £250.".'.—*[Mr. Alex Carlile.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Alex Carlile: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The new clause relates to gift aid. Gift aid has been a success. We were told in Committee that in the eight months to the end of May this year, tax repayments of more than £19 million had been made to charities. In Committee, the Economic Secretary promised to keep the minimum limit under careful review, having agreed and included in the Bill a provision that raised the maximum limit.

It is disappointing that, thus far at least, the Government remain determined to keep the minimum limit as high as £600. There must be many people who would be prepared to enter the gift aid scheme if it were possible to give £250 or a figure between £250 and £600, but who cannot give as much as £600. I appreciate, of course, that tax relief can be obtained for small donations given, for example, under deeds of covenant. However, many people find the gift aid scheme simpler, more attractive and more straightforward than giving under deeds of covenant, which they regard as a legal procedure involving a legal document which they feel binds them for a number of years in circumstances that may well change.

I suggest that the reduction of the limit from £600 to £250 would lead to a considerable increase in charitable giving while maintaining the threshold high enough so that the administrative costs are not disproportionate. We know that charities have had to absorb a real blow as a result of the 2·5 per cent. increase in VAT which was announced in the Budget. We know that the Government express support for the voluntary sector—indeed, we have heard many exhortations from the Government that people should be more self-reliant and that the voluntary sector, especially charities, should carry greater burdens. We know of the tremendous support which the public are prepared to give charities in relation not only to poverty and other domestic considerations, but to worldwide challenges which they see in their newspapers and on their television screens.

The total unreclaimable VAT bill met by charities in England and Wales this year will amount to as much as £250 million. That places not only a financial burden, but an administrative burden on the charities.

As I said in Committee, there is a strong case for the reform of charity law. I encourage the Government to

[Mr. Alex Carlile]

consider whether that reform can be included in the next Gracious Speech. I hope that that will be the case. Perhaps the Government can give a commitment now that they will consider lowering the lower threshold for gift aid so that charities can enjoy, as we approach the general election, the double bonus of being able to receive far more under gift aid and to work in a less mysterious and hostile framework.

Mr. Maples: The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) has had two bites at this cherry because exactly the same points were raised in Committee. I am afraid that I shall give him pretty much the same answer. This is an example of how, when a Government introduce what is universally acknowledged to be a good scheme, within a year people are saying that it is not generous enough. However, the charities are saying that they widely welcome it. This month's issue of *Charity* magazine states that it is

"universally acclaimed as being the best thing that a Chancellor could have done to unlock new money".

By the end of May, charities had claimed tax repayments on some 17,000 gifts by both individuals and companies, which provided charities with income of £57 million, and a further £19 million in tax repayment claims. It is a pretty successful scheme.

The aim of gift aid is to encourage substantial gifts to charity. Tax relief is available for smaller gifts made under deeds of covenant or for gifts up to £600 a year made under the payroll giving scheme. Those are valuable assured sources of income and it is important not to undermine them. There is a danger that reducing the limit for gift aid to, say, £250 would undermine the payroll giving scheme and covenants and thereby remove an assured source of income—a flow of income over a period—from charities.

It is not practical to give relief for all small one-off gifts to charity. Covenants, which continue for a period and for which the tax paperwork can generally be processed by the donee, or payroll giving, where it can be done by the donor, are relatively easy things to administer. Enabling people to give individual gifts of about £250 would create an administrative problem. It is for a combination of those reasons that we decided to set a minimum limit of £600 net of basic rate tax to single gifts to charity under the gift aid scheme.

I understand why the hon. and learned Gentleman feels that it might be beneficial to charities to reduce the limit. However, the arguments are not all on one side and, as the scheme has been in existence for only one year, I am reluctant to concede any amendments now. I am giving him pretty much the same answer as I gave in Committee, but I can assure him that we shall keep the minimum limit in mind when we consider the results of the scheme and whether there are ways in which it can be improved.

Mr. Alex Carlile: It is disappointing that, despite strong representations from many charities, the Government are unwilling to reduce the limit at this stage. However, it is welcome to hear that the Government will keep the matter under review. Many of us who take a close interest in charities are waiting and hoping for a much more substantial law reform in relation to charities very soon. Bearing in mind what has been said, for the time being I am content to beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 30

ADDITIONAL PERSONAL ALLOWANCE

—NON-DISCRIMINATION

"—(1) Section 259 of the Income and Corporation Taxes act 1988 shall be amended as follows:

"and the section as amended shall have effect for the year 1990-91 and subsequent years.

(2) In paragraph (c) of subsection (1) the word "man" shall be replaced by the word "individual" and the word "wife" shall be replaced by the word "spouse".

(3) In subsection (4) after the words "husband unless" shall be inserted the words "either relief is available by virtue of subsection (1)(c) above or".".—*[Mr. Chris Smith.]*

Brought, up and read the First time.

Mr. Chris Smith: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

In Committee we drew the attention of the Government to an example of discrimination of the tax system in relation to the additional personal allowance. The allowance is available to someone who has a child living with him, if that person is a man and is married and living with a wife who herself is totally unable to look after herself throughout the year to which the allowance applies because of illness or disability. The tax relief is available to a man in such a position but not to a woman living with a totally disabled or ill husband. I believe that in Committee the Minister voiced her sympathy with our point that that is grossly discriminatory. I repeat that a man can claim the additional personal allowance but a woman in identical circumstances cannot. We believe that there should be equity between husband and wife. That is why we have tabled the new clause on Report.

In Committee the Minister said that she was sympathetically inclined towards an examination of the problem that we had identified. The problem was first drawn to my attention by my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross), who has a constituent who cannot avail herself of the additional personal allowance, whereas if her husband had been in her circumstances, he could have done so.

The Minister said that she was sympathetic and that she would consider the issue. She gave no absolute commitment to come back on Report to put matters right. Very helpfully, she wrote to me on 11 July to say that the Government had further considered the matter but were not yet ready to make specific proposals. I was disappointed to receive that response. Of course, I appreciate that the Government may wish to take a wider look at the issue; they may want to consider it in the context of the benefits system as well as of the tax system. I appreciate that a tax allowance benefits only those who are taxpayers. It does not benefit everyone who might be in this particular circumstance.

12 midnight

However, to put right the discrimination now would, at least for this year, get rid of an example of discrimination in our taxation system. The Government could then spend the rest of the year considering the issue more carefully and fully and could produce more fully worked up proposals next year. But to accept the new clause now would enable us to put on the statute book, for this year at least, a measure to remove a blatant example of discrimination in the availability of the additional personal allowance.

I hope that at this eleventh hour, as we approach the closing stages of the Finance Bill, we might just persuade the Minister of State to have another look at our new clause and to say just for once, "Yes, the Government will do something right now", and not put off doing so for fear of avoiding doing something better in the future. I hope that the Government will find it in their heart to accept the new clause and put right the discrimination. They could then perhaps go on to look more fully at how to remedy other wrongs within the system.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: As the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) said, the new clause is essentially the same as the one that we discussed in Committee. The only real difference is that the change would apply from 1990-91 instead of 1991-92.

I said in the debate in Committee that the difference in the treatment of men and women was an anomaly and that I would give further consideration to this important issue. As the hon. Gentleman said, I have written to him on the matter. I am not certain whether the new clause was tabled before or after he received the letter. I said in my letter and I repeat now that the Government want to look at the issue thoroughly and carefully and that it is not possible to review the matter properly in time to reach a decision before this Report stage. However, I assure the hon. Gentleman, as I assured him in my letter, and I assure the House that we take the issue seriously. It needs to be tackled and tackled thoroughly.

Mr. Chris Smith: Of course, I appreciate the sympathy with which the Minister of State approaches the issue. I remain disappointed that she did not feel able to go that little bit further tonight and make a change in the Bill. We shall continue to press the Government on this matter because it remains an outstanding anomaly within the system. Although perhaps it does not act against the interests of many people, for those who are affected it means a lot. We shall continue to press the Government on the matter. We look forward to a specific proposal within the next few months that the Government will introduce measures to deal with this anomaly. In that hope, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 39

RATE OF VEHICLE EXCISE DUTY (NO. 2)

'In determining the rate of vehicle excise duty for the year 1991-92 and subsequent years for any class of vehicle the Chancellor of the Exchequer shall have regard to the principle that all classes of vehicle shall cover their track costs by broadly the same factor and that any variation for any particular class of vehicle may only be justified because of a comparative benefit with respect to other classes of vehicles to the environment.'.—*[Dr. Marek.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Dr. Marek: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I shall be brief as it has gone midnight and we have many more amendments to get through. I could speak at length on the new clause—[HON. MEMBERS: "The hon. Gentleman has done that before."] Yes, but I shall confine my remarks to table 9, entitled, "Road taxation revenue and road costs in 1990-91: by vehicle class" from the pamphlet, "The allocation of road track costs 1990-91, United Kingdom", which was issued by the Department of Transport in April 1990. That is the only table to which I shall refer in my remarks.

The new clause is simple. It asks the Chancellor of the Exchequer, before he makes his Budget judgments on vehicle excise duty and costs for road users, to level out the taxes-to-costs ratio. Any differences should be accounted for by the environmental benefits that certain vehicles bring to the roads. The reason for that is simple. Table 9 shows that for cars, light vans and taxis the taxes-to-costs ratio is 3·2:1, whereas for goods vehicles over 3·5 tonnes the ratio is only 1·3:1.

We certainly need roads and heavy goods vehicles because we must transport goods, and most goods are transported by road. We must also be mindful that we do not disadvantage our industry through taxation policy compared with industry elsewhere in Europe. I am aware that transport in Germany is always that bit cheaper than it is in this country. In some ways I should like the Minister to worry not just about what goes on in the United Kingdom, but about what goes on within Europe to ensure that our industry is not disadvantaged by transport costs.

The difference between the ratios is large. Owners of large vans and motors will pay fuel tax and vehicle excise duty, and they will more than cover their costs on the road by a factor of 3·2:1, whereas some HGVs only just cover their road track costs. Table 9 shows that all goods vehicles over 3·5 tonnes just cover their costs by 1·3:1.

Let me put this in figures so that it is absolutely clear. There are 22,622,000 cars, light vans and taxis. The cost of the damage that they do to roads comes to £3,075 million. There are only 471,000 heavy goods vehicles, yet the damage that they do to roads comes to £1,510 million. Although the number of HGVs is much smaller, they do half the damage that is done by all the cars, light vans and taxis. If the House considers that, and that the HGVs' taxes-to-costs ratio is only 1·3:1 compared with 3·2:1 for cars, light vans and taxis, it will agree that something is wrong.

When we had a discussion on an associated subject in Committee, the Minister said that she would consider the matter carefully in the ensuing year. That is important. I hope that the Minister will reaffirm that commitment. I also hope that she will consider the issue in terms of the environment. If the transport of goods is unnecessary, it is obviously environmentally friendly not to undertake such a journey. It is environmentally friendly to move goods by rail or water whenever that is possible. However, I appreciate that most goods are transported by road. Little thought has been given to this issue by the Government.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I speak with three and a half years' experience of dealing with such matters. A great deal of thought has been given to the issue. The Transport and General Workers Union would be upset if HGVs, which many of its members drive, were subject to three times their current tax. It would be reasonable to take the surplus raised from private motorists for use on pensioners, hospitals and education. However, to try to load the costs on industry when the rest of the European Community is not even taking the track costs from its HGVs suggests that the remarks of the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) should be directed at the EC rather than at my hon. Friend the Minister.

Dr. Marek: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman has just entered the Chamber, but I have already mentioned the EC. The Minister must lobby in Europe to ensure that our industry is not disadvantaged. The record will show that I have now said that for the second time, and I have already said that I do not want to delay the House.

The disparity is too large and not enough is being done to look after the environment and to introduce green policies in transport taxation. If the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) had regard for such matters when he was at the Department of Transport, his efforts were obviously unsuccessful. I do not want to be deprecatory, but it is evident that he may have worried so much about such policies that he is now on the Back Benches—again I do not intend to be deprecatory.

A problem exists, and I hope that the Government will consider it urgently.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): I have listened with considerable interest to the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek), but, with respect, his speech was grossly deficient in one aspect. He did not mention the vehicle excise duty on motor cycles.

Dr. Marek: The next set of amendments address that issue.

Mr. Jopling: I am aware of that, but it is as well to raise the matter.

I must declare an interest as I am the president of the Auto-Cycle Union, which is the governing body of motor cycle sport.

The Budget caused considerable resentment among the motor cycling community, of which, as the House may know, I am a member. That statement did not refer to the fact that the vehicle excise duty on motor cycles had been increased by a far greater extent than that on motor cars. That should have been declared in the statement. If the Treasury and Chancellor should ever feel inclined to impose such a disproportionate increase in excise duty in the future, that should be made clear to the House during the course of the Budget statement. This year that duty increased considerably and I have not heard any adequate explanation as to why that was necessary.

The hon. Member for Wrexham referred to damage to roads. That is an important factor of which the House should be aware. Motor cycles cause practically no damage to roads. Given the number of people that they transport, they cause proportionately less damage to roads than any other mode of transport. Their effect on the environment with regard to congestion, the parking space that they take up, the space that they occupy in general, and the fuel that they use in proportion to the number of people that they transport make them an environmentally friendly form of transport.

I am interested in the new clause and shall listen carefully to what my hon. Friend the Minister of State says. However, in framing the Budget and the Finance Bill, proper regard has not been paid to the motor cycle community's claims. On the whole, it has been dealt a pretty dirty deal during the course of these amendments.

12.15 am

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I do not want to take the new clause too seriously because I do not think that the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) takes it too seriously. It is important to realise that it means either that the taxation on heavy goods vehicles should be tripled or that the vehicle excise duties for cars should be cut to one third of its present rate. Neither of those propositions can be seriously floated past the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett).

I hope that we shall continue to see a degradation in the value of the vehicle excise duty for cars—the figure should not change—and that the extra cost will be put on the marginal use of cars. That is the only sensible way to look at motor taxation. We should raise the marginal cost of using a private car both in terms of cost and time, rather than going for the road pricing theory, which is a space for every car for which someone must pay with a fistful of fivers. We should also continue to try to reduce the cost of the damage that heavy goods vehicles cause to the roads by introducing better suspension systems and by trying to ensure that lorries are kept outside residential and shopping areas.

Even before I intervened the hon. Member for Wrexham spoke about the track cost in the rest of the European Community. I emphasised that in my intervention because it needs emphasising more and more. Only when other European countries begin to realise the damage that those vehicles cause will we see fair competition between hauliers. British hauliers will do better in that competition because we have better co-operation between drivers and management and, unlike most other hauliers in Europe, our management is used to competition.

I hope that the new clause is not pressed. The hon. Member for Wrexham probably regrets having spoken on it.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Clearly, in constructing a policy for motor taxation a balance needs to be struck between environmental considerations, revenue received and practicalities. In that respect, although I know of the enthusiasm and expertise of the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) on the comparative tax paid by certain types of heavy goods vehicles, his proposals involve practical problems which he has not addressed.

For example, to bring the tax-cost ratio of HGVs up to that of cars and light vans would involve, on average, sevenfold increases in their vehicle excise duty. That means that some lorries would pay £21,000 VED a year, which might not be welcomed by British industry. Alternatively, to bring cars down to the same ratio as lorries would require us to cut their overall tax burden by £6·6 billion. As VED brings in only about £2·5 billion, abolishing it altogether would bring the ratio down to 2·4:1 rather than 1·26:1 that the hon. Gentleman seeks.

However, motoring taxation, fuel duty and vehicle excise duty are mainly about raising revenue, which amounts to nearly £14 billion, though it is clearly sensible to adopt a policy so that all classes of vehicle should at least cover their share of the public expenditure costs of the road network. All vehicles now do so as a result of the changes in VED and fuel duty that we have made over the years. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic wrote to the hon. Member for Wrexham after the debate in Committee to explain how those duties were calculated.

I welcomed the contribution of my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), who is a distinguished motor cycle enthusiast. In his Budget speech, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the

Exchequer did not have time to mention all the measures, but details of the VED increase for motor cycles were mentioned in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report", and in the Department of Transport press notice. Motor cycle riders pay less tax on fuel and a lower VED than car drivers.

Environmental issues have been mentioned. We can sometimes use taxation to bring positive environmental benefits. In earlier debates we mentioned the differential between leaded and unleaded petrol which has boosted unleaded petrol's share of the market to more than 40 per cent. We also switched the balance of taxation for both private vehicles and lorries from fixed to variable costs, thus ensuring that those who pollute most, pay most. In 1980, the Armitage inquiry recommended that the excess for each sub-class of heavy goods vehicles should reflect their relative impact on the environment. It is difficult to achieve that perfectly, and we never do as well as the hon. Member for Wrexham would like, but VED paid by those using heavier rigids has, in general, increased by more than that for articulated lorries.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Transport pay serious attention to the needs of the environment because we all benefit from that. We have achieved much through our taxation policy, but we have been able to do so only while still having regard to fiscal policy overall, because our policy leaves my right hon. Friend the Chancellor with the flexibility to respond to new situations and concerns.

The Government's aim is to achieve a fair system of taxation that takes account of all factors, not just the environment. That can best be achieved by leaving the present and future Chancellors flexibility to respond to new situations and concerns, not by restricting their room for manoeuvre.

Dr. Marek: The new clause simply proposed that the Chancellor of the Exchequer should have regard to the principle, and then enunciated the principle. The hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) is a man of extremes. He said that the policy had to be on the extreme left or the extreme right, but there are all sorts of possibilities in between. One can have regard to the principle, but it is sometimes hard to adopt the principle and implement it immediately. I am under no illusions about that.

We have had a useful debate. I am glad that the Minister said that the Government have regard to the environment, and the vehicle excise duty on some classes of heavy goods vehicles has risen a little more. I hope that the Treasury will ensure that the Department of Transport turns its attention to that before the next Budget because it does not look as though there will be a general election before next May or June, and there will be another Budget under the present Administration. In those circumstances, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 4

VEHICLE EXCISE DUTY

Dr. Marek: I beg to move amendment No. 18, in page 3, line 6, leave out '15.00' and insert '11.00'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments:

No. 19, in page 3, line 12, leave out '30.00' and insert '22.00'.

No. 20, in line 13, leave out '50.00' and insert '42.00'.

No. 21, in line 14, leave out '50.00' and insert '42.00'.

Dr. Marek: The right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) referred in the previous debate to motor cycles. The amendments are an example of how the Treasury has gone the opposite way in terms of looking after the environment—motor cycles are reasonably environmentally friendly machines, at least when they have proper baffles fitted to their exhausts so that they cannot be heard from two or three miles away. Motor cycles travel a great many miles to the gallon. That means that they are environmentally friendly. Although vehicle excise duty on motor cars was not changed, the duty on motor cycles and some other vehicles was increased, and that is unfair.

The amendments are modest. They seek to raise the duty on motor cycles from £10 to £11 and not to £15. Where the duty was £20 we propose an increase to £22. Duty on the highest cubic capacity is to be raised from £40 to £50, but the amendments suggest an increase to £42. There is much concern that vehicle excise duty on motor cycles is being increased simply because there was much evasion. The last substantive paragraph in a letter from the Chancellor of the Exchequer to Mr. Peter Ryder of the British Motorcyclists Federation states:

> "The widespread evasion of VED is of concern to Government because of both the revenue loss and the effective reduction in checks for MOT and insurance. It would appear that the penalties for evasion at the current level of VED are not a sufficient deterrent and I hope that the increase will help stop the slide."

What does that mean? The letter continues:

> "I know that as a responsible organisation you do not condone the activities of those who ignore the law, and I hope you will understand that the Government cannot tolerate them either."

What does the Chancellor mean when he says "the increase will help stop the slide"?

Does he mean that the extra excise duty paid by motor cyclists will stop the decline in the Treasury's revenue? If he does mean that, he is advancing the unfair principle that simply because some people evade paying excise duty—and it is not only some motor cyclists who are guilty of that—a punitive increase in vehicle excise duty should be imposed to make up for the shortfall.

The ratio of motor cycle duty to car duty has remained constant for many years. Without notice the Chancellor decided to pick on motor cyclists and to increase vehicle excise duty, and he has not offered a rational or logical explanation for doing so. I do not expect the Government to admit that they were wrong and that they will cancel the increases, but I hope that the Minister will give a logical explanation for the increases or at least admit that the changes were for completely spurious fiscal reasons and that not enough attention was paid to the impact of the increases.

The Minister should ask the Department of Transport to look at the environmentally friendly aspects of motor cycles, cars and heavy goods vehicles and submit better proposals next year.

Mr. Jopling: I apologise to the House for jumping the gun and speaking about motor cycles during discussion on the last amendment. When the Minister of State, Treasury replied to that debate she said that the Chancellor did not

[Mr. Jopling]

have time in his Budget statement to refer to this massive increase in the excise duty on motor cycles. All that I can say is that if he had time to refer to the contentious issue of mobile telephones, it is difficult to believe that he did not have time to refer to an increase in excise duties on motor cycles that was proportionately far larger than that for cars, and that affected far more people than a tax on mobile telephones. That argument will not wash, so I hope that neither she nor any of her colleagues on the Treasury Bench will use that argument again.

12.30 am

I have yet to hear a proper explanation of why it was felt necessary to increase the excise duty on motor cycles by so much. In the previous debate, I declared my interest in this matter. Until today, I was the owner of a large capacity motor cycle, and I hope that I shall have another one the day after tomorrow.

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): While my right hon. Friend can undoubtedly ride his machine with the greatest of skill, is he not aware that it is 12 times as dangerous to ride a motor cycle as it is to drive a car? It may be that the desire to reduce the appalling rate of casualties among motor cyclists inspired the Treasury.

Mr. Jopling: I understand my hon. Friend's point, and, like him, I am greatly concerned about the number of deaths and injuries among young people who ride powerful motor cycles when they are not particularly experienced. This is a matter of as much concern to me and to many involved in the motor cycling sport as it is to him. The Government are not backward in coming forward to tell us that they are putting up cigarette duty for much the same prevention reason. If this is why they are increasing the excise duty on motor cycles, let them tell us. As far as I am aware, that argument has not been used.

The hon. Member for Wrexham referred to evasion. I was not going to mention that because I did not think that it was worth mentioning, but as he has, I should say that it is irrelevant when it comes to deciding at what level to pitch the duty. I see no point in penalising those who pay to make up for those who do not pay. I should have thought that if one pushes up the price of a road licence on a motor cycle, one encourages people not to pay it, so that is not the way to go about it.

I do not want to press this matter this year, but I should tell my hon. Friend the Minister that I feel miffed about the way that it has been handled. I feel miffed about the logic behind it, which I do not understand. This has been a raw deal for those who ride motor cycles. I hope that people will not again be given the opportunity for criticising the Government for picking on the motor cycling community by clobbering it with an excise duty. I hope that it will not happen again.

Mr. Wallace: The right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) was right to say that motor cyclists have been clobbered. The percentage increases are startling, especially when the vehicle excise duty for motor cars was not increased. The Minister tried in Committee to explain away the percentage increases by saying that the actual amounts were increases of £5 or £10, but for many motor cyclists the increases are not neglible. We are talking of sizeable increases for vehicles that are environmentally friendly. Mopeds, especially, are very economical in their use of fuel, and for many young people who live in rural areas they provide an essential lifeline. I am sure that the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale, who represents a rural constituency, will appreciate that. Motor cycles and mopeds enable young people to enjoy social facilities and to undertake journeys to places of further education and training.

I have received a petition from Mr. Victor Thomas of the Old Manse, Stove, Sandwich, Shetland and some of his friends and neighbours. It emphasises that the motor cycle is an environmentally friendly vehicle and is a necessity to many. In most instances a motor cycle uses less fuel than a motor car.

The Minister sought to give an assurance in Committee that the Government were not seeking to penalise the honest motor cyclist by raising the cost of VED to cover the loss of revenue because one third of motor cyclists do no pay VED, but one cannot help feeling that that is precisely what the Government are doing. The hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) read out correspondence that seemed to give that impression. He read out correspondence in Committee in which a Treasury spokesman was quoted as saying that it was a measure of inflation and that the higher rate would recompense the many evasions in the form of unpaid licences. If that is the Government's approach—a hidden agenda that means that those who are honest are having to bear the burden of subsidising those who are dishonest—their weak case is undermined.

The right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale protested against such a principle being incorporated in our taxation. I have no doubt that many people will welcome his support for local authorities that find that they have to place an added poll tax burden on many payers because of the non-payment of others.

Two months have passed since the increases in VED for motor cyclists were discussed in Committee. I hope that the Minister has been made well aware of the strong feelings of motor cyclists. They have been singled out, as it were, for increases in VED. In percentage terms, the increases will be punitive. I hope that the Minister has had a chance to reconsider her position.

Mr. Cryer: I, too, have received many letters from constituents about the unfairness with which the Government have levied an extra tax on motor cyclists.

Motor cyclists attract a good deal of prejudice because sometimes their machines are not sensibly used. The exhaust systems of some machines are not properly fitted and are ineffective, and we know that motor cycles with defective silencers are ridden late at night. To criticise motor cyclists on that basis, however, is to criticise at one fell swoop all the keen motor cyclists who behave properly, who keep their cycles well maintained, who take pleasure in their use and who in many instances find them to be a necessity.

The Government's deregulation of bus services—not only in rural areas—has meant that a service can no longer be provided if a profit cannot be made. No bus company will be willing to tender if it is impossible to make a profit, and a passenger transport authority is not permitted to provide a subsidy for a service. There is therefore a greater emphasis on personal transport, and the cheapest form of that transport is a motor cycle or moped.

The Government are militating against its use. It has been suggested that an increase in the licence fee for a motor cycle will act as a deterrent and will reduce the high rate of accidents, but that is not the correct approach. If that were the Government's attitude, I am sure that they would have increased it to try to obtain some shadow of virtue from a situation which has very little virtue attached to it.

If the Government are concerned—as we all are—about the rate of accidents involving motor cycles, other measures are required. They include better training, although a fairly comprehensive training scheme has been introduced in the past few years; a more comprehensive motor cycle test involving details of mechanical efficiency if lack of such knowledge is a contributory factor to accidents; and more courtesy from the other vehicles that we have discussed—the HGVs—which, by virtue of their size, are sometimes involved in accidents with motor cyclists because of the comparatively diminutive size of the latter. Those factors must be tackled separately. The increase in vehicle excise duty should not be used as an excuse to deter people who wish to take up motor cycling.

Hundreds of thousands of motor cyclists are sensible and careful; they operate their machines well and find them of great use and importance in gaining access to work and leisure activities. We must take those people into account, especially when they use British motor cycles—and not, as I suspect that the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale does, imported BMWs—and when they take a specific interest in maintaining the vestiges of what was once, I suppose, the strongest and most powerful motor cycle manufacturing industry in the world, although, along with much other manufacturing industry, it has, alas, been reduced to a shred of its former glory. Such people have our added support, but in general, whatever machines motor cyclists ride, they deserve a better deal from the Government. I hope that; even at this late stage, the Minister will try to wrest some justice from an unjust decision.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: It is interesting and perhaps rewarding to see that at this time of the morning the House can become emotional about this issue. I shall make three main points.

First, I fully accept that, although one third of motor cyclists evade paying vehicle excise duty, that means that two thirds pay it. The vast majority of motor cyclists are responsible, careful and, in view of this debate, very enthusiastic drivers. However, much mention has been made of motor cyclists receiving a raw deal, and swingeing and unfair increases of 50 per cent. have been bandied about. We are in fact talking about increases of £5 a year or £10 a year. They are not inconsiderable sums, but, balanced out over the weeks, they represent 10p or 20p a week which is less than the cost of a packet of crisps. Other people might more easily be able to equate that figure to fractions of the cost of a pint of beer or of a packet of cigarettes. I do not accept that such figures represent swingeing increases that cannot be met.

Secondly, part of our purpose was to restore the balance between cars and motor cycles by raising the VED by a modest amount to bring the two taxes more into line.

Thirdly, part of our purpose was to increase the VED paid by motor cyclists because a result of a decision taken in 1985 to freeze VED has been to reduce the real value to such an extent that the evasion rate has increased unacceptably. As I said, the latest estimate is that one third of all users avoid paying tax, and the consequential loss of £9 million is not inconsiderable. Some hon. Members might applaud the solution of abolishing VED, but to do so would create considerable difficulties in maintaining a vehicle register and making effective insurance and MOT checks.

12.45 pm

I made it clear in Committee that it is not our intention to recoup from the honest motor cyclist the revenue lost through evasion, or to penalise the motor cyclist relative to the car driver. Motor cyclists still pay less tax than car drivers in proportion to their share of the cost of the road network.

It is argued that as motor cycles are generally more fuel-efficient than cars, and usually use unleaded petrol, we should encourage their use. My answer is that they already pay considerably less in fuel duty per mile travelled. I do not disagree with the claim that motor cycles cause less wear and tear on the roads than cars, which is why their VED is still, at most, half that of cars.

People choose to use either a motor cycle or a car for a host of reasons, of which the tax payable is only one. Comfort, capital cost, running costs, and safety all play their part in their decision.

We have tried to achieve a more neutral taxation regime as between the car and motor cycle, and it is now less weighted towards motor cycles than it was. The increase of £5, or £10 a year at most, is small. The fact that motor cycles cause less wear and tear on the roads is reflected by the low rates of VED that they still attract in comparison with cars. Motor cycles that are more fuel-efficient pay less in fuel duty per mile—and that is another incentive. The proposed increase is modest, and I hope that the House will accept it.

Dr. Marek: The Minister said that the increase is designed to bring motor cycle tax more into line with that charged in respect of motor cars. As far as VED is concerned, the ratio has been fixed for five or six years, but the Government have now altered it, so that motor cycles will attract an increased ratio of road tax in comparison with motor cars.

The Minister justifies that change by saying that motor cycles use less fuel, so she is effectively taxing an environmentally friendly mode of transport. The new tax reflects the Government's anti-green policy, and it is extremely disappointing that they show no regret or contrition, and can offer no logical explanation for their action.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 7

BEER DUTY

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I beg to move amendment No. 22, in page 8, line 4, at end insert—

'"the Commissioners" means the Commissioners of Customs and Excise;'.

This technical amendment removes any possible uncertainty, and it is one about which I have written to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown). It defines the commissioners mentioned in the two freestanding provisions as

"the Commissioners of Customs and Excise".

[Mrs. Gillian Shephard]

No difficulties arise in respect of the clause's other references to the commissioners, because a definition is already provided for in the legislation being amended.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 19

VEHICLES LEASED TO THE HANDICAPPED

Amendments made: No. 16, in page 14, line 42, leave out 'the lessor is a charity'.

No. 17, in page 14, line 43, at end insert

'the lessor is—

(a) a charity, or

(b) a person used by a charity for the purpose of making supplies which attract relief under this section.".'.

Clause 52

INCOME TAX (BUILDING SOCIETIES) REGULATIONS 1986

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I beg to move amendment No. 45, in page 36, line 31, leave out from beginning to 'this' in line 32 and insert

"In relation to any building society whose accounting period ended before 1st October in the year of assessment 1985-86.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, we may take the following amendments: No. 29, in page 36, line 31, leave out from 'society' to 'this' in line 32, and insert—

'(a) which commenced proceedings to challenge the validity of the regulations before 18th July 1986, or

(b) which, after 18th July 1986 but before 19th March 1991, commenced proceedings for the recovery of money paid by it, being proceedings taken as a result of the outcome of earlier proceedings of the kind to which paragraph (a) of this subsection relates, or

(c) which, after 18th July 1986 but before 19th March 1991, made any payment as provided for by the regulations, and which, in relation to such payment, gave written notice that it disputed the validity of the regulations.'.

No. 30, in page 36, line 32, leave out 'before 18th July 1986' and insert

'or to recover money paid by it on the basis of such a challenge made by it or by any other building society before the date on which this Act received Royal Assent.'.

No 31, in page 36, line 32, after '1986', insert

'or in relation to a building society which since 18th July 1986 but before 19th March 1991 commenced proceedings for the recovery of money paid by it, being proceedings taken as a result of the outcome of earlier proceedings to which this subsection relates'.

No. 32, in page 36, line 32, after '1986', insert

'or which was referred to in an affidavit sworn before that date as expressly supporting such proceedings and lodged in the Court in the course of such proceedings.'.

No. 46, in page 36, line 32, after '1986', insert

'or would have done so but for its reliance in good faith on the view that the liability of every building society under the regulations would be determined according to the decision of the court in proceedings which were commenced before that date.'.

Mr. Bottomley: If I am given an opportunity, I shall seek to divide the House on amendment No. 29, which brings together a number of the ways in which building societies could reasonably expect to take the benefit of the result of the judicial review that followed the Finance Acts 1985 and 1986, the regulations under the 1985 Act and the application for judicial review made by the Woolwich building society in the High Court, the Court of Appeal and the House of Lords.

I do not intend to try to rally as many hon. Members as possible to join me in the Lobby, although if Labour Members chose to do so that would be very nice. I want it to be made clear in any subsequent judicial review proceedings—others have been instituted, meaning that the saga that has continued for the past five years may continue for a further five—that the House of Commons was not told in 1985, when the proposals for the change were made, that the Revenue intended to take a tax advantage. That is a neutral expression used recently by my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary. The Revenue proposed to take advantage of six months' tax on the Woolwich, the Leeds and some other building societies.

There are three ways of describing the taxation that is at issue. One is to call it "double taxation". To an extent, my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary conceded that in the fifth sitting of the Standing Committee. Another way is to call it "the gap"; my hon. Friend has described it thus on other occasions. He has often used the form of words employed by counsel for the Treasury in the High Court, who argued that the tax under consideration had been deducted from depositors and members of building societies.

The third description—used recently in a letter, from which I think I have permission to quote, from my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the president of the Leeds building society—is "tax advantage"; we could, indeed, mention tax disadvantages as well. Whatever expression we use, and whether our chosen expression is pejorative or merely matter-of-fact, we are talking about between £250 million and £400 million.

In the past few days, it has emerged that discussions were held between either the Revenue or the Treasury and building society representatives in 1985. I do not intend to go into the details, because I do not know them. Besides, confidential discussions should remain confidential unless there is good reason to refer to them. I do not accuse my hon. Friend of not having good reason.

Let me say to my hon. Friend—and, through him, to his officials in the Treasury and the staff of the Inland Revenue board—that I am grateful for many of the replies that they have given. In the civil service, it is very difficult to be accountable in detail, and to be able to set out in detail all the reasons why any particular action was taken, especially if it was taken six years earlier. That is one of the differences between public service and the private sector.

We heard in the 1985 Budget statement that there would be no additional revenue from the sensible change that was proposed—that building societies, instead of paying in each tax year a sum to satisfy their tax liabilities or those of their members, would make payments quarterly based on what had happened in the actual financial year.

It was clearly understood in the House previously that the payment made on 1 January in each tax year would satisfy a society's liabilities in that tax year, although the sum came out of a society's dealings with its members and depositors in the previous year. That much is common ground. It is also common ground that the press notice put out by the Treasury, or the Inland Revenue—I forget which, but it does not really matter—at the time of the 1985 Budget said that there would be transitional arrangements.

Many people could have believed that those transitional arrangements were used to refer to the fact that under the new system of accounting for tax quarterly —14 days after the end of each quarter—the system would begin in a quarter starting on 1 March, not in a quarter starting on 6 April. It would have been perfectly reasonable for building societies and others to assume that the transitional arrangements reference was to that and not necessarily to going after extra taxation for a year for which many building societies had already fully satisfied their tax liability.

The only other reference appeared in a footnote to the Red Book issued on Budget day stating that there would be some public sector borrowing requirement effect. The Committee considering section 41 of the Building Societies Act 1986 and the extension of powers to the building society commissioners did not believe that the phrase "some effect on PSBR" was a full way of describing what may have been in some senses a deficit of £76 million to the Inland Revenue in the coming year or a tax advantage to the Revenue of between £250 million and £400 million.

There was a debate on the matter during the Committee stage of the 1985 Finance Bill and I have referred to the debate in the Committee considering the statutory instrument dealing with section 41 and the powers of the building society commissioners. Dr. Oonagh McDonald was wrong when she referred to the effect of £50 million.

I want to refer to some of the parliamentary answers that I have received recently on the matter. I asked my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer

"what would be the effect of the removal of Clause 52 of the Finance Bill on the ability of the Inland Revenue to retain certain disputed tax paid by building societies."

The answer from my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary was:

"Whether or not tax paid under the transitional provisions in the 1986 Building Societies Regulations is repayable would, in the absence of Clause 52, depend on the particular facts of each case."

People outside this place have told me that it would have been far better if the Government had not announced in the 1991 Budget that they were going to introduce what started out as clause 50 and is now clause 52. It would have been much better to have left it the way Patrick Jenkin left it on Report during proceedings on the Finance Bill of 1986 to have the matter fought out in the courts. We have a situation that is created by retrospective or retroactive, or both, amendments to the Finance Act 1986 which gave effect to regulations that were misdrawn under the Finance Act 1985.

As a result of lack of full description about what was happening in 1985 and together with the debate on the Floor of the House on 17 July 1986 and the cascading decisions of the High Court, the Court of Appeal and the House of Lords, we have had a mixture of debate and legal decision. That was revealed in discussions upstairs in Committee on this Bill when my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) and the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) quizzed my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary. There was a mixture of what the courts held was in law and what the courts and others believed was in Parliament's mind. Very little of that had anything to do with what happened in 1985 when we began to allow for some potential consequential decisions following the change in the basic way in which building societies pay taxation.

We are talking about substantial sums. In a reply to me dated 8 July, my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary refers to the Inland Revenue statistics for each year since 1985 and recounts the schedule for composite rate of tax on building society interest for each year since 1980-81. I will cite the figures to give some idea of the sums involved. In 1980-81 the figure was £1,217 million. It rose the following year to £1,425 million and in the following year, 1982-83, it was £1,583 million. It was roughly the same in 1983-84. In 1984-85, it was up to £1,844 million. There is then a run of four years—1985-86 to 1988-89—in which it was approximately £2,600 million. In the most recent year for which figures are available—1989-90—it was £3,713 million. We are talking about very large sums.

1 am

The amount of money changes because of a number of factors, including interest rates, tax rates and the level of deposits. In the long term, if building societies become a popular medium through which to accumulate savings, that will be one influence.

From year to year, the dominant influence is the interest rate. It is difficult to decide how much of the change in the amount raised by the Revenue from building societies on the composite rate tax changed between 1985-86 and 1986-87. My hon. Friend has said that it would be disproportionately expensive to work that out. However, we need to find out what is likely to have happened.

I return for a moment to 1985. It is clear from the Budget speech that there was not a full explanation. It is clear that there was not a full debate in Committee and it is clear that there was not a full debate on Report.

The first bit of information that we have available to us is an article which I was grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing to my attention. It was written by Richard Northedge and appeared in *The Daily Telegraph* on 29 July 1985. The headline was

"Societies fight £500 million double tax demand."

The article went on in fair detail, dealing mainly with the Woolwich and with the Leeds, and talks about the societies with a 30 September year end which would have to pay double tax for six months.

I have asked Treasury Ministers whether either the Treasury or the Inland Revenue responded in public at the time of *The Daily Telegraph* report. My hon. Friend has told me that he is not aware of any such response. That is an accurate answer, because he is saying not that there was not a response, but that he is not aware of one. It is regrettable, because if the issue turns on whether the tax advantage, or the tax that people were going to go after for six months from the Woolwich, from the Leeds and from others for a year in which the tax liability—and there is no dispute about this—had been fully satisfied by the payment made on 1 January, it would have been better if there had been a public response, and if the argument about what is double taxation or what is taxing the gap had started at the time when the issue first came forward in public.

Mr. Maples: The Treasury is not in the business of responding to every article that is written in newspapers. My hon. Friend cannot read anything into what he has described. My hon. Friend has sought, through his parliamentary questions and correspondence with me, to establish that it was not the intention of the Government at the time of the 1985 Budget to tax what I call the "gap

[Mr. Maples]

period". I gave him the article, which was a clear sign that in July of that year the matter was raised in *The Daily Telegraph*. Everyone who reads that paper and every building society must have been aware of it. In those circumstances, it would be appropriate for my hon. Friend to agree that it was clear to all the building societies at that time that it was the Government's intention to tax that period.

Mr. Bottomley: Nothing that my hon. Friend has said is in disagreement with what I have said. I have said that it is regrettable that the issues were not brought out into the public debate. I was not criticising anyone.

If my hon. Friend wants me to give way again, I will happily do so, because I am trying to put a fair exposition to the House bringing together the various things that have happened over the past six years.

I asked my right hon. Friend the Chancellor whether he would list all other newspaper, parliamentary or ministerial reports before 29 July 1985—that is, before the Richard Northedge article—which made explicit reference to a proposal to claim tax from building societies in relation to any period from their year end to the end of the financial year 1985-86 separate from the tax payments that had satisfied the liability for that full financial year. My hon. Friend has responded today. It is important to acknowledge my gratitude for the speed with which he has responded to a number of these questions, and to say that I understand his comment that the information is not readily available and cannot be provided without disproportionate cost.

However, before the article of 29 July 1985, there is no record of any explicit reference to this issue, despite the fact that we had had the Budget, and the Second Reading, Committee and Report stages of the Finance Bill. The only reference was when Oonagh McDonald raised it in Committee when, apparently, the figures were so different from those that may or may not have been available at the time that that cannot be regarded as a full and open discussion. My hon. Friend may say that officials or Ministers had been having full discussions with the building societies. That is fine—but it is not discussions with the House of Commons. I do not think that there is any reference on the Floor of the House or in Committee to what was going on. That became clear only later.

We move on to when it was decided to propose legislation to obtain what I call "additional tax" from building societies for the financial year 1985-86 and when and how an estimate was published of the financial effect on total tax receipts and on the tax to be paid by societies. My hon. Friend repeats his view that the 1986 legislation, changing the way in which building societies account for the tax on interest and dividends paid, did not involve additional tax. I am still trying to move us forward from 1985 which is when we were looking at the consequential provisions tied to the generally accepted switch in the method of taxation.

We have had some useful information today from my hon. Friend, showing calculations that produce a reduction in the revenue received of £76 million. I am not sure how it will be designated in *Hansard* but it may be Question 159. It deals with the available information, listing, for the building societies with their year end in each quarter, an estimate of the gains and/or losses respectively from the transitional arrangements and from the change to the new tax system in 1986-87.

I hold the view that that minus £76 million may be based on the fact that the year in question does not have 12 months of tax receipts. There is a switch from one system to another, with the new system starting on 1 March, and with that tax not being received until the subsequent year. The table purports to show that, although some societies, including the Leeds and the Woolwich with their September year-ends, were hurt by the change to the new system, the building society movement in the aggregate benefited to the tune of £76 million or 3 per cent. of what would otherwise have been raised under the old system.

Presumably, there is a short and total answer to this. I suggest that the amount of tax that would have been due in 1986-87 if the old system had continued would have discharged all liability upon interest paid to the investors up to and including 5 April 1987. That is a 12 month-period. Under the new system, the amount due in 1986-87 discharged only liabilities on interest paid to investors up to and including 28 February 1987. In other words, the table compares the cost of 12 months' liability with the cost of less than 11 months' liability or—to put it in a way that will be recognisable to those who drafted the regulations—the table may recognise the double tax effect of regulation 11, but not of regulation 3.

Some of this is clearly supposition, because the information on which I am working has been available to me—and through me, to the House—only recently. It is regrettable—I am not blaming anyone, but it is regrettable—that that is so in 1991 when we are dealing with a saga that started in March 1985. It would have been better to have had this out and to have discussed it at that time. The tax in respect of the stub of one month and five days—from 1 March 1987 to 5 April 1987—did not have to be paid until 14 June 1987, but was it payable at the composite rate of tax for 1986-87? This takes us into one of the invalid regulations that is dealt with by clause 52(2) and (3). The necessary adjustment to compare like with like is to pro-rata the total figure for the new system—the 1986-87 receipts, which amount to £2,868 million—to reflect the missing 36 days. We are talking about over £240 million a month, so 36 days will give us more than a month's worth of tax.

Assuming that interest payments are spread evenly throughout the year, the sum of which may be generous because the March quarter is likely to be a heavy payment, the calculation is £2,868 times the ratio of 365 divided by 324, which has been calculated to be £3,182 million. That would be an extra £238 million or an 8·1 per cent. increase in taxation for the building societies movement in aggregate, instead of a 3 per cent. reduction.

The suppositions and assertions that I am making may not be right, but they are the best that can be done with the information made available to the House in the past few days or hours. There are some uncertainties that I shall not go into about whether the figures include the Woolwich and what percentage of composite rate tax has been employed to calculate the old system and new system receipts respectively.

There are also various other doubts. It is suggested that regulation 12 outbalances regulation 11, which deals with what one might call the gap or double taxation issues. There are discrepancies, which I am sure can be explained,

between the figures and those quoted in the Inland Revenue statistics in the Chancellor's answer to me in *Hansard* of 8 July.

I suggest to the House that what has happened up to now has been clearly unsatisfactorily in several ways. First, the parliamentary draftsmanship was imperfect. That is clear from the need to introduce the amendment in the 1986 Finance Bill at a late stage. That was done to trump the Woolwich application for judicial review. It did not succeed. In the debate on 17 July 1986, when Patrick Jenkin raised the issue, two—*[Interruption.]* Madam Deputy Speaker, if I go on hearing barracking from behind me, my speech may get longer rather than shorter. It would be helpful to have——

Madam Deputy Speaker: I assure the hon. Gentleman that I can hear him very clearly.

Mr. Bottomley: I can hear those behind me very clearly.

The aim of my last remark was to draw the attention of the House to the two references in the debate on Report on 17 July 1986, that is to say, one day before the cut-off point in clause 52, to the fact that the Leeds was taking proceedings. I do not know whether it commenced proceedings or not, but it may turn out that those references have some substance that would stand up in court. We may find that not only the Woolwich was able to keep its £70 million plus. We may discover that the Leeds could keep its £57 million if it had done anything that could have been construed as opening legal proceedings before the cut-off point. We would then be left with what might be called the minnows and some of the other small societies such as the Greenwich, which proportionately were hit even harder than the Leeds or the Woolwich.

We have already established from the information how building societies have their years end in different quarters and how some of them gained by what have been called the transitional changes—the changes in the timings of their payments of tax. We end up with what is clearly hybridity except that the way in which it is covered in clause 52 is to deal with classes of building societies which include the Woolwich alone or the Woolwich and the Leeds, if my references to the Report stage of 1986 are correct.

The position is highly unsatisfactory. The draftsmanship is unsatisfactory. The near hybridity is clearly unsatisfactory. We then come to whether the Government are seriously encouraging all building societies to join in duplicate judicial review proceedings along the lines of those started by the Leeds Permanent building society last week. There is a clear difference between a tax appeal and judicial review. I am not aware of other occasions when either the Treasury or the Inland Revenue has not allowed judicial review to be regarded as a statement of the law.

To say that a tax appeal applies only to the people who appeal may or may not be reasonable, depending on the circumstances. Most people would accept that one application for judicial review should state the law for each of those affected by the law itself. That is clearly a view which is shared by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General. When I asked him—I may have got the words slightly wrong—whether it was normal or appropriate for many people to apply for judicial review, he said that it was not necessary. That is a fair comment. If we pass clause 52 and the second application for a judicial review, by the Leeds, is not overturned, judicial review appeals will be duplicated by the whole class of people who could be affected. It is unsatisfactory to have drawn the line at 18 July, which is a reason why it is appropriate to vote on amendment No. 29.

1.15 am

People will see in tomorrow's *Hansard* the useful answer from my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. I asked

"if Ministers at the time of the 1985 Budget intended to lay regulations to create liability for tax relating to a year for which the building societies Composite Rate Tax liability had been fully discharged; what estimate of the money involved was available to Ministers at the time; and what, and when, an estimate was first made available to Parliament."

He replied in part:

"No estimate was made at the time, of tax on interest accruing between the end of societies' accounting periods ending in 1985-86 and paid before the end of that tax year."

I may be contradicted by those who were Ministers at the time and I would not want to challenge them, but I believe that if at the time of the 1985 Budget there had been a clear intention, it would have been stated, the sums would have been calculated, there would have been an estimate and the House would not be in this predicament.

My final point is to warn the House about getting into the habit of letting double taxation or a tax advantage of £250 million go by, even after judges have said that a highly peculiar thing has happened, but presumed Parliament knew what it was doing at the time.

I want to assert strongly that as a Member of the House in 1985 I did not have a clue that that was going on, although I had had friendly relations with the Woolwich building society ever since I was elected in 1975. If I did not know that then and if the conclusion to the 1986 debate was that the matter should be tested by the courts because it would not be fully fought through during the late stage of the Finance Bill here, what with the courts saying "No" and Parliament not saying "Yes", I am glad that at least one Member of this House, with support from various others during the past few weeks, has been pursuing this point.

If ever Back-Bench Members, whether on the Government or Opposition side, start allowing Parliament to be treated as it undoubtedly was treated in 1985, what with the conclusions of the 1986 debate, which was not satisfactory, and this near hybrid approach to the results of judicial review, this Parliament might as well scrap its work and go home.

Anyone can provide a Government. There are 160 countries with a Government. It is easy to be in government. It is far better to work in partnership with Parliament. That is why I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary and his officials who provided the information so that tonight at least we could have the debate that we should have had in 1985—six years ago.

I hope that this saga will not continue for the next five years. The way to stop it is for the Government to get together with building societies and sort out an acceptable compromise. It may be rough justice to the Government, but they are dealing with only 1·5 per cent. of the income that they have had from building societies in the past seven years. It will put an unsatisfactory situation right.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): I shall be brief. This is a worrying matter which should concern the House greatly, first, because of the accusation of double taxation and, secondly, because of the retrospective nature

[Mr. Bowen Wells]

of the clause that the Government want to enact in the Bill. Therefore, together with my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) and many others, I have been into the matter in some detail.

I have put strongly to building societies that they should set out for the House and in their publicity exactly how they have been double taxed. I have asked them to provide a worked-out example showing where they have deducted tax once and then have had to pay another tax on the same sum to the Government. They have failed to reply and I do not believe that they can, otherwise they would have done so. I am inclined to believe the Government's contention that it is not double taxation. They are merely trying to collect the money that was deducted by the building societies for payment to the Inland Revenue to pay it over to the Revenue.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Wells: No, I will not.

The only thing to which my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary should reply is the recently revealed information to which my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham referred about the building societies paying more money to the Revenue as a result of the calculation on an 11-month year, not a 12-month one. That is extremely worrying because it suggests that the clause has been wrongly administered. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to satisfy the House that all he is trying to collect is that which the building societies have deducted from their members, which is due to the Inland Revenue.

Mr. Devlin: The speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) simply will not do. My hon. Friend has not even addressed the House of Lords judgment on the matter. The issue has been through the courts and examined by some of the best legal brains in the country. They have come to the conclusion that double taxation has occurred.

It is not good enough to say that, because the building societies will not give a simple worked example, they do not have a case. It will not do for my hon. Friend the Minister to repeat what he has said in correspondence. He cannot, simply by assertion, say that there has not been double taxation.

Mr. Maples: I think that I must be one of the few people who have read the House of Lords judgments—I read them all again this morning because I thought that they might be mentioned. If my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) can find for me in the House of Lords judgment where it is held to be double taxation, I shall be extremely interested. There is one reference to it in the leading judgment that states that the effect was

"in a sense, to tax them twice."

That judgment did not criticise the Court of Appeal that comprehensively overruled the court of first instance on that point.

I dealt with this matter at considerable length in Committee and I do not intend to bore the House by going over it again. At the end of the Committee proceedings I believe that most members of the Committee found that they were convinced by, or at least reasonably happy with, the Government's position.

I should deal with a couple of issues raised in the debate. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) for the points that he raised, and his criticism of the building societies is a telling one. No one has been able to show me any pound of income that is being taxed twice.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: What about the 11-month year?

Mr. Maples: In 1986-87 there were four quarters. The period taxed was from 1 March 1986 to 28 February 1987. Therefore, it was a 12-month period, although it did not coincide with the tax year. It started a month earlier and finished a month earlier, but there were four quarterly payments in that year. My hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) is not right to say that the figure of £76 million less revenue that I gave was not an accurate figure because 11 months only had been taken into account. Four full quarters were taken into account. Even though they did not coincide with the tax year, four quarterly payments were made during that year. As a result, as we said in 1985, no additional revenue was generated as a result of the proposal—£76 million less was collected.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eltham has tried to make a lot of the House not being told what was happening in 1985. As I have said to my hon. Friend in correspondence, there were clear minutes of meetings before the Budget between the then Economic Secretary and members of the Building Societies Association. From those minutes it is perfectly clear what was intended.

In view of the furore that has developed over that matter this year, I am surprised that none of those building societies briefed a Member of Parliament like my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham. They could not have briefed him then because he was a member of the Government who passed the proposals, so I suppose that they would have had to have briefed some other Member of Parliament. I am surprised that they did not do so because they were aware of what would happen.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eltham suggests that clause 52 is not necessary because the general law could simply be applied. There is considerable doubt about that. The matter has been raised in the past and was not first raised by the Leeds building society the other day. It would rely on the defence that money paid under a mistake of law cannot be reclaimed. That would turn on the details of documentary evidence which, for arbitrary reasons, might differ according to the case. It is better to set the matter to rest by enacting clause 52.

The final point that my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham made was that there was a difference between a tax appeal and a judicial review. Clearly, they are different procedures but it is difficult to see the substantive difference in this case.

Mr. Devlin: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Maples: Let me deal with that point.

Previously, a taxpayer may have won a case and the Government would have then changed the law. For example, in the Padmore case the Inland Revenue sued Mr. Padmore for some tax that he declined to pay on the ground that he was not entitled to pay it. Mr. Padmore won the case, but that is not how the Woolwich building society wanted to behave. It did not want to refuse to pay the tax. Instead, it paid the tax and had an explicit

agreement with the Revenue that it would challenge it by a process of judicial review and that, if it won, the Revenue would refund the tax. No other building society made that agreement. It would have been open to them to bring judicial review proceedings of their own and have those joined with the proceedings of the Woolwich, or to make an agreement with the Revenue that they would pay under protest and would get a refund of the tax if the Woolwich won its case. That is what happened in the Padmore case. Three other taxpayers made an agreement with the Revenue that they would be bound by the decision in that case. They benefited from the judgment, as did Mr. Padmore, whereas the law was changed for everyone else. Therefore, we are not departing from a fairly standard practice.

Mr. Devlin: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Maples: I should just like to finish the point.

It may interest the House to know that, when the first tax payments for that period were made, the Woolwich and two or three other small building societies paid under protest. Only the Woolwich said that it would contest the case and it was as a result of that that this agreement was made. No other building society made those arrangements or paid under protest.

The building societies that have been at the forefront of some of the arguments that we are debating did not pay under protest or make any protest until after the Woolwich had won its High Court case, so I did not have much sympathy for those other societies. It seems reasonable that the Woolwich should be allowed to have its tax refunded because it won the case, but it is inconsistent with the practice that this Government and many previous Governments have adopted. Where the law has been held by the court not to be what it was thought to be, the taxpayer involved in that case benefits from that decision, but it is proper retrospectively to amend the law to catch everyone else. That is what we are doing in this case.

Mr. Devlin: In English law, a judicial review is and always has been a statement of public law. Any other person is entitled to rely on that statement. My hon. Friend the Minister is wrong to say that there is no distinction between a tax decision, which is the arbitration in a particular tax case, and a case of public law, which a statement that any other taxpayer, individual member of the public or corporation may fairly rely upon.

Mr. Maples: When the law is decided by the Court of Appeal or the House of Lords it is exactly the same, whether it is the result of a judicial review proceeding or a case brought by the Revenue against a taxpayer. Although the judicial review has existed for a long time, it is a proceeding that has been developed in the past few years. It has been used largely in connection with administrative rather than tax laws.

I have explained why the case was dealt with by a judicial review. It was because the Woolwich did not want to litigate the matter by refusing to pay the tax and then invite the Revenue to sue it. I understand why it did not want to behave in that way. One cannot argue that the law is different because it was decided as a result of a judicial review proceeding rather than any other way.

1.30 am

Mr. Bottomley: My hon. Friend mentioned an agreement made with the Woolwich to accept the result of the judicial review case. Did my hon. Friend mean to say that there was a formal agreement so that if the Woolwich won the case in the House of Lords it could keep the money?

Mr. Maples: My understanding is that the Woolwich paid the original tax owed for the gap period under protest and made an agreement with the Inland Revenue that the Woolwich would take the case to litigation and, if it won, the Revenue would refund the tax to it. There was an agreement to that effect, and no other building society made a similar agreement, although it would have been open to it to do so.

In the circumstances, unless there is any particular point that any hon. Member wishes me to develop on general aspects, I shall not continue. I invite the House to reflect on the amendments as they would allow societies other than the Woolwich to take advantage of the Woolwich judgment.

1.30 am

Mr. Bottomley: The simplest way to sum up the debate, which was valuable, but would have been better if it had taken place in 1985, is to refer to what Sir Nicolas Browne-Wilkinson said at the Court of Appeal. He said:

"It is unnecessary to consider in detail the judge's"—

Mr. Justice Nolan's

"reasons for rejecting the Revenue's argument since, in this court,"—

the Court of Appeal—

"the Revenue has reversed its position."

The argument that the Revenue won in the Court of Appeal was exactly the opposite of the argument that it had put in the High Court.

It seems that if the Revenue is allowed to change its argument totally, and argue in the Court of Appeal that a building society was not accounting for the tax for building society members, the House should be able, not to change its argument, but to stick to the following two principles. The first is that one should not distinguish between the people affected by an application for a judicial review, especially when the Leeds was explicitly referred to in the affidavit proposed by the Woolwich—the two societies shared lawyers. I could not hear a lawyer telling the Leeds or any other building society to go to the expense of carrying out parallel judicial review proceedings. I think that such an occurrence was unprecedented—my hon. Friend the Minister may tell me that I am wrong.

Secondly, in the debate on the Floor of the House on the day before the cut-off debate in 1986, the Leeds was extensively referred to. It was twice assumed in that debate that the Leeds had commenced proceedings. It seems that it is wrong for the Treasury to come forward with a new amendment at a late stage of a second Finance Bill one year after the first to change the law, especially as it is now becoming clearer that those building societies at the year end in December gained from the provisions. The House should regard that as unsatisfactory.

My reason for calling for a vote on amendment No. 29 is not necessarily to win. I have not tried to organise a gang to defeat the Government, because I think that the Government should change their mind and acknowledge that the probing has led to the exposure of an

[Mr. Bottomley]

unsatisfactory position. In subsequent judicial proceedings, it should be possible for the High Court, the Court of Appeal or the House of Lords to understand that the House knew nothing of the implications of the affair in 1985, even though the Revenue and some building society officials may have done. Hon. Members are supposed to know what they are doing. Some of the judgments in the judicial review show that the judges had to decide the law as written by the House, and could not look behind it to see what hon. Members had in their minds.

Mr. Devlin: Would it not have been a great help to the workings of the House tonight if the Attorney-General had come to give us a statement of the law as it stands on judicial reviews? My hon. Friend the Minister, while well-meaning, is totally wrong.

Mr. Bottomley: I do not want to suggest that my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary is wrong on anything. He has a hard enough job anyway and has been put to some test in this debate and others. He has done better than any other Minister could have done, but I still believe that the Government are defending an unsatisfactory position.

Therefore, it is with great reluctance that I shall call for a vote on amendment No. 29, not amendment No. 45.

Amendment negatived.

Amendment proposed: No. 29, in page 36, line 31, leave out from 'society' to 'this' in line 32, and insert—

(a) which commenced proceedings to challenge the validity of the regulations before 18th July 1986, or

(b) which, after 18th July 1986 but before 19th March 1991, commenced proceedings for the recovery of money paid by it, being proceedings taken as a result of the outcome of earlier proceedings of the kind to which paragraph (a) of this subsection relates, or

(c) which, after 18th July 1986 but before 19th March 1991, made any payment as provided for by the regulations, and which, in relation to such payment, gave written notice that it disputed the validity of the regulations.'.—*[Mr. Peter Bottomley.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 6, Noes 119.

Division No. 211] **[1.34 am**

AYES

Cryer, Bob	Wallace, James
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin	
Paisley, Rev Ian	**Tellers for the Ayes:**
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*	**Mr. Peter Bottomley and**
Skinner, Dennis	**Mr. David Trimble.**

NOES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Chapman, Sydney
Amess, David	Chope, Christopher
Amos, Alan	Colvin, Michael
Arbuthnot, James	Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*	Couchman, James
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Cran, James
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*	Currie, Mrs Edwina
Bevan, David Gilroy	Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Day, Stephen
Boswell, Tim	Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Bowis, John	Durant, Sir Anthony
Brandon-Bravo, Martin	Emery, Sir Peter
Brazier, Julian	Fallon, Michael
Bright, Graham	Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*	Franks, Cecil
Burns, Simon	Freeman, Roger
Butterfill, John	French, Douglas
Carrington, Matthew	Gale, Roger
Cash, William	Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodhart, Sir Philip	Neubert, Sir Michael
Goodlad, Alastair	Nicholls, Patrick
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles	Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*	Norris, Steve
Gregory, Conal	Oppenheim, Phillip
Ground, Patrick	Paice, James
Hague, William	Patnick, Irvine
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie	Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*	Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Hanley, Jeremy	Riddick, Graham
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*	Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Harris, David	Rowe, Andrew
Hayes, Jerry	Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*	Sackville, Hon Tom
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*	Sayeed, Jonathan
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*	Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*	Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Irvine, Michael	Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Jackson, Robert	Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Janman, Tim	Stern, Michael
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*	Stevens, Lewis
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*	Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Kirkhope, Timothy	Summerson, Hugo
Knapman, Roger	Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*	Thorne, Neil
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*	Thurnham, Peter
Lawrence, Ivan	Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark	Twinn, Dr Ian
Lord, Michael	Viggers, Peter
Maclean, David	Waller, Gary
Malins, Humfrey	Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Mans, Keith	Watts, John
Maples, John	Wells, Bowen
Maude, Hon Francis	Wheeler, Sir John
Mawhinney, Dr Brian	Widdecombe, Ann
Mellor, Rt Hon David	Wolfson, Mark
Mills, Iain	Wood, Timothy
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*	
Moate, Roger	**Tellers for the Noes:**
Moss, Malcolm	**Mr. David Lightbown and**
Moynihan, Hon Colin	**Mr. John M. Taylor.**
Needham, Richard	

Question accordingly negatived.

1.45 am

Clause 72

DEFINITION OF "NORMAL COMMERCIAL LOAN"

Amendment made: No. 23, in page 52, line 39, leave out from 'effect' to end of line and insert '—

(a) so far as concerns the application of section 64(2) for the purposes of section 136A of the Capital Gains Tax Act 1979, in relation to claims on or after 1st April 1991, and

(b) so far as concerns any other application of section 64(2), in relation to disposals on or after that date.'. —*[Mr. Maples.]*

Clause 84

NON-RESIDENT SETTLEMENTS WHERE SETTLOR HAS AN INTEREST

Amendment made: No. 1, in page 60, leave out lines 31 to 34 and insert—

'(a) chargeable gains, whether of one amount or of two or more amounts, are treated as accruing by virtue of paragraph 2 of Schedule 16 to the Finance Act 1991 (gains of non-resident settlements chargeable on settlor), and'.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

Clause 93

CORPORATE BONDS

Amendments made: No. 24, in page 63, line 14, leave out subsection (1) and insert—

'(1) Section 64 of the Finance Act 1984 shall be amended as follows.'.

No. 25, in line 29, at end insert—

'(4) This section shall have effect—

(a) so far as concerns the application of section 64 for the purposes of section 136A of the Capital Gains Tax Act 1979, in relation to claims on or after 19th March 1991, and

(b) so far as concerns any other application of section 64, in relation to disposals on or after that date (and, in relation to such disposals, shall be regarded as always having had effect).'.—*[Mr. Maples.]*

Clause 114

POOLS PAYMENTS TO SUPPORT GAMES ETC.

Mr. Denis Howell (Birmingham, Small Heath): I beg to move amendment No. 52, in page 79, line 34, after 'to', insert 'independently appointed'.

I shall detain the House as briefly as possible at this hour, but there are one or two matters that should be raised. I am glad that the appropriate Minister is in his place, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. The right hon. and learned Gentleman is well known to be much concerned about the health of the arts and of sport, as I am.

I welcome the new trust proposal. I do not seek to oppose it or denigrate it. Indeed, the Government are worthy of great credit for having introduced it. It is the third trust to be established by means of reducing betting duty. One of the earlier developments was the establishment of the Football Trust, which might be regarded as the Howell trust, though it never is. I had some responsibility for implementing the scheme, having established it with the good co-operation of the Pools Promoters Association.

The second trust might be described as the Major trust. The Prime Minister, when Chancellor of the Exchequer, properly reduced betting tax after the terrible disaster at Hillsborough to produce money to try to implement the recommendations of the Taylor report to improve safety at sports grounds.

We now have a third trust for sport and the arts, which I suppose should bear the name of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I welcome all the additional resources that are coming into sport. I think that everyone would agree that the Football Trust has done excellent work. It should be remembered that when it was established its objectives and its membership were properly agreed between the PPA and the appropriate Minister, which was me. That will not happen with the new trust which we shall establish under clause 114.

It is important to establish the purpose of a trust and the independence of the trustees. That was never better illustrated than by the remarks of the Minister for Sport last week on the proposed super league that is to be controlled by the Football Association. As the House may know, the Minister for Sport said that the second of the trusts to which I have referred, the Major trust, was created to provide money for football teams in the football league or the Scottish football league. As I understand it, the Minister said on "Question Time" last week—and I gather that he has repeated it in a statement—that if clubs left the football league the Major money would no longer be available to them. That is a statement of profound importance. I understand why the Minister made it, and it is right that he did so in order that no one should doubt that the trust was for a specific purpose and that if that purpose no longer existed because teams took themselves out of the football league they would lose that support from the Treasury.

The trust established under clause 114 will, I understand, provide £40 million for sport and £20 million for the arts—all of which I welcome—as a result of a 2·5 per cent. reduction in betting duty. Although there is a reduction in betting duty, it will be taxpayers' money, as I am sure the Minister will agree and would like me to emphasise. When the concession was made, that was made clear at the time in public statements but not in the House. I believe that this is our first opportunity to discuss the issue.

We are establishing a new trust with considerable sums of money from the public purse—£60 million in all—without, as far as I can see, any consultation or co-ordination with the Arts Council or the Sports Council. That is one of the main reasons why I have raised the issue. When I went to the Sports Council the other day before tabling the amendment, I discovered that not only did it not know what policy the new trust would implement, but that it had been told by Treasury officials—I hope that the Minister will deny this or put us right—that there would be no co-ordination between the new trust, with its £40 million to spend on sport, and the Sports Council and certainly no cross-membership between the Sport Council and the trust.

That cannot be right. It would be ludicrous if there were no co-ordination between two separate trusts that provided public money—one created by the Bill and one a statutory body, the Sports Council. An organisation could apply for a grant to the Sports Council and be turned down—probably on good policy grounds—but could then make the same application to the independent trust. That would be nonsense. There must be a co-ordination of policy and strategy between the Arts Council and the Sports Council on the one hand and the new trust on the other. I accept that the new trust must have some financial independence, but it must also have regard to the existence and policies of the other statutory bodies which, in large measure, will be carrying out Government policy.

My second concern is the appointment of trustees, which is covered by the amendment. I mentioned the Minister's intervention—a very proper intervention—in the affairs of the trust set up to deal with the Hillsborough disaster. I appears that the trustees will be chosen entirely by the Pools Promoters Association, which is currently inviting nominations—which suggests that the Government have no input. It cannot be right that the members of a so-called independent trust that will get all its money from the public purse should be nominated by the PPA. I would prefer the trustees to be appointed by organisations specified in the Bill or by the Secretary of State. Persons wanting to nominate trustees would know how to approach the matter and that their candidates would be objectively assessed.

I am sure that no right hon. or hon. Member would think it correct for bookmakers or the tote to apply for membership of the Horserace Betting Levy Board, yet that

[Mr. Denis Howell]

is a relevant comparison to draw to the attention of the Chief Secretary. There has been no public or parliamentary debate on that issue, but as taxpayers' money will be involved, perhaps there could be a requirement that the trust reports annually to Parliament. We could then review its policy in respect of both the arts and sport.

By and large, the Arts Council provides money for revenue purposes, not capital, whereas the reverse is true in the case of the Sports Council: it provides funds for capital requirements, not revenue. The two organisations' policies are diametrically opposed, but they must relate in future to the new trust.

I hope that the Treasury does not view the new trust as a substitute for a national lottery. This is not the hour to debate the merits of a lottery, but some of our friends in the Pools Promoters Association—which co-operates with the present Government as it did with me in providing money for sport and now for the arts—feel that the reason for the Government's enthusiasm is that they view the trust as a substitute for a national lottery. I believe that the two can run in parallel. The PPA's members, with their experience and technical ability, might be the best people to run a national lottery. In any event, I know that such a lottery has the approval of some Ministers, particularly the Minister for the Arts, who contributed an interesting article to the *Birmingham Post* last week.

In general, I support the trust, but I hope that the Chief Secretary will be able to provide further information, and set our minds at rest, in respect of some of the points that I have raised.

Mr. Mellor: I am grateful to the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) for raising this subject, and for making a good many points very succinctly. I applaud all that he has done for sport over the years, and appreciate his interest and involvement.

2 am

I am also grateful for the warm welcome that the right hon. Gentleman has given the foundation, which is indeed an exciting venture. For us to have £60 million a year to disburse on sport and the arts represents a major development, and I am sure that we all wish the foundation well.

It is important to recognise that some £20 million of that £60 million is revenue forgone from the reduction in pools betting duty; the rest reflects changes in the stake money, and is a contribution from the Pools Promoters Association. It was apparent to the Government that both sport and the arts needed more funds. Various fiscal changes were suggested in relation to sport, particularly youth sport, but it was extremely difficult to bring them about without distorting the tax system. The foundation seemed a good alternative.

The right hon. Gentleman mentioned relationships with the Sports Council and the Arts Council. I hope that there will be rapport between the various organisations. However, the fact that an arts organisation does not qualify for support from the Arts Council does not mean that it is not worthy of support. Although the Arts Council's funds have been increased, it always has to establish priorities. I recall my involvement with the National Youth Orchestra, which lost its grant because the Arts Council felt obliged to support professional rather than amateur youth activities. The fact that the foundation will provide an alternative source of revenue need not prevent sensible understandings from being reached between the various bodies.

The foundation is private. It is not intended to be a public body, for the reasons that I have already given—although there will be a link with the Department of Education and Science, and, in particular, the Minister for the Arts. A representative of the Department will sit in on trust meetings.

I shall not go into detail about the appointments. Let me tell the right hon. Member for Small Heath, however, that his efforts in regard to the Football Trust were not in vain. Many of the arrangements made for the trust are mirrored in the arrangements being made for the foundation, and the appointments broadly follow the model of the new Football Trust set up last year. There will be 11 trustees, four of them nominated by the individual pools companies and seven nominated by the Pools Promoters Association. The Minister for Sport will be consulted on the appointment of the chairman.

Because—as the right hon. Gentleman said—some of the foundation's resources come from duty forgone, we shall want to be satisfied that the trusteees are fit and proper persons before agreeing that the cut in betting duty should go ahead. When we know who the trustees are, we shall know whether the foundation can command support and confidence. I believe that it can and will, and that it will be none the worse for being independent of Government, in at least as crucial a way as the right hon. Gentleman advocated.

Quite plainly, the Pools Promoters Association understands that the trustees must be fit and proper persons in order to merit the reduction in betting duty. I hope that we shall be able to make a more substantive announcement about the foundation before the recess so that the foundation can get down to work at the beginning of the next football season. In the meantime, if the right hon. Gentleman has any further suggestions, I would be pleased to consider them.

Mr. Howell: I am grateful to the Minister, but I cannot understand why the further announcement, which I welcome, is to made before the new football season because I understand that the trust cannot spend any of its money on football. I understand that horse racing and football were excluded as proper objectives for the new trust.

Mr. Mellor: That is not so. I appreciate that many hon. Members feel that we could be discussing this at another time and in another place—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear"] I am glad that at least something that I have said has met with agreement. However, league football is excluded because it is already the beneficiary of the 2·5 per cent. reduction. That does not prevent amateur or non-league football being supported, and that is right.

Mr. Howell: That may be, but the Chief Secretary to the Treasury's comment about the beginning of the football season was odd because the proposal does not apply to professional football. The money comes from pools betting that operates for 12 months and not just for the football season.

I will get on with it as I do not want to play extra time. In welcoming the Chief Secretary's comments, one of the difficulties is that there have been no public statements

about how the trust is to be constructed. The issue should be debated publicly if four of the trustees are to be appointed by the pools companies and seven from the Pools Promoters Association. They seem to be the same people wearing different hats.

I hope that there will be further statements so that we can discuss the details. Having expressed my satisfaction with this short debate, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Schedule 10

BUILDING SOCIETIES: QUALIFYING SHARES

Amendment made: No. 26, in page 123, line 33, at end insert—

'(5) This paragraph shall not have effect in relation to the application of section 64 for the purposes of section 136A of the Capital Gains Tax Act 1979.'.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

Schedule 13

MANUFACTURED DIVIDENDS AND INTEREST

Amendments made: No. 34, in page 131, line 25, at end insert—

'"recognised clearing house" means a recognised clearing house within the meaning of the Financial Services Act 1986;'.

No. 35, in page 131, line 27, leave out 'the Financial Services Act 1986' and insert 'that Act'.

No. 36, in page 131, line 30, after 'payment'", insert 'subject to any regulations under sub-paragraph (2) below'.

No. 37, in page 131, line 34, leave out from beginning to end of line 45 and insert—

'(b) any manufactured dividend or manufactured interest not falling within paragraph (a) above which is paid in respect of United Kingdom securities or United Kingdom equities by a person other than one who is—

(i) a market maker in relation to United Kingdom securities or United Kingdom equities of the kind in question, or

(ii) in such circumstances as may be prescribed, a member, of a prescribed class or description, of a prescribed recognised investment exchange, or

(iii) in such circumstances as may be prescribed, a prescribed recognised clearing house,

and which is so paid otherwise than in connection with an approved stock lending arrangement;'.

No. 38, in page 140, line 51, leave out 'and' and insert—

'"recognised investment exchange" means a recognised investment exchange within the meaning of the Financial Services Act 1986"; and'.

No. 39, in page 141, line 2, after 'manufacturer', insert '(a)'.

No. 33, in page 141, line 4, after 'Kingdom', insert 'or

(b) is a member, of a prescribed class or description, of a prescribed recognised investment exchange,'.

No. 40, in page 141, line 8, leave out from 'it' to 'may' in line 9 and insert—

'(7B) Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (7A) above, dividend manufacturing regulations made by virtue of that subsection'.

No. 41, in page 141, line 16, leave out from 'paid' to 'for' in line 17 and insert—

'and, without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (c) above, any regulations made for the purpose specified in that paragraph may include provision, in a case falling within subsection (7A)(a) above,'.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

Schedule 15

RELIEF FOR COMPANY TRADING LOSSES

Amendment made: No. 27, in page 154, line 16, leave out '1st April' and insert '14th June'.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

Schedule 16

SETTLEMENTS: SETTLORS

Amendments made: No. 2, in page 158, line 11, at end insert

'but nothing in the preceding provisions of this sub-paragraph shall prevent deductions being made in respect of losses accruing in a year of assessment in which the conditions mentioned in paragraph 1(1)(a) to (d) and (f) above are fulfilled as regards the settlement.'.

No. 3, in page 159, line 7, leave out sub-paragraph (4).

No. 4, in page 159, line 32, at end insert—

'(8) In sub-paragraph (3) above "child" includes a stepchild.

(9) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (3) above the question whether a company is controlled by a person or persons shall be construed in accordance with section 416 of the Taxes Act 1988; but in deciding that question for those purposes no rights or powers of (or attributed to) an associate or associates of a person shall be attributed to him under section 416(6) if he is not a participator in the company.

(10) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (3) above the question whether one company is associated with another shall be construed in accordance with section 416 of the Taxes Act 1988; but where in deciding that question for those purposes it falls to be decided whether a company is controlled by a person or persons, no rights or powers of (or attributed to) an associate or associates of a person shall be attributed to him under section 416(6) if he is not a participator in the company.

(11) In sub-paragraphs (9) and (10) above "participator" has the meaning given by section 417(1) of the Taxes Act 1988.'.

No. 5, in page 161, line 39, leave out '(a)'.

No. 6, in page 161, line 41, at end insert

'but in deciding that question for those purposes no rights or powers of (or attributed to) an associate or associates of a person shall be attributed to him under section 416(6) if he is not a participator in the company.'.

No. 7, in page 161, leave out line 42 and insert—

'(9A) In this paragraph "participator" has the meaning given by section 417(1) of the Taxes Act 1988.'.

No. 8, in page 162, line 9, leave out

'by way of bargain made'

and insert

'under a transaction entered into'.

No. 9, in page 162, line 11 at end insert

'but if the settlement's expenses relating to administration and taxation for a year of assessment exceed its income for the year, property or income provided towards meeting those expenses shall be ignored for the purposes of this condition if the value of the property or income so provided does not exceed the difference between the amount of those expenses and the amount of the settlement's income for the year.'.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): I beg to move amendment No. 49, in page 162, line 12 at end insert

'and

(c) otherwise than in respect of the expenses of the trustees'.

The amendment complements Government amendment No. 9, but it takes it a little further. It comes from consultations between a number of tax practitioners, one of whom is operating as a consultant. The problem with the Government amendment is that it provides only a

[Mr. William Cash]

partial solution to dealing with settlement expenses. In a nutshell, the capital-related expenses are paid out of income. The amendment will amount to an addition to the settlement by a life tenant, which will bring the trust within the new rules covered by the schedule.

Mr. Maude: We have accepted that there is a case for allowing the expenses properly chargeable for an existing trust to be met without bringing it within the new provisions. Government amendment No. 9, with which we have just dealt, covers the situation. I cannot accept amendment No. 49, essentially on the basis that it goes wider than is necessary or desirable for the purpose.

Mr. Cash: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment by leave, withdrawn.

Amendments made: No. 10, in page 162, line 27, leave out

'at matters before that date) might be expected to enjoy'

and insert

'only at the terms of the settlement immediately before 19th March 1991) would be capable of enjoying'.

No. 11, in page 162, line 39, leave out sub-paragraph (8) and insert—

'(8) In sub-paragraph (7) above "child" includes a stepchild.

(9) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (7) above the question whether a company is controlled by a person or persons shall be construed in accordance with section 416 of the Taxes Act 1988; but in deciding that question for those purposes no rights or powers of (or attributed to) an associate or associates of a person shall be attributed to him under section 416(6) if he is not a participator in the company.

(10) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (7) above the question whether one company is associated with another shall be construed in accordance with section 416 of the Taxes Act 1988, but where in deciding that question for those purposes it falls to be decided whether a company is controlled by a person or persons, no rights or powers of (or attributed to) an associate or associates of a person shall be attributed to him under section 416(6) if he is not a participator in the company.

(11) In sub-paragraphs (9) and (10) above "participator" has the meaning given by section 417(1) of the Taxes Act 1988.'.

No. 12, in page 163, line 4, leave out

'by way of a bargain made'

and insert

'under a transaction entered into'.

No. 13, in page 164, line 36, leave out

'any provision other than the paragraph concerned'

and insert

'the paragraph concerned or of any other provision'.

No. 14, in page 164, line 44, leave out

'any provision other than the paragraph concerned'

and insert

'the paragraph concerned or of any other provision'.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

Schedule 18

SETTLEMENTS: BENEFICIARIES (MISCELLANEOUS)

Amendment made: No. 15, in page 172, line 37, leave out

'by way of a bargain made'

and insert

'under a transaction entered into'.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

Bill to be read the Third time this day.

Fair Employment (Northern Ireland)

2.11 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Richard Needham): I beg to move,

That the draft Fair Employment (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 4th July, be approved.

Fair employment is a most important issue in Northern Ireland. It is of concern to everyone and it affects relationships between and within both sides of the community. The order addresses one of its key aspects —the equitable, prompt and effective processing of individual complaints of alleged discrimination.

It may be helpful to the House if I outline briefly the background to the order and its consequential draft monitoring regulations, copies of which have been provided to assist hon. Members. When the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989 was passing through Parliament, the Government undertook to watch how the new legislation worked out in practice and to review its operation.

The Fair Employment Commission's monitoring report for 1990 is encouraging. For one thing, statutory monitoring has established facts—hard and concrete evidence—about the actual employment situation. In doing so, it has helped to dispel the myths, prejudices and misinformation that so often surround the topic. It has shed much-needed light on the reality of the overall situation. That is a most significant contribution to objective debate on the subject, as is the gathering of evidence that shows that there are disadvantages and under-representation in both communities.

Statutory monitoring has also revealed some very positive features, such as the almost equal representation of both communities in higher professional posts such as teachers, lawyers and doctors. It has revealed the small differential between Protestants and Catholics in the broad managerial and technical group of occupations. It suggests that Northern Ireland is moving far closer to fair employment in aggregate terms than has been generally believed.

Of course, we are not complacent. Catholic under-representation in such industrial sectors as engineering, banking, finance and insurance, and in the skilled manual, clerical and sales occupations, is not acceptable. The same applies to Protestant under-representation in certain management and professional occupations. But there is no doubt that the first statutory returns show a more positive, and certainly a far more complex and sophisticated, picture than the simplistic crude and misleading caricatures painted by the MacBride proponents. So, overall, there is encouraging evidence that the 1989 Act is already helping us to move in the right direction. Progress is being made and areas for further improvement are being identified and quantified so that they can be selected for future action.

However, the House will be aware that in October 1990, a decision of the fair employment tribunal disclosed a serious problem in relation to the operation of a single but important aspect of the Act. It relates to the handling of individual discrimination cases. The problem is that the protection afforded by section 30 of the 1989 Act to information used for monitoring purposes, or from which the community background of an employee or job

applicant could be deduced, is too wide. Individuals are unable to pursue cases and employers are unable to bring forward evidence to answer complaints.

When we canvassed possible solutions in a consultative paper in November 1990, views were divided. On the one hand, there were those who wanted total repeal of section 30 and on the other there were those who supported amendment to allow disclosure of monitoring information, but only in very carefully defined and limited circumstances.

Total repeal would be clear cut, but it would mean removing the specific offence of releasing information obtained during monitoring. There is considerable concern that such information should remain confidential except in very limited circumstances. At the same time, it is not easy to define all the circumstances in which such confidential information should be disclosed, while ensuring that the fair employment tribunal is not overburdened with cases about disclosure.

After careful consideration of the comments received on their consultative paper, the Government proposed a further approach. That approach set out a reasonable compromise between the requirements of disclosure and confidentiality.

The main elements of the Government's approach are repealing section 30 of the 1989 Act and adding to section 28 a new provision which will provide for the confidentiality of monitoring information through regulations. The regulations will preserve the confidentiality of monitoring information obtained under the three principal methods of monitoring. They will remove confidentiality from information obtained under the residuary method of monitoring. They will permit the disclosure of confidential information in limited circumstances, for example, to the Fair Employment Commission, the Labour Relations Agency, the Equal Opportunities Commission, the fair employment tribunal, the courts and industrial tribunals.

The comments received on the Government's draft order and regulations, and the debate on them in the Northern Ireland Committee, showed that all parties appreciated the need to ensure that individual cases—330 are currently pending—could proceed quickly. But it was clear that the basic division remained between those favouring total repeal of section 30 and those favouring limited disclosure.

As a result of that Northern Ireland Committee debate, the Government were persuaded of the need to amend our draft order in a number of ways. It now ensures that neither the Fair Employment Commission nor the Equal Opportunities Commission are unnecessarily limited in their ability to seek information from monitoring returns —nor does the order preclude disclosure to consultants or trade union officials; it contains appropriate retrospective provisions to permit the processing of cases affected by the tribunal's ruling last October; and it corrects an omission from the 1989 Act about time limits for bringing a complaint where an act of discrimination has taken place over a period.

The order addresses two key objectives: first, the need for individual complainants to have ready access to the relevant information necessary to pursue their cases; and, secondly, the need for all who hold protected information to have a clear appreciation of what information is protected by the legislation and what is not, and to have the necesssary statutory backing for the release of confidential information under the exceptions provided in the order and regulations.

I am very conscious of the particular sensitivities aroused in Northern Ireland by permitting the disclosure of information on perceived religious belief or community affiliation, or on the names and addresses of specific individuals. I recognise those sensitivities and know that they can be considerably heightened by the terrorist activities in both communities. But it is important to maintain a sense of proportion. The reality is that in the vast majority of cases the only information in which the commission or tribunal are likely to have an interest is that which discloses the community affiliation of an individual. It is most unlikely that, in most cases, more detailed information about, for example, address, occupation, or club membership will be requested. Even in the most unlikely event of its being requested—and this is the important point—the order does not require or compel the release of such information. So it is important not to overegg the sensitivity issue; and it is equally important to keep in mind that the order is permissive. It does not insist on the release of information whether sensitive or

Ultimately, it is for the fair employment tribunal to determine what information it is reasonable for an employer to provide or withhold, in response to a request from a complainant. The tribunal has absolute legal discretion in this matter and the Fair Employment Commission, without in any way compromising the tribunal's discretion, has said that it stands ready to provide employers with guidance on how they should respond to requests for information in individual cases. It is prepared to advise employers on the content, nature and timing of the release of information. So I suggest that all employers make use of it when they are concerned about how best to respond to a particular request.

Turning to points of detail, it may be useful to the House to focus on the primary reason for this amending order and to point out clearly what it does and does not do. At present the confidentiality provisions under section 30 of the 1989 Act are so wide that individual cases cannot proceed and employers cannot bring forward information to defend themselves. As a result, no information likely to disclose community affiliation can be divulged. Clearly, this is unacceptable to both complainants and employers. So the order effectively breaks this logjam on individual cases taken by members of both communities and it enables employers to know clearly what information is, and what is not, covered by confidentiality.

It is important to emphasise that the amending order does not require the divulging of confidential information about Royal Ulster Constabulary or Ulster Defence Regiment members, for example, or indeed any other individuals. It does not give complainants or the FEC the right to demand specific information and to have this supplied. Complainants and the Fair Employment Commission can, as at present, request information, but employers are still not obliged or required to provide it.

So at present, the release of requested information remains voluntary. Criminal sanctions also remain to protect confidentiality. The amendment focuses confidentiality on information supplied by one of the three principal methods of monitoring and on the determination by the employer of community affiliation.

[Mr. Richard Needham]

It follows that if a complainant asks for any information including the name and address of an individual who happens to be a member of the RUC or UDR, the employer could still refuse to provide it; an employer is not obliged to provide any information in response to a question from a complainant or the Fair Employment Commission. So an employer could still, as at present, refuse to provide that information.

The Government are determined to enforce the best practice of fair employment in Northern Ireland on behalf of both communities. Too many firms in Northern Ireland are still either almost totally Protestant or almost totally Catholic—242 concerns employ more than 90 per cent. Protestants and 142 more than 90 per cent. Catholics. This shows the need for better integration of work forces in Northern Ireland. It shows the need to continue to provide equality of opportunity and fair employment for both Protestants and Catholics.

By working more closely together—by playing on the same team within the work force—people get to know, trust and respect each other better. Residual suspicions and outdated myths about people from different communities and cultural traditions are challenged and eroded. This is what the Government's fair employment legislation aims to do. I hope that we can all agree that the better integration of the work force throughout Northern Ireland is good for not only fair employment but the economic, social and political well-being of the region.

These objectives, particularly the fair employment and economic priorities, are linked. There must be substantial job creation and inward investment. Jobs for all requires jobs in the first place. That is what those who support the MacBride campaign tend to forget. The only political party in Northern Ireland that supports the MacBride campaign is Sinn Fein. And the House knows what the Sinn Fein policy on job creation amounts to in practice: the use of the bomb and the bullet to destroy jobs, threaten both the lives and the livelihoods of workers and to keep whole communities and families deprived of economic opportunity and hope.

I am sure that all those with a genuine interest in equality of opportunity in Northern Ireland will wish to renew their call for increased investment and job creation in the region as an important complement to fair employment. This order is a further stage in the encouraging progress that has been made since the passage of the 1989 Act. It will enable the equitable, effective and expeditious processing of individual cases by the fair employment tribunal. I commend the draft order to the House.

2.22 am

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): The order seeks to correct an error which was made when the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Bill was passed. It is an error in the important area of monitoring. In the past year the final responses of employers to the monitoring procedures have been obtained. I take issue with the Minister on what the monitoring has shown. It is argued that, because the monitoring returns show that Catholics and Protestants are employed in relation to their numbers in the population, there is no discrimination. That is profoundly misleading.

The monitoring returns do not tell us the respective proportions of Catholics and Protestants within the work force. They tell us the number of employees only in firms of 25 or more staff. They give no indication of the state of employees who work for fewer than 16 hours each week. They produce only aggregate results for multi-site employers. Therefore, the statistics perhaps require more careful examination than that suggested by the Minister.

As long as large gaps remain in the statistics, there will be difficulty in ascertaining the true picture, especially as it applies to both communities, to people in part-time jobs and, above all, to female employees. Nevertheless, the final responses of employers to the monitoring requests have given us a basis on which we can work from year to year to build up a picture of what is happening in the work force.

The Opposition welcome the fact that the Government have decided to address the problem of the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989 that was identified in the case of Pryce *v.* University of Ulster. Although, as we are amending a Westminster statute, we consider that such matters should usually properly be dealt with by public Bill procedure, we recognise the need for urgency in this case. The decision of the fair employment tribunal in the Pryce case was the only legally correct one, so no useful purpose would be served by any further delay in resolving the difficulty. The urgency of action on this issue is clear since the Pryce verdict has paralysed the operation of the fair employment tribunals and the industrial tribunals. We hope that the adoption of the order will lead to a rapid clearance in the backlog of the cases before the tribunals. We hope that the Government will facilitate the tribunals with all the assistance that they may consider necessary to achieve that objective.

I should point out that the order does not follow the direct approach to the disclosure problem which the Opposition sought and which was originally requested by the Fair Employment Commission, the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights. We all advocated the simple repeal of section 30 of the 1989 Act. The Government decided, for reasons that the Minister gave us, that they could not follow that particular road. We can hope, therefore, only that the order does not lead to further as yet unforeseen problems in the implementation of the legislation. Nevertheless, it would be ungracious not to commend the Government on their positive response to many of the suggestions and arguments advocated by the Opposition during Committee when we discussed the principles of the Bill. Many of them were part of the proposals of the various organisations to which I have already referred—SACHR, the Fair Employment Commission and the Equal Opportunities Commission.

In particular, we welcome the Government's decision to allow full disclosure of the information to the tribunals. Similarly, the fact that the order will be retrospective is of great importance in ensuring access to justice. The definition of "recurrent discriminatory practices" at the last rather than the first instance of discrimination is also to be commended. We also recognise the Government's good sense in allowing for a disclosure to equal opportunities consultants, trade unions and other negotiators. Although we accept that the confidentiality of monitoring information on individuals must be protected, we do not believe—the Government also seem to accept

this—that such protection should be so inflexible as to subvert the purpose of the Fair Employment Acts. We welcome the fact that the Government have accepted that.

The importance of the fair employment issue cannot be overestimated. I regret that its degree of importance has certainly not been reflected in the scheduling of this order for consideration by the House tonight in what might be called less than peak viewing period. The search for equality and justice is vital in the struggle to make Northern Ireland like any other part of these islands, and of Europe. The Opposition hope that we can put this unfortunate episode behind us and that the Pryce case is now history. We must get on with the task of establishing genuine equality of opportunity for all sections of the community. We hope that the order will now permit the effective implementation of fair employment legislation. In that hope, should the order be challenged, the Opposition will support it in the Lobby.

2.28 am

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): On behalf of the people of Northern Ireland, I should like to make the strongest possible protest in the House at the way in which the legislation has been introduced. First, we had a charade in Committee when neither the Whips nor the Opposition evidently understood that if the matter was referred to the House a gag would be put on all further debate in the Committee. Therefore, it was only possible for two Members representing Northern Ireland to make contributions in Committee.

We are now considering the matter at this ridiculous hour of the morning. The legislation is important: it covers new ground, it is not applicable to any other part of the United Kingdom, and it is retrospective. Information gathered under the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989 which was considered confidential is now to be taken out of the arena of confidentiality and made public in certain circumstances. We are called at this late hour to debate the matter. If this is the way in which Ministers responsible for Northern Ireland think that they should proceed with such issues, it is nothing less than a disgrace.

The 1989 Act and the order flow from the Anglo-Irish Agreement and statements made in Dublin. The Government in Dublin have made strong representations to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland that legislation should be introduced immediately to rectify the so called grave and terrible discrimination against Roman Catholic work people in Northern Ireland. Those accusations are not true. It would do hon. Members good to study the people who are making such accusations.

I read with great interest a recent article by Noel Browne, a veteran figure of left-wing politics in the Republic, who was Minister for Health between 1948 and 1951. He wrote of the Irish Republic:

"It is a carefully-cocooned, well-preserved fly in amber, a unique relic of pre-Reformation, mediaeval Europe. In both eastern and western Europe, the republic is the last remaining vestige of Philip II's infamous Roman Catholic Empire, 'on which the sun would never set' . . . Lest the corrupting influence of free-thinking Lutheran Protestants should corrupt the Catholic Irish, separate development was established to keep Catholics distinct. As well, Protestants were denied the right to earn a living in the republic, and were driven out. Three out of four Protestants fled what is now the Republic in the last hundred years."

We can see the attitude to the employment of Protestants in the Irish Republic. That attitude was described not by a Unionist or someone who is known for right-wing politics, but by a veteran socialist who was driven out of politics in the south of Ireland by the pressures of the Roman Catholic hierarchy. Yet those in the south of Ireland make accusations about discrimination and call for legislation against it in the north of Ireland.

Recently I wrote to the British ambassador in Dublin to inquire how many Protestants are employed in the civil service in the Irish Republic and in the Gardai. Her Majesty's ambassador to the Irish Republic, Sir Nicholas Fenn KCMG, replied:

"We have spoken to the Central Statistical Office; the office of Census and Population Studies; the Civil Service Commission; the Employment Equality Agency; and the Department of Finance, but have drawn a blank on your constituent's enquiry. The information is simply not available here".

The people who call for legislation on fair employment to apply in Northern Ireland do not do anything about the matter in their own country.

I believe in fair employment, but I do not believe that people should be employed because of their religious affiliation. People should be employed because of their qualifications to do the job. When this legislation was first brought before the House we were told that there would be no such thing as quotas. We were told that everything would be confidential and that it was just a monitoring system. Increasingly, a regimentation of religious affiliation is being carried out. The strange thing is that, if the Government decide that someone is a Roman Catholic or a Protestant, that affiliation can never be changed.

I have raised with the Minister the issue of a constituent of mine who, because she happened to have attended a maintained school, was registered for ever as a Roman Catholic. A letter from the Northern Ireland Health and Social Services Board says that that does not really matter and that my constituent should not be concerned about it. I do not see why wrong or misleading facts should be put into the monitoring system without providing a way to change them. The Government should seek to be truthful in their information.

In the past, I was told that all the information would eventually be destroyed, but we are now told that it will be kept and can be asked for by the courts. May I put forward my party's opposition in principle to the disclosure of anyone's religious affiliation to any third party, and to the entire monitoring procedure set up by the fair employment legislation. People should not be required by law to state their religion, nor should employers be required by law to inquire into their employees' affiliation.

The Fair Employment Commission seems eager to highlight what it calls discrimination against Roman Catholics, but it is less eager even to investigate what happens with regard to companies that employ more Roman Catholics than they should. I have in my possession an interesting document that has been much quoted in the press. Some time ago, the British Broadcasting Corporation decided to put on what was to be the show of all shows and spent almost £1 million on it. Naturally, it was a complete and awful flop, the money was poured down the drain and many people were consequently put out of work.

The document, which is a complete record of all that happened in that show, was found on a rubbish heap in Belfast. The floppy disk reference number on the document is REGFM12.011. I purposely quote that

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

reference to the House because Mr. Cooper cannot find a way to investigate the matter. He now has the number of the floppy disk, so he has the power to ask the BBC for the records. He did not do so because the record shows that the ratio of employment in that show was seven Roman Catholics to one Protestant at the best, or worst, whichever way one looks at it, and five Roman Catholics to one Protestant at the worst, or the best. But Mr. Cooper is not prepared to do the job that he is supposed to do. Unless the Fair Employment Commission is fair, no one will have any faith in what it carries out.

The Fair Employment Commission published an investigation into the Post Office a short time ago. As I have already made clear, I do not hold any brief for the FEC, but its figures show that Protestants were under-represented in Belfast, Ards, Londonderry, Magherafelt and Strabane. If Roman Catholics had been under-represented, what a furore there would have been and what accusations would have been made. But the FEC seems to be endeavouring to stage a cover-up.

So serious was the under-representation of Protestants in the north-west that the Post Office must treble the number of Protestants on the payroll to give them the same percentage as exists in the local community. But instead of recruiting Protestants, the Post Office has been recruiting even higher percentages of Roman Catholics in recent days. The FEC examined Ulsterbus and City Bus that employ almost 2,900 people, and again found that the Protestant community was under-represented. The more recent the recruitment, the higher the percentage of Roman Catholics employed.

Those are the FEC's own figures. We heard about managerial posts not being given to Roman Catholics. Sometimes attempts are made to establish that, when Roman Catholics get jobs, they get less skilled posts, while Protestants tend to be given the managerial and salaried positions. But Anthony Murphy and Graham Gudgin of the Northern Ireland Economic Research Centre recently commented on the fact that the FEC's annual report showed that Catholics are ahead of Protestants in the managerial, technical and professional occupations. The House should make itself aware of those facts.

The FEC report on the University of Ulster dealt another heavy blow to the myth. It found that the higher the salary scale, the greater the percentage of Roman Catholics employed. The same report also showed that the difference between Catholic percentages in established posts as opposed to new positions was startling.

Many leading researchers in Northern Ireland are now being faced with demands from Protestants about the treatment of their community. When a company in Northern Ireland expands its business and takes on hundreds of additional staff, it is usual practice for a Minister to make a statement and tell the good news—I agree with that because employment in Northern Ireland is good news. United Technologies of Londonderry had an increase of 300 jobs. How many of them went to Protestants? As far as we can ascertain, not one. Those are the facts, and the House should be aware of them.

Dublin makes many accusations about the way that Protestants treat Roman Catholics in the north. But it is not a one-way street and Northern Ireland Ministers should be as enthusiastic about fighting for jobs for Protestants as they are about fighting for jobs for Roman Catholics. There is in the Fair Employment Commission a tendency—more than a tendency, a bias—not to let the full facts be known.

Today Mr. Cooper was sought by the press because this wonderful document which was discovered on a rubbish tip was to be mentioned in the House. Mr. Cooper was conveniently unavailable, but when a report states that Roman Catholics are not getting a fair crack of the whip in some places of employment he is on the radio and television and making statements galore running down Protestant employers.

I noted what the Minister said about Protestants and Roman Catholics. He should crusade equally for both and should see to it that Protestants get as fair a crack of the whip as Roman Catholics. According to the Fair Employment Commission, there is a great variation. Something is wrong and steps must be taken to ensure fair play. The answer to problems about fair employment is to have plenty of employment. But when there is not plenty of employment the House must be even-handed, because if it is not there will be no confidence in legislation on this matter.

I am seriously alarmed about confidentiality being breached, although some hon. Members may say that that does not really matter. In the Committee examining the order I and the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), who led for the Opposition, were amused by some of the goings on. The right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) said:

"Two points arise. First, does the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman—he is a Roman Catholic—*[Interruption]*— . . ."

it seemed that that was a terrible thing to say—

"recognise the conclusion of the Fair Employment Commission that it has many more more Roman Catholics on its staff than is reflected in the general population of Northern Ireland,".

I raised a point of order and said:

"It is strange that we are discussing an order that makes it the responsibility of everyone who is employed to state where he stands as between Protestantism and Romanism only. Yet when a right hon. Member referred to a member of the Committee as a Roman Catholic there were protests."

The Committee was deciding that everybody must be religiously labelled, but when a member of the Committee was referred to as a Roman Catholic there was an interruption and anger.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North made clear what he was and said that he did not get his job because he was a Roman Catholic. He was not in the quota system. He said:

"I am a Labour Member of Parliament who happens to be a Roman Catholic. I was elected on a Labour ticket and no other. If I were to stand on any other ticket, I would be soundly beaten by a Labour candidate and deservedly so." —*[Official Report, Northern Ireland Committee*, 16 May 1991; c. 15-16.]

The hon. Gentleman would not get a job in Northern Ireland under the order. That shows the hypocrisy in this matter, and how the Ulster people look on that hypocrisy.

Confidentiality is important. What we need to fight in Northern Ireland is fear. People are afraid. Only today, we had another report that information from the Army, with photographs, had got into the wrong hands. People are worried about safety. I want to know how there will be confidentiality if we go on releasing these monitoring procedures, and what they bring out in all places where

they can under the order. Who will have the information? Will there be a religious roll call of everybody in Northern Ireland?

Many in Northern Ireland feel that the House has not had enough time adequately to consider the order. I must finish my speech soon because other hon. Members wish to speak, and we have only an hour and a half for the debate. Usually, on a debate such as this, we would have three hours, but when the Government decided to put the order before the House at this late hour Ministers did not want to be having their breakfast before they went to work. They want to have their cornflakes at home, not here. Some of us cannot get home, so we would be happy to talk all night on this theme. We are not chained or tied to anything. I see the Minister of State the hon. Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney) sadly nodding his head. All that I can say is that, if the Government put such measures before the House at this hour, he cannot expect us to do anything other than use the full hour and a half for the debate.

All the information gathered last year in the monitoring exercise was gathered under the provisions of section 30. People co-operated under the law as it then was. They were told that the information would be confidential. Tonight, we are being asked to breach the very foundation on which this information was given. The Order in Council will enable employers to disclose information that was given to them on the basis of confidentiality. Thus, the Order in Council is retrospective, as the Minister made clear. That is a serious bar to our acceptance of the order. If section 30 is to be done away with, in the sense that it is to be altered by the order, then no information should be released until a new monitoring exercise has been carried out, and every employee is told that the information will not be kept confidential because in certain circumstances it will be made public, and his religion will be made public to a third person.

These people should now be told the new circumstances under which the information about them can be released, and to whom. There should be an amendment so that if an employer proposes to disclose information about an employee, that employee has the right to be notified that that information will be disclosed. It is not right that the employer can disclose information, gathered on the basis of confidentiality, without telling the person concerned that that information will be released. What have the Government to say about those two matters?

This monitoring is not done in England or Scotland or in Wales. We are on new ground, and we should be doing something tonight that will regiment the work force of Northern Ireland. As the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North said, later it will go down to smaller firms as well.

There has been no difficulty on the work floors of Northern Ireland during all the troubles. That is a big thing to say, but it is a fact. There are some who would lead others to believe that people are at loggerheads on the work floors, but the troubles in our country have been kept away from areas of work almost entirely. That is to be commended. I have been worried for a long time, however, that, when objections are made by the Fair Employment Commission about the flying of the Union Jack or the putting up of poppies on Remembrance day, disaster will be brought into places of employment. These are matters to which the Government must pay heed. We need to keep the troubles away from the workplace in Northern Ireland.

When we pass the order tonight, we should realise how serious are the matters that it raises. I trust that Mr. Cooper will be sacked and that we shall get someone in Northern Ireland who people can trust and in whom they have confidence. It matters not whether that person is Roman Catholic or Protestant. It does not matter what his religion is as long as people can put their faith and trust in him. Whether the Government like it or not, the people have lost all trust in Mr. Cooper.

Why was it that the report on industries and shops in Londonderry was not brought forward quickly? Why did Mr. Cooper drag his feet? When the report was completed, why did he put it under wraps? He did so because it was an indictment of the way that Protestants were being treated in Londonderry. Let us have fair play. If we have fair play all round, people will have some confidence in what is happening.

Information was gathered in confidence and people were told that it would never be used. Now we are asked to accept that there should be a breach of confidentiality and that confidential information can be used without telling the person who co-operated fully, thinking that the information would remain confidential. That is an indictment of the order.

2.59 am

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): We are considering a significant piece of legislation and, as other hon. Members have said, it is disgraceful that it is being debated at nearly 3 am under a procedure that prevents proper detailed discussion of the measure. I know that we discussed the matter during one sitting of the Northern Ireland Committee. Members who attended that sitting will know that we never got down to the details of the legislation, even in that context. There was not a proper debate on the details, and there has not been one tonight.

The use of the Order in Council procedure for this legislation is especially inappropriate. It introduces—not for the first time—confusion between the two statute books. The Order in Council made on the Northern Ireland Acts is a form not of secondary legislation but of primary legislation. The question that arises—it is a point that I put to the Minister during a meeting that was held to discuss the matter—is which statute book the order will go into.

The order amends the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989 which is contained in the United Kingdom statute book which is appropriate. Where will the Fair Employment (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order go? It amends the 1989 Act, so in which statute book will it appear? We have a Northern Ireland statute book —so-called—but it contains only Orders in Council and is, generally speaking, confined to transferred matters and is said to be intended to maintain continuity. However, there is no question of continuity with regard to the Fair Employment (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order because the Act that it amends is not in the Northern Ireland statute book, but in that of the United Kingdom. Logically, the Order in Council should appear in the United Kingdom statute book. It will be interesting to see how that is made up at the end of the year.

This is not merely a technical point or a matter of curiosity; it is a question of which interpretation Act is to be applied. Being drafted as an Order in Council, it looks as though the draftsman has followed the usual form for

[Mr. David Trimble]

Northern Ireland Orders in Council and has applied to it the Interpretation Act (Northern Ireland) 1954. Of course, the interpretation Act that applies to the United Kingdom statutes is the United Kingdom Interpretation Act 1978, and the two Acts are not the same. It is ludicrous that the order inserts new sections into the 1989 Act, but should the question of interpretation arise when reading the greater part of that Act one applies the United Kingdom interpretation Act. However, in some sections and subsections one will have to switch from the United Kingdom Interpretation Act to the Interpretation Act (Northern Ireland) if the person interpreting the Act appreciates that there is a difference.

Anomalies are created not just in respect of the Interpretation Act. Orders made under the Northern Ireland Act 1974 are subject to vires limitations by reference to the provisions of the Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973, which apply to this Order in Council and to the regulations made under it, which will then be inserted into a United Kingdom Act to which there are no vires limitations. It is a constitutional monstrosity, and I am amazed that it is being carried out by Order in Council, which states that it must be done for reason of urgency. If it were a matter of urgency, there has been plenty of time to vote the matter through as a Bill and to have debated it if the Government considered it urgent enough and were prepared to make time available. This is July and the matter arose in November. There has been consultation and discussion, and there has been more than enough time to push the issue through in the normal way, That should have been done, but it has not been done.

The use of the Order in Council procedure reveals another matter of interest. It exposes the fraudulence of the argument used to deny us proper legislation. When we complain about the Order in Council procedure we are told that it must be maintained to maintain the integrity of the statute book. There is no integrity in the statute book in this case. That shows that the integrity of the statute book is not the reason why the procedure is maintained.

The use of the Order in Council procedure is also bad in this case because it reinforces the fact that the legislation is confined to Northern Ireland because Orders in Council can legislate only for Northern Ireland. If legislation of this nature is considered appropriate, it should apply on a United Kingdom-wide basis. It is said that there is disadvantage in employment in Northern Ireland on what might be called ethnic grounds. There is also disadvantage in the United Kingdom on ethnic grounds. If it is wrong to discriminate against a person on the grounds of his national or ethnic origin, it should be wrong throughout the kingdom. If legislation of this nature is considered necessary in Northern Ireland, it should also apply in England and Wales where there is significant disadvantage for ethnic minorities—but not only for them.

A few months ago, an interesting survey revealed that Roman Catholic university graduates from Northern Ireland who sought employment in England and Wales fared less well than Protestant graduates from Northern Ireland who did the same. That fascinating survey showed that Roman Catholic graduates seeking employment in England did worse than those remaining in Northern Ireland, which implies that there is greater discrimination against Northern Ireland Catholics in England than in Northern Ireland—though any one set of figures must be treated with some reservation.

If sufficient time had been available to me, I would have examined the origins of the 1989 legislation, which can be found in the problem that was said to have arisen in the case of Pryce *v.* University of Ulster. I am not convinced that the problem did stem from that case. If that case had been properly pursued at the time, the alleged difficulty in the 1989 Act would have disappeared. However, it would take more time to make that argument than is at my disposal this evening.

If the Pryce case did reveal a problem in respect of section 30, it could have been resolved by a short and simple amendment. It was held that section 30 confined disclosure for the purposes of the 1989 Act, whereas the Pryce case was brought under the provisions of the 1976 Act. If that was true, all that was needed was an amendment to section 30, substituting for the words "this Act" a phrase such as "the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Acts".

When the Minister was consulted last November, it was said that the problem related to the tribunal case. We pointed out that that could be cured by a minor change, and that the more radical changes to the law on confidentiality that would be made by the order would then be unnecessary. The disparity between the limited nature of the problem and the extent of the proposed changes made us suspect that the Government and the Fair Employment Commission had a hidden agenda.

Replying to those points in his letter of 21 February, the Minister said:

> "I should say too that the decision to seek an amendment of the 1989 Act was not made simply on the basis of the ruling of the tribunal president, but on the clear view that the case brought to light a quite complicated problem, which required speedy resolution."

Unfortunately, the Minister did not state what the problem was. However, in our consultations with him a few weeks ago, he said that it was feared that the offence of disclosure created by section 30 was so wide that if a person who was aware of an item of information about an individual—such as the school that he attended—happened to disclose it, even though the information had not been gained in connection with classification under the legislation, that person would be committing an offence.

The solution to that problem would be a provision on the lines of the new subsection (7) that will be added to section 19 of the 1989 Act by article 4 of the order. However, the disparity between the alleged problems and the extent of the proposed alterations makes us wonder why the order considerably widens the disclosure provisions in the way that it does. No explanation was offered by the Minister on past occasions or more recently.

Article 4 also imports a new subsection (1)*(a)* into section 19 of the 1989 Act, which provides for disclosure "necessary or expedient for the proper discharge of the functions of the Commission".

Subsection 1*(b)* refers to such a disclosure that

> "is made for the purpose of, or in connection with—
>
> (i) any actual or prospective proceedings before the Tribunal, or an industrial tribunal; or
>
> (ii) any actual or prospective civil or criminal proceedings before a court."

I contrast the wording of the new subsection (1)*(a)*, which refers to a disclosure that is

> "necessary or expedient for the proper discharge of the functions of the Commission"—

which is not present in subsection (1)*(b)*—with the existing section 19(1)*(b)* of the 1989 Act, which refers to a disclosure that is

"necessary—

(i) for the purposes of any proceedings".

Originally, disclosure was to be limited to where it was "necessary"; now, the word "necessary" has been omitted.

The changes in the legislation permit disclosure not just to the Fair Employment Commission—we might feel some sympathy with that—but to the Labour Relations Agency and the Equal Opportunities Commission, and for the purpose of any other proceedings. To demonstrate that my comments are not politically motivated, let me quote the Belfast Solicitors Association, which said:

"If there is reason in that these bodies may be legitimately involved in the investigation of a Fair Employment complaint, then disclosure to that extent should be permitted, but specifically limited to their involvement in such investigations. If there is reason why such bodies should have more general access to such information, then that should be debated and provided for in their own enabling legislation."

No one could disagree with that. This is fair employment legislation, and the disclosure provisions in it should be for the purposes of such legislation. Instead, much wider provision has been made for disclosure, and —as the Minister said in the letter that accompanied the most recent alterations—it is permitted wherever it is required for the purposes of any legislation. That, surely, is taking things too far.

There is also provision for disclosure in connection with any civil or criminal proceedings. At the meeting to which I referred, we asked the Minister if he could provide any example in which disclosure would be necessary in connection with fair employment proceedings. He was unable to do so, and I shall be interested to see whether he can do so on this occasion.

People are sensitive about the disclosure of such information. Many do not like the classification that results from the legislation; many are concerned for safety reasons, as identification of a person's religion is significant. For that reason, the protection of confidentiality is important. The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) raised the issue when the original Bill was debated, asking what provision would be made in that regard. The then Secretary of State replied:

"Although the hon. Member for Antrim, North ... dressed it up in rather more lurid colours, he made an important point about confidentiality. He will know that confidentiality of information has been a clear concern of the Government in the preparation of this legislation. He knows that clause 19 is directed specifically to that important point. Clause 19 makes it an offence to disclose information from which a person's religious beliefs could be deduced."—[*Official Report*, 26 July 1989; Vol. 157, c. 1104.]

That important point has been substantially eroded in the new legislation. Not only has the provision for disclosure been widened, but protection has been transferred from the legislation to regulations.

The Belfast Solicitors Association commented on that, too. It said:

"As the provisions regarding confidentiality, even though wrongly drafted, were originally, and rightly, considered to be of sufficient importance to be contained in the 1989 Act, it is wrong that the amending provisions should not also be contained in the primary legislation. They should not be delegated to the subordinate legislation of the Department of Economic Development.

This is not just a technical point. It is actually undesirable that the provisions regarding confidentiality should be contained only in the Department's regulations, because these are not subject to any mandatory voting or other scrutiny procedure at Westminster other than the negative resolution procedure—the requirement of laying before Parliament under paragraph 3(3) of Schedule 1 to the Northern Ireland Act 1974.

This means that the Regulations are not subject to scrutiny at Westminster by the Houses Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments. Nor is there any procedure of scrutiny in Northern Ireland. Because these Regulations are subject to the negative resolution procedure at Westminster they would not come before the Examiner of Statutory Rules. (In any case apparently his post became vacant some years ago, and has not subsequently been refilled.)

Accordingly, if the amendments are to be contained in the Monitoring Regulations there will be insufficient scrutiny or protection."

Where there are sensitivities about disclosure, to remove protection is not a good idea. It should have been achieved in primary legislation that should have been enacted properly.

It is ironic that the apartheid regime in South Africa has been applauded for removing legislation that requires people to be monitored and their ethnic origin to be registered at a time when we are reinforcing this procedure in Northern Ireland. Many people find it objectionable, even though it must be conceded that that monitoring occasionally produces information that is of assistance in rebutting some of the wilder allegations.

None the less, the monitoring is objectionable in principle because it obscures the merit principle that should underlie the legislation and employment. It leads to a form of excessive head counting that is unhealthy for employment. It leads also to a surreptitious introduction of quotas by the back door which is the vice of the Fair Employment Commission, something which the commission's chairman understands and about which he is encouraging people to act illegally although he does not have the courage to admit that openly.

The monitoring also leads people to the fallacy of believing that we should be dealing with equality of outcome. In terms of the legislation, it would be perfectly proper for us to be dealing with equality of opportunity. It is important that there should be equality of opportunity, but only a fool would think that there must therefore be equality of outcome in every branch of industry and grade of employment. A series of factors will interpose between equality of opportunity and the outcome. Some of the factors are social, but it would be foolish to search for a perfect equality of outcome in every respect of employment, and that is what monitoring leads to.

3.16 am

Mr. Needham: The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) said that monitoring until now dealt only with a certain proportion of the work force and did not involve companies employing fewer than 25 people. He was quite right. However, it covers two thirds of the total work force. I have no reason to believe that as it spreads out to companies employing fewer than 25 employees it will show any difference.

The figures show that the numbers in employment match closely the proportions in the communities although not as perfectly as one might wish, but very much in line with the proportions in the population as a whole. That is very important. The hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) referred to the advantages of monitoring.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) made a point about the lateness of the hour for the debate and I agree with him about that. However, that is not

[Mr. Needham]

necessarily a matter for me. Other hon. Members have kept the House talking tonight. We had a full debate on Northern Ireland business last week although some of that was rather detailed and perhaps this debate would have been better earlier in the day and perhaps a week earlier as well.

I do not agree with the hon. Member for Antrim, North about the Anglo-Irish Agreement having any involvement in this. I am determined to administer the economy of Northern Ireland so that we have fair employment for Protestants and Catholics alike. The hon. Gentleman made great play about that and he was right to do so; it should be fair on both sides.

At the moment 68 per cent. of Protestant males are in employment and 32 per cent. of Catholic males are employed. There is an imbalance. In a certain area 142 companies employ 90 per cent. Catholics. However, there are about 240 who employ 90 per cent. Protestants. I do not want to make too much of an issue of that except to say that matters have to be balanced equally, which is what the legislation is about. I think that the hon. Gentleman accepts that.

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): Should we take the Minister's denial of the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley), who suggested that the fair employment legislation was a child of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, as a rebuke for Mr. Gerry Collins, who claimed that it was?

Mr. Needham: Mr. Collins can take it any way he likes. The fact is that fair employment legislation was introduced in the House in 1976, long before the Anglo-Irish Agreement was in anybody's eye. The hon. Member for Antrim, North cannot have it both ways. He cannot say that he dislikes monitoring and fair employment legislation in principle and then attack—and I do not deny that he does so with some justification—the imbalance that exists in certain areas or companies in Northern Ireland. He is right to point out where imbalances exist. The very fact that the places that he quoted, such as the Post Office and the BBC, come out of the monitoring process shows that the Act is having effect. I agree that it is vital that the Fair Employment Commission is seen to be even-handed and balanced in the way in which it carries out its investigations. I am sure that Mr. Cooper will look carefully at the blue document that the hon. Member for Antrim, North found on the rubbish tip.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Is the Minister prepared to say in the House that he would direct Mr. Cooper, as I understand he has the power to do, to look at the document? As he already has the floppy disk number, he can get the information from the BBC.

Mr. Needham: I do not like directing people. As I have said, I am sure that Mr. Cooper will look closely into the points that the hon. Gentleman makes. Mr. Cooper can also read *Hansard* and see the points that have been made about him. He is as aware as anybody of the need to ensure that the Fair Employment Commission has a reputation in Northern Ireland for balance and even-handedness.

The hon. Member for Upper Bann raised a series of technical points on the legislation, and it was fair enough for him to do so. The Government do not accept that the fact that this legislation is an order and that the act is on a different statutory basis is any reason why lawyers looking at the two parts of the legislation will not be able to work in harmony. I listened to what the hon. Gentleman said. We have no evidence to suggest that the order and the Act should not work in harmony.

I understand the hon. Gentleman's point about the reason why we introduced the order. As he rightly says, the reason was that we wanted to make good the omissions from the 1989 Act as soon as we could because we did not wish a back-log of cases to grow and so undermine the basis of the fair employment legislation and how it is seen in the United States and in many parts of Europe—as a way forward which all of us in the House accept gives the image of Northern Ireland a boost for inward investment and economic potential.

Mr. Trimble: The Minister said that he saw no difficulty in the order and the Act being together in harmony. Does that mean that they will be in harmony on the same statute book?

Mr. Needham: The answer is that they cannot be in harmony on the same statute book because, as the hon. Gentleman has rightly pointed out, they come under transferred matters and other matters.

Mr. Trimble *rose*——

Mr. Needham: I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman again. There is no reason, other than the technical points that he made, to believe that the legislation should not continue to work effectively. I am not clear whether the hon. Gentleman is trying to undermine the legislation through a series of technical quibbles on the basis that he disagrees with it in principle. He has admitted that he feels that monitoring has benefits, but he then said that head-counting is unhealthy. He should tell that to the hon. Member for Antrim, North who spent most of his speech talking about head-counting and nothing else.

The hon. Member for Upper Bann then said that merit and equality of opportunity should be the criteria. I agree entirely. The whole basis of the legislation is to ensure that merit can be seen to be the basis on which jobs are gained in Northern Ireland and that equality of opportunity is what we are about. The hon. Gentleman then talked about the fact that equality of opportunity does not exist in certain companies and that there is no balance. He was perfectly right to address that point—it must be addressed. Nevertheless, the legislation shows that after a long history in both communities, where it cannot be argued that there has not been discrimination and unfair employment, the Government are determined to attack and remedy the problem. In so doing, they will set an example to others.

Mr. Trimble *rose*——

Mr. Needham: I conclude by saying that I read Dr. Browne with some interest on these matters.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Surely the Minister must understand that certain employment sectors in Northern Ireland have always been wholly in the hands of either the Protestants or the Roman Catholics. Tiling and slating, for example, have always been in the hands of the Roman Catholics. Is he saying that he should break into that and into sectors that have always been either predominantly Protestant or Roman Catholic? Surely history must have some influence,

as should the areas where people live. We cannot ask Protestants to go into a Roman Catholic area to work. Surely the Minister must keep those things in mind.

Mr. Needham: I absolutely agree with the hon. Gentleman. There should be no quotas and no compulsion, but we must ensure under the legislation——

Mr. Trimble *rose*——

Mr. Needham: I have not finished answering the hon. Gentleman yet.

We must ensure that what is done is done on the basis of fairness and balance and that the policies that employers follow are not discriminatory. The hon. Member for Antrim, North made a fair point when he talked about Londonderry and about United Technologies. He has shot his own fox because that is a good example of a company that is located in a specific place and where it would be extremely difficult—I am not saying impossible; we all want to work towards this—to get a balance in a certain travel-to-work area. We all know what the difficulties are, but that does not mean that we do not do whatever we can to try to ensure that the policies that companies and employers adopt are seen clearly to be within the framework of fair employment legislation so that everyone in Northern Ireland knows that they have a reasonable opportunity when they try to get a job.

Mr. Trimble: I thank the Minister for eventually giving way—I had been seeking to raise a point with him before the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) intervened.

The Minister affected to be confused about the argument that I was making towards the end of my speech. I am sorry if it was a little rushed, but I was speaking quickly to try to assist the House. The point that I was making, which I repeat, is that the monitoring process, and especially the way in which it is applied by the Fair Employment Commission, undermines the merit principle, which is good and should be vindicated. The way that monitoring operates is undermining that principle by surreptitiously introducing quotas. The targets and all the rest are effectively quotas, whereas the merit system should apply.

The Minister said that I was raising technicalities. I am not, but I am waiting to find out why the disclosure provisions could not be confined to the purposes of the Act.

Mr. Needham: I shall not weary the House at this late hour with examples under fair employment legislation where religious or community affiliation would be necessary for a civil or criminal action. I am happy to write to the hon. Gentleman. I assure him that there are cases. I will give examples to him.

On the hon. Gentleman's first point on monitoring, I do not accept that it is a surreptitious way of introducing quotas. Nor do I accept that monitoring which shows the religious composition of the work force undermines the merit principle. I believe that when the work force in a travel-to-work area shows a balance between the two communities, whatever the composition of the population in that area, that is much more likely to show that the merit principle is operating than a total imbalance one way or the other. That is unless the hon. Gentleman argues that there is a particular degree of intelligence in one community in one area or in another community in another area. We know that that is not the case.

We are trying to show that companies and employers are using the best possible recruitment and personnel practices to ensure that they recruit for jobs in a balanced way. I believe that that is what everyone in Northern Ireland wants. People do not want to see discrimination any more than the hon. Member for Antrim, North does. I commend the order to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Fair Employment (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 4th July, be approved.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): By the leave of the House, I will put together the Questions on motions Nos. 4, 5, 6 and 7 on the Order Paper.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

HOUSING

That the draft North Hull Housing Action Trust (Area and Constitution) Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 10th June, be approved.

COMPANIES

That the draft Companies (Disclosure of Interests in Shares) (Orders imposing restrictions on shares) Regulations 1991, which were laid before this House on 19th June, be approved.

NORTHERN IRELAND

That the draft Access to Personal Files and Medical Reports (Northern Ireland) Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 6th June, be approved.

ROAD TRAFFIC

That the draft Motor Vehicles (International Circulation) (Amendment) (No. 2) Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 20th June, be approved—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

Question agreed to.

European Community Documents

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees),

ENERGY EFFICIENCY REQUIREMENTS FOR HOT WATER BOILERS

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 9791/90 and the supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of Energy on 1st July 1991 relating to energy efficiency requirements for new hot water boilers; and supports the Government's intention of ensuring that the Community's action in this field takes full account of the interests of consumers and others in the United Kingdom.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

Question agreed to.

Gibraltar

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

3.33 am

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): I am vice-chairman of the British Gibraltar, group, but I speak for myself on this occasion, as will the chairman, the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin), later in the debate.

The 1980 Lisbon agreement and the 1984 Brussels agreement, which followed the opening of the border between Spain and Gibraltar, restored communications and free movement of persons and vehicles across the border. However, the Brussels agreement permits discussion of the sovereignty of Gibraltar between Spain and Britain. That is at odds with the spirit of the preamble to the 1969 constitution, in which the Government make it clear that they will never enter into arrangements under which the people of Gibraltar would pass to the sovereignty of another state against the free and democratic expression of their will. That was based on the 1967 referendum when, of a total electorate of 12,762, 12,132 opted to remain under Britain and only 44 to go under Spanish rule. Subsequent opinion polls have endorsed that finding. What is unique about the Crown colony of Gibraltar is that the people there are, indeed, British citizens.

What is worrying even to this day is the consistent avowed intention of Spain to gain sovereignty over Gibraltar, albeit by peaceful means. No doubt the closure of the frontier by Franco in 1969 was described as being done by peaceful means, although it was highly provocative. Obviously, the Brussels agreement, where it allows for the discussion of sovereignty between the British and Spanish Governments, rubs salt into the raw and all too recent wounds of the people of Gibraltar.

I am concerned not with the past but with the present. What gives me great concern is the apparent harassment that is now taking place on the border. It is because of alleged tobacco smuggling. There is, indeed, tobacco smuggling, as I observe and other observers seem to agree, mainly by unemployed Spanish nationals who, stuffing lots of cigarettes and tobacco into their voluminous clothing, cross and recross the border five or six times a day without, apparently, let or hindrance. However, when it comes to vehicular traffic there is no green channel and every car that passes across that frontier is searched. In practical terms, that means a wait of an hour and a half.

The House can imagine the position of a business man who tries to go from Gibraltar to Spain in the morning —an hour and a half's wait going and a further hour and a half's wait coming back. The waiting time can increase to as much as four hours. I can describe that only as a Franconian approach. It gives me great concern that British citizens are consistently harassed in that way. If it is not the political intention of Spain to disrupt the commerce and economy of Gibraltar, that certainly is the effect. Of course, it is disrupted in other ways, too. Much of the building on Gibraltar is now carried out by Spanish contractors.

Spain has not stopped there. It has made allegations about Gibraltar turning a blind eye to drug trafficking and money laundering. The Foreign Office acknowledges that that is completely untrue. It might be better described in less parliamentary terms as a bare-faced lie. All those add up to the continuing harassment of Gibraltar by Spain. It is with much sorrow that I say that those issues should have been sorted out before Spain was granted admission to the Common Market. It is difficult to rid one's mind of the conclusion that the acts of Franco appear to be continuing, but this time they are carried out by a democratically elected Government.

As the House is aware, the economy of Gibraltar was entirely dependent on the dockyard and the forces and the money that they brought in. With the closure of the dockyard and the removal of the Army, Gibraltar was struck tremendous economic blows. It intends to become self-sufficient. It is making great commercial strides and it is seeking the establishment of an offshore financial centre. For those attempts to be viable there must be freedom of movement and travel for those operating in Gibraltar as business men.

The harassment of British citizens at the frontier is unhelpful. The failure to re-establish the Gibraltar-Algeciras ferry also hinders economic development. Of greatest concern is the issue of air transport. The Gibraltar Assembly legitimately refuses to ratify the vague, short airport agreement. Because of that vagueness, that agreement appears to give the Spanish the opportunity to interfere in the sovereignty issue over Gibraltar. That legitimate refusal is used to block the admission of Gibraltar to the European Economic Community liberalisation process. Without that, Gibraltarians cannot fly direct to either Spain or any other EEC country.

I cannot better express the concern felt than by quoting the annual report of 1990 from the Chamber of Commerce of Gibraltar, which states:

"The contention of the Chamber is that the people of Gibraltar should enjoy the inclusion of Gibraltar's airport in the EEC's air liberalisation process, as of right. Gibraltar's rights to this process were firmly established by the airport's inclusion in the 1983 Inter-Regional Air Services Directive, and were supported by HMG up to July 1987 in Luxembourg when Spain first sought to exclude Gibraltar on the grounds of disputed sovereignty."

What discussions are now taking place between the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Defence about the Royal Air Force in Gibraltar? The airport, which will be the lifeline of Gibraltarian commerce, depends to a large extent on the support and the resourcing of the RAF. During defence questions the Government have expressed their concern to keep the RAF in Gibraltar, but there is great anxiety in Gibraltar that that support will be withdrawn.

What active steps are the Government taking to help Gibraltar to become economically self-sufficient? Have discussions been held on Gibraltar exhibiting at Expo 92? Is not the section of the Brussels agreement that permits bilateral discussion of sovereignty between Brussels and Spain counter-productive as it causes great concern among Gibraltarians? It also undermines their confidence in Britain's intentions, which does not encourage their co-operation.

Britain has repeatedly reiterated its commitment to support the 1969 constitution, but when one sees other documents such as the Brussels agreement, one begins to wonder whether the Government are talking with a forked tongue.

We owe the Gibraltarians a considerable debt for their support in many conflicts, including most recently the Falklands and the Gulf. Are the British citizens in

Gibraltar—that means all Gibraltarians—to be treated as second-class EC citizens? We must support the 1969 constitution not only with words but with actions. We must support Gibraltar in its economic endeavours and work to allow Gibraltarians to be not only politically but economically free.

3.45 am

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): I congratulate the hon. Member for Bolton, South-East (Mr. Young) on being rather more successful than I have been in the ballot for this Adjournment debate. He knows of my considerable interest in Gibraltar as chairman of the British Gibraltar group, and I thank him for leaving me a couple of minutes to endorse what he has said, especially about frontier delays and air services, and to add three points.

First, Gibraltar still rejects the 1987 airport agreement, arguing—with some justification—that the Government proceeded during the negotiations in the face of known Gibraltarian opposition to what was eventually agreed with Spain. It is felt in Gibraltar that, by providing for special arrangements for Spain under a joint use regime, the agreement represents a de facto infringement of British sovereignty. As a result, there is now an impasse, which is causing considerable frustration on all sides.

It is in the interests of all concerned, especially those living on both sides of the frontier—in Gibraltar and La Linea—that the matter be speedily resolved. As a first step, it is important to clear up the ambiguities that arise from differences in interpretation of the airport agreement by Britain and by Spain. For instance, a similar agreement on an international airport at Basle requires some 2,000 pages to explain precisely what it means. There is no question of a dispute between any of the parties in that case, so it seems illogical that the Gibraltar airport agreement runs to only some three pages. That is obviously part of the reason why such misunderstandings have arisen. Although it accepts that its airport must remain under British authority, Gibraltar would welcome its use by Spanish or, for that matter, any other foreign airlines.

Secondly, Gibraltarians rightly resent their exclusion from the EC air liberalisation packages. There have been two and a third is on its way. It is a negation of Gibraltar's right to benefit unconditionally from its membership of the EEC, which it has by virtue of article 227 of the treaty of Rome. When my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) was Secretary of State for Transport, he said that all Community legislation applies to Gibraltar unless, like the common agricultural policy or value added tax, they are specifically exempted.

When my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe) was Foreign Secretary, he said that the Government could not contemplate anything that undermined Community law or the legitimate rights of Gibraltar as part of the European Community. Yet Gibraltar is still excluded from the air liberalisation packages despite the fact that it is making great strides in changing to a free market economy rather than being so dependent on the Ministry of Defence for its national income. I believe that the Gibraltar development corporation is taking the case to the European Court of Justice. I shall be interested to hear from my hon. Friend the Minister about the position of her Majesty's Government in relation to that case.

Thirdly, Gibraltar should now participate in the so-called Brussels process. By doing so, it will enhance its sovereignty if sovereignty means having control over its own affairs. If it does not take part, Gibraltar's sovereignty will be diminished. It should be made clear to Spain that, if Gibraltar is expected to participate in the Brussels process—it is high time that it did—the subject of sovereignty must come off the Brussels agenda. A recent opinion poll showed that 60 per cent. of the people in Gibraltar favour participation, but the issue of whether sovereignty should be discussed was not included on the questionnaire.

The hon. Member for Bolton, South-East and I visited Gibraltar with four of our parliamentary colleagues from 2 to 5 June, and I should like to place on the record our appreciation of the warm welcome that we received from everyone in Gibraltar. There was no doubt that they liked seeing British Members of Parliament on the Rock. It enabled us to see Gibraltarians' problems from their view rather than through the rose-tinted spectacles of Westminister and it gave Gibraltarians the opportunity to remind us that they still feel strongly that they wish to remain British.

3.52 am

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones): I begin by thanking the hon. Member for Bolton, South-East (Mr. Young) and my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin), first, for having remained in the House until nearly 4 am to discuss this important subject and, secondly, for giving me the first opportunity that I have had since I became the Minister responsible for Gibraltar to comment in the House on the position in Gibraltar and the policies of the Government towards this dependent territory.

There are two basic pillars on which our relationship rests. The first—to which the hon. Member for Bolton, South-East has referred—is the Gibraltar Constitution Order 1969. That sets out the constitutional provisions for the dependent territory and specifically states in the preamble that

> "Her Majesty's Government will never enter into arrangements under which the people of Gibraltar would pass under the sovereignty of another state against their freely and democratically expressed wishes".

That undertaking remains, and it means what it says. The Government stand by it and this Minister of all people—and the House will understand why—has no intention of presiding over any hedging on that undertaking.

The second pillar of our relationship rests on the fact that Gibraltar is a democracy—and a rather lively one at that. I shall come to our relations with Spain later on in my remarks, but I would just say that it simply will not do for Spain to refer to Gibraltar as the "last colony in Europe". Our relationship with Gibraltar has lasted nearly 300 years—considerably longer than the lifespan of many of our EC partners. That relationship has developed in a way that has enabled Gibraltar to have its own Government with democratic credentials which no one can call into question.

Since 1969, a number of significant events have taken place. First, the United Kingdom has joined the European Economic Community and, with that accession, Gibraltar became a part of the Community while remaining outside the customs union. Secondly, over the years, Gibraltar's direct economic dependency on the United Kingdom has

[Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones]

diminished to a point where this year the last Overseas Development Administration programme in Gibraltar should run out. Economically, Gibraltar is looking for ways of standing on its own feet—and the people and Government deserve every congratulation on that. As the hon. Member for Bolton, South-East requested, the Gibraltarian people and Government have the full support of Her Majesty's Government in those endeavours.

Thirdly, the changing military and strategic position we face in Europe has meant that Gibraltar is no longer the military garrison that it used to be—a sort of Aldershot in the Mediterranean. The resident battalion has been withdrawn. Most of the dockyard has been transferred to the Gibraltar Government. Thirty years ago the Ministry of Defence owned 60 per cent. of the land area. Today it owns 28 per cent. These are, of course, matters for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, but it is difficult to see this trend being reversed. My hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside spoke about the airport. I must also refer that matter to my right hon. Friend.

The fourth important change is that Spain has become a member both of the Community and of the NATO alliance. She is a valued partner and a trusted ally of the United Kingdom. I was sorry to hear a Labour Member make wholly unwarranted comparisons between the Spanish Government and the former regime. I hope that on reflection he will feel that such comparisons are unwise.

It has become increasingly clear to me—and I think that I can say that this view is shared by the Chief Minister of Gibraltar and by Gibraltarians themselves—that the future for the Rock lies within the Community, as it does for Britain herself. That future is promising. Gibraltar is the southern gateway to the largest single market in the world and the doorway to one of the most popular and thriving tourist markets anywhere.

As I said earlier, Gibraltar has already made enormous strides in preparing herself for this role for which she is uniquely qualified by her geographic position and by the ingenuity and acumen of her people. But the House will know that Spain has a territorial claim over Gibraltar. The fact that we reject that claim does not make it go away.

I shall try to sum up for the House the nature of the Spanish claim. Spain accepts—acquiesces to might be a more accurate phrase—the terms of the treaty of Utrecht, which ceded the town and castle of Gibraltar to the British Crown in 1713. She does not accept our sovereignty over the isthmus which Spain regards as having been usurped over the years. I make no comment on the Spanish claim other than to say that it does not change our right to administer Gibraltar, that it exists as a claim, and that it will not go away. Equally, we accept that independence for Gibraltar is not an option.

It is against that background that Gibraltar's future in the Community must be built. The fact of Community membership is crucial to Gibraltar's future, but the fact of Spain's membership is crucial, too. Already, as a Community member, Spain plays her part in framing EC regulations and laws which have effect in Gibraltar. I have to tell the House bluntly—and Gibraltarians are all too well aware of this—that from time to time Spain either pursues or seeks to safeguard her claim and the bilateral negotiating process between Britain and Spain as she sees them from within the Community. Gibraltar's exclusion from the aviation liberalisation packages, to which my hon. Friend referred, bears witness to this, as does Spain's current refusal to agree to the external frontiers convention which has been agreed by all other EC partners.

In my judgment, the current position is unsatisfactory for Gibraltar, for Spain and for the United Kingdom. But I repeat that I am not prepared to contemplate reneging on the undertaking given by this House to the Gibraltar people in 1969; nor am I prepared to ignore the fact of Gibraltarian democracy.

A year ago when I visited Gibraltar I called on the people themselves to initiate a debate about their own future. We will listen to that debate and we will look seriously at any proposals that emerge from it, but we will not seek to impose any ideas upon the people. They have the undertaking in the 1969 constitution order and they have their democracy as a framework within which to discuss their future.

Last May when the Spanish Prime Minister came to the United Kingdom he called for an "effort of imagination" on this subject. I say that this effort must come not just from Gibraltar but from Spain, too. It is not enough to talk about "the last colony". Spain has only to look across the Straits of Gibraltar to appreciate that these things are never quite as simple as they seem. Spain is a big and secure enough democracy to recognise that the democracy of the Gibraltarians merits respect, too.

The House will be well aware of my personal affection for Spain. Not surprisingly, throughout my life, I have come into contact with many British hispanophiles. Nearly all of them carry in their rucksack some ingenious scheme that purports to solve the Gibraltar problem. I believe that it cannot be "solved" in the simple sense of the word, but there is just a chance that it may be dissolved within the EC. There is a sea change taking place in Europe, involving more co-operation, fewer barriers and a greater understanding generally. That tide of new thinking has the capacity to break through the tensions and mistrust that have for so long bedevilled Gibraltar's relationship with Spain. Gibraltar's duty, and Spain's duty too, must be to make sure that these opportunities do not pass them by.

We in Britain cannot, will not, repudiate the undertakings that we have given. That would be a denial of everything we claim to stand for in the world. But we are willing to show all the imagination that may be required of us.

If Gibraltarian democracy is to mean anything—I believe that it does—progress depends on the freely and democratically expressed wishes of the Gibraltarians. If Gibraltar makes that effort of imagination, I hope that Spain will do so, too.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute past Four o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 16 July 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRIGHTON MARINE PALACE AND PIER BILL *[Lords]*

Queen's consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.

Read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

LONDON UNDERGROUND (SAFETY MEASURES) BILL *[Lords]*

Order for Third Reading read.

To be read the Third time tomorrow.

LLANELLI BOROUGH COUNCIL (BURRY PORT HARBOUR) BILL *[Lords]*

Motion made,

That the Promoters of the Llanelli Borough Council (Burry Port Harbour) Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office of their intention to suspend further proceedings not later than the day before the close of the present Session and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agents for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by them stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be deemed to have been read the first and shall be ordered to be read a second time;

That the Petitions against the Bill presented in the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

That, in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words 'under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)' were omitted;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) (NO. 4) BILL *[Lords]*

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the Greater Manchester (Light Rapid Transit System) (No. 4) Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office no later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

Ordered,

That, if that Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agents for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by them stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

Ordered,

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

Ordered,

That the Petitions relating to the Bill presented in the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

Ordered,

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

Ordered,

That, in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words 'under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)' were omitted;

Ordered,

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Message to the Lords to acquaint them therewith.

COMMERCIAL AND PRIVATE BANK BILL [*LORDS*]

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the Commercial and Private Bank Bill [*Lords*] shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office of their intention to suspend further proceedings not later than the day before the close of the present Session and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

Ordered,

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agents for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by them stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

Ordered,

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be deemed to have been read the first and shall be ordered to be read a second time;

Ordered,

That, no Petitions against the Bill having been presented within the time limited within the present Session, no Petitioners shall be heard before any committee on the Bill save those who complain of any amendment as proposed in the filled up Bill or of any matter which arises during the progress of the Bill before the Committee;

Ordered,

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Order of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Message to the Lords to acquaint them therewith.

BRITISH RAILWAYS BILL

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the British Railways Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

Ordered,

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

Ordered,

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

Ordered,

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read) and, having been amended by the Committee in the present Session, shall be ordered to lie upon the Table;—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

To be communicated to the Lords, and their concurrence desired thereto.

Oral Answers to Questions

HEALTH

NHS Reforms

1. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met representatives of the British Medical Association to discuss the health service reforms.

2. **Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met representatives of the British Medical Association to discuss the health service reforms; and if he will make a statement.

12. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he next plans to meet leaders of the British Medical Association to discuss changes in the national health service.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. William Waldegrave): I last met representatives of the British Medical Association on 9 July. We had useful talks on several topics related to the reform programme.

Mr. Bradley: I am sure that the Secretary of State is aware that the BMA is concerned about the policy of opt-out for hospitals and I know that he is also aware of the consultations taking place between Withington and Wythenshawe hospitals about the rationalisation of services, especially the closure of the maternity unit. Now that Wythenshawe hospital has expressed an interest in opting out, the management of Withington hospital may now wish to retain all its services, including the maternity unit. Will the Secretary of State give the assurance today that the maternity unit at Withington can remain open until decisions have been taken about whether Wythenshawe can opt out?

Mr. Waldegrave: As the hon. Gentleman knows, there is no question of opting out. There has been a first expression of interest in establishing a national health service trust for one of those hospitals. As the hon. Gentleman knows—I believe that he recently met the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell) to discuss the matter—we are considering that reorganisation, as we are statutorily required to do, on its merits and quite separate from the issue of approving any NHS trusts in due course.

Mr. Sims: Is not one of the most important aspects of the reforms the emphasis that is placed on health promotion, by encouraging people to eat and drink sensibly, warning them of the dangers of tobacco products and providing doctors with incentives to provide health checks, immunisation and screening? Is it not a fact that the British Medical Association and all doctors fully support those changes?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is right. The *British Medical Journal* contained a generous leader by Mr. John Ashton, head of the department of public health at the university of Liverpool welcoming the steps that the Government have taken in publishing "The Health of the Nation". There has been widespread welcome for the publication of the report of the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food and for the tougher action that we are

taking on cigarette labelling. Together with the general practitioners' contract and its emphasis on preventive medicine, those steps allow the Government to claim that we are the first Government to take forward those matters with such vigour.

Mr. Atkinson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that an increasing number of GP members of the BMA are seeking to pass on the undoubted benefits of his reforms to their patients by becoming fund-holders and will he now end the patient list limitation so that an increasing number of doctors can become fund-holders if that is their wish?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is right. GP fund-holders are bringing forward many innovative new ideas for the better treatment of their patients, which are already being picked up by the district health authorities for the general benefit. Many GPs are pressing me to lower the list size qualification. We are running some experiments and pilot schemes on that, which I hope will be successful.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I welcome the innovative movements, but has the BMA suggested that it needs more GP trainers and trainees? In drawing up the junior doctors' contract, has any consideration been given to increasing the number of medical students?

Mr. Waldegrave: Yesterday evening I met the regional deans, including the dean from Northern Ireland, to discuss these matters. Although in general they welcome the new structure, which protects their budget, we discussed real issues about the total number of doctors needed. That is why yesterday I announced the establishment of a new committee chaired by Professor Colin Campbell to examine and measure objectively the total need for doctors in the years ahead.

Mr. Rowe: Does my right hon. Friend agree that some of the anxiety expressed by Opposition Members about national health service reforms is caused by their astonishment that the Government have listened so carefully and effectively to what GPs and many others have been saying for many years? For example, in Kent, where the number of practice nurses has trebled in the past three years, general practitioners are finding increasingly that the NHS reforms provide them with a tremendous opportunity to improve and innovate.

Mr. Waldegrave: There is absolutely no question but that the improvements which have been made in general practice and community medicine in the past 10 years have in many cases transformed the services available to patients. Patients know that and welcome it warmly, as they have done in my hon. Friend's constituency.

Mr. Robin Cook: If the Secretary of State is so anxious to listen to the views of GPs, which of the BMA's conference resolutions will he be most anxious to discuss when he next meets that body? Will it be the one that records the BMA's view that the reforms of the health service mean that the NHS is not safe in his hands? Or will it be the one that expressed concern at the rapid deterioration of the NHS? Or would the Secretary of State rather meet the 600 consultants who paid for a page in *The Observer* warning that as a result of the changes there are now serious restrictions on patients' choice? If the Secretary of State prefers the views of patients, will he meet the community health councils, whose conference a week ago resolved that contracting could not remedy underfunding? Is not the reality that the Government are not interested in anyone's opinion but their own and will not listen to anyone but themselves?

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall address that part of the BMA motion that said that it sought

"constructive dialogue with the Government rather than confrontation."

Of course, that is what we shall seek.

I am surprised to see the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) engage in such debate. He recently visited Walton. It was a rather unsuccessful visit during which he involved himself in the affairs of the Fazakerley hospital with the result that one of the consultants said:

"These electioneering politicians make me sick. They won't talk about the expansion at Fazakerley . . . The Fazakerley option was what the clinicians wanted. It is clearly the best way to deliver health care on one site."

That was followed up by the hospital doctor who said:

"It is ironic that Labour, which criticises the Government for not listening to the views of doctors on its health reforms, is now itself choosing to ignore medical opinion."

A little quiet from the hon. Gentleman would be in order.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: I warmly congratulate my right hon. Friend on the new constructive dialogue which has been established between his Department and the BMA. Will the new committee that has been set up merely discuss the health service and the reforms, or could it be extremely constructive and seek to monitor and evaluate the effects of the reforms in the national health service? If the latter is the case, I should be grateful if my right hon. Friend could confirm it to the House this afternoon.

Mr. Waldegrave: I think that my hon. Friend is referring to the joint work that we intend to do on GP fundholding, in particular with the general medical services committee. I assure my hon. Friend that that will be a continuing assessment and that we shall listen to recommendations which come out of that work.

Cervical Smears

3. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many health authorities have now met the targets set for the time scale of results of cervical smears to be relayed to general practitioners and patients.

The Minster for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): Health authority laboratories must aim to return the results of cervical smear tests within one month to the doctor who took them. Latest figures show that 173 district health authorities—that is 93 per cent.—were meeting the target.

Mrs. Ewing: The Minister will appreciate that that is an improvement on the previous statistics. Does she recall that on 21 February she said that one third of the laboratories were not meeting that target and that there was a waiting list of about 7·5 weeks for the processing of tests? What is the waiting time in areas where the target is not being met?

Mrs. Bottomley: Thirteen districts are not meeting the target, the longest wait, at the latest date, being 13 weeks. The vast majority have waits of much less than that. The particular case is being closely investigated, but there has been a substantial improvement. Last July, about two thirds of districts were meeting the target. Now, 93 per

cent. of them are. Perhaps even more important, nine out of 10 GPs are obtaining their target payments for making sure that they take cervical smears in the first place. This is real health promotion and disease prevention.

Mr. Marlow: Health Ministers are rightly introducing initiatives to deal with the health care of women, but half the population, by and large, is made up of men. What health care initiatives does my hon. Friend intend to put forward to look after us?

Mrs. Bottomley: I have every sympathy with my hon. Friend and I shall enter into urgent discussions with him to see what further steps we can take to improve the health care of men. Women not only make up the majority of the population; they make up the overwhelming majority of those who work in the NHS, and for the most part, they are the decision makers and communicators in their families about health. I agree, however, that we must give further concern to the health care of men, whose life expectancy is not, I regret, as great as that of women.

NHS Capital Expenditure

4. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the level of capital expenditure in the national health service in 1978-79; and what is the figure for 1991-92.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): NHS capital expenditure is planned to be £1·9 billion in 1991-92 compared with £0·4 billion in 1978-79, an increase in real terms of 68 per cent.

Mr. King: I thank my hon. Friend for those excellent figures. He will have laid emphasis on the fact that in 1979 the last Labour Government—to balance their financial books, at the behest of the International Monetary Fund—cut and cut again capital expenditure in the NHS. Those cuts impeded the development of the service in the Birmingham area, which under the present Government is launching the "Building a Healthy Birmingham" campaign, along with hundreds of millions of pounds of investment. Does my hon. Friend agree that only under a Conservative Government is that possible?

Mr. Dorrell: The track record squares absolutely with my hon. Friend's version. Between 1974 and 1979 the Labour party cut the NHS capital programme by 16 per cent. in real terms, compared with the increase of 68 per cent. that I have just announced. My hon. Friend will be pleased to hear that in Birmingham we currently have in progress a programme costing £15·9 million at the Queen Elizabeth hospital, £23·4 million at the East Birmingham hospital, £5·6 million at the Good Hope hospital, and £2·5 million at the Dudley Road hospital. That represents a total of schemes in progress of £47·4 million, without taking account of the £310 million which we are committed to spend on the "Building a Healthy Birmingham" programme.

Mr. Ashley: Before the Minister and other members of the Government try to score too many party political points in relation to figures such as those, may I ask him to find time to read the letter in *The Independent* today, which is an account by a patient in a leading London hospital casualty department which is filthy, hot and overcrowded? Is the Minister aware that that is the reality facing many patients in Britain today?

Mr. Dorrell: The question that that patient or anyone else wishing to compare the records of the parties on capital expenditure must ask is which of the rival management teams available offers the best prospect of solving the problem—a team which, when it last had the opportunity, cut capital expenditure by 16 per cent., or a team which, since 1979, has seen capital expenditure increase by 68 per cent.

NHS Trusts

5. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospitals applied for and were granted trust status in the first wave; and how many have expressed interest in possible inclusion in the second and third waves.

Mr. Waldegrave: A total of 66 hospitals and other units applied for trust status in the first wave, of which 57 were established as trusts on 1 April this year; 130 expressions of interest were received for inclusion in the second wave, and 107 applications have been submitted. We also expect five or six first-wave candidates which were not established to resubmit their applications. We have not yet asked for formal expressions of interest in the third wave.

Mr. Jessel: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that, of the four district general hospitals that serve Twickenham, Kingston already has trust status, Ashford has applied for it in the second wave, and West Middlesex and Queen Mary's Roehampton, hospitals intend to apply for it in the third stage? Does he agree that that great enthusiasm for trust status is despite the efforts of Labour politicians to intimidate those national health service staff who might wish to be involved?

Mr. Waldegrave: The fact that so many hospitals are applying for trust status shows that the staff involved have not been intimidated. We had to make the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) back down from his threats before the House on one occasion. I am delighted to say that, as my hon. Friend already knows, Kingston hospital NHS trust has already reduced the number of long waiters from 2,000 to 400 and the new building will be open this year, and the other applications are coming forward. In the case of Ashford, trust status was strongly supported by more than 80 per cent. of the consultants.

Mr. Battle: Does the Secretary of State agree that it would be better to sort out what is happening with the first wave before considering another wave? Where trust status has been granted, as in the case of Leeds general infirmary, the impact has been the loss of 10 beds in Cookridge cancer hospital and eight night staff being told on 14 June, without any prior notification, that their jobs were to go. Is not that what is happening?

Mr. Waldegrave: No. The trust hospitals are matching good management to problems which have often existed for many years, and we are seeing quicker and better solutions to those problems for the benefit of patients. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would welcome that.

Mr. Wiggin: Weston-super-Mare general hospital was fortunate enough to achieve trust status in the first round,

the trust is working extremely well and I can reasonably claim that the people of that excellent town are receiving better health care than ever before, but will my right hon. Friend discourage the regional health authority from seeking to remove some of the peripheral hospitals such as Burnham-on-Sea and Axbridge simply in the interests of tidy bureaucracy?

Mr. Waldegrave: As my hon. Friend would expect, being a relatively near neighbour I am well aware of the issue and I shall look at it closely. I am also aware that the trust is doing extremely well and bringing new benefits to patients every week.

Mr. Robin Cook: The Secretary of State will be aware that one of the hospitals included in the figures that he has announced for the second wave is King's College hospital in Camberwell. Since the changes in April, that hospital has been on red alert and closed to routine cases. Before the Secretary of State considers that hospital for a trust, will he reconsider the three invitations to visit the hospital that he has refused? Would it not be better for the Secretary of State to visit that hospital in financial crisis rather than spend time tomorrow only half a mile away from it at the Dulwich picture gallery, where he is opening an exhibition of portraits of old Etonians?

Mr. Waldegrave: That is a very heavyweight contribution. The hon. Gentleman is going to a meeting at King's College hospital tomorrow, and the leaflets advertising his presence contain untruths. I hope that he will take the opportunity to dissociate himself from those leaflets, which say:

"King's College hospital to opt out of the national health service."

The hon. Gentleman knows that that is a lie. He has backed down on the point before and I hope that he will do so again now.

The hon. Gentleman recently made another unsuccessful visit, to Oldham hospital, to campaign against the consultants who wished the hospital to be a trust. He said then that a Labour Government would pour money into the NHS—*[Interruption.]* Oh yes, he did—I have the quote with me. A local newspaper reported the hon. Gentleman as saying:

"A Labour Government would pour money into the NHS."

On a recent visit to the British Medical Association, the hon. Gentleman said that additional expenditure of £6 billion was not out of the ball park, but when he was asked on "Panorama" where the money would come from, he said:

"These are questions . . . that you will have to address to John Smith, who is my colleague"—

there may be some doubt about that—

"who handles the Exchequer questions."

May we have answers from the Member who is responsible for those matters?

Hospital Waiting Lists

6. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made in reducing hospital waiting lists in Shropshire.

Mr. Dorrell: In the 12 months to March 1991, the number of patients waiting for in-patient and day case treatment in Shropshire fell by 17 per cent. More importantly, the number waiting for more than one year fell by 58 per cent.

Mr. Gill: I am most grateful for those encouraging figures. Does not my hon. Friend agree that they are by no means unique in the country today and that, under the Conservative Government, and as a result of the management changes introduced last year, waiting lists have been reduced throughout the country? Will my hon. Friend take this opportunity to remind the Labour party that there is scarcely a patient today who cannot see a doctor, scarcely a patient who, having seen a doctor, is denied the drugs and medicine required, and scarcely a patient who, having been admitted to hospital, has not been entirely delighted with the care and attention received in hospital?

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend makes a good point, particularly in relation to waiting lists. One figure has been consistently collected before and through the period of the last Labour Government and through this Government's term of office—the number of people waiting for in-patient treatment in the health service. That figure rose by 48 per cent. between 1974 and 1979, and has fallen by 9 per cent. since 1979.

Clinical Guidelines

7. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met representatives of the British Medical Association to discuss clinical guidelines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Ministers and officials have regular contact with representatives of the British Medical Association and discuss a broad range of issues of mutual interest.

Mr. Wardell: Does the Minister accept that, if the resources of the national health service are to be used to the maximum advantage of patients, it is crucial that clinical guidelines are laid down, both for general practitioners and for consultant surgeons, so that patients can have full confidence that the operations undertaken on them do not do them more harm than good, as is plainly the case in a large number of current procedures, including hysterectomies and operations for glue ear, to give just two examples?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman is taking us into deep waters. I would not want the House to be the judge of which medical procedures are correct. We have effective royal colleges which monitor the standards and the Government have greatly strengthened the process of medical and clinical audit, which should further improve standards. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to raise a particular issue with me in relation to a procedure that he fears is being wrongly applied, I shall be happy to put him in touch with the chief medical officer to discuss the issue further.

Mr. Michael Morris: The key clinical guideline that all patients want when they see the consultant is to be told the date on which they will be operated on. Will my right hon. Friend put pressure on the NHS executive so that that is the norm in all 14 regions of this country?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend makes a fair point. It is in some of those spheres of convenience to patients—quite apart from medical standards, which I do not question—that the NHS can do a great deal more. The Government are doing a great deal more both to bring down the waiting times which were left at a high level by the last Labour Government, and to make the service more convenient for patients.

Mr. Wigley: What clinical guidelines are given to consultants who identify a patient with an urgent need for an operation, cannot cope with the patient within the NHS for months, yet find time to do the operation privately at their own profit? Is that not a matter which should be regulated by severe clinical guidelines?

Mr. Waldegrave: I think the hon. Gentleman knows that urgent cases are admitted—50 per cent. of all cases are admitted at once off the waiting lists in the NHS, and of the remaining cases, the great majority are seen within about five weeks. Recently, the work that we did with the joint consultants committee laid down clear guidelines for the treatment of urgent cases, with the total support of all the professionals involved, including the British Medical Association.

NHS Ambulance Trusts

8. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what new initiatives have been taken by the national health service ambulance trusts; and how this will affect patient care.

Mr. Dorrell: All three ambulance service trusts have taken positive steps to ensure quicker response times, staff are fully trained and each ambulance is manned with a paramedic. These improvements enhance the quality of care to patients.

Mr. Thompson: Is my hon. Friend aware that the new, well-run Norfolk and Waveney national health service ambulance trust has recently speeded up its paramedic training and has initiated a 24-hour message handling service for general practitioners? Does not this show that trust status leads to good management and value for money, to the benefit of NHS patients throughout the area?

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend is right. The fame of the NHS as an organisation that runs good ambulance services has spread beyond these shores. Yesterday, the *Evening Standard* reported that the Barcelona Olympics will benefit from NHS expertise in the operation of an ambulance service. Labour Members will benefit from hearing a quote from the director of NHS Overseas Enterprise Ltd., Mrs. Wark, who said:

"The NHS gets a lot of criticism within the UK, but it still has the highest reputation of any health service in the world."

Most NHS patients would agree with that.

Mr. Clelland: Is the Minister aware that the only initiative taken by the Northumbria ambulance trust, apart from entering the car repair business, has been an increase in the salaries of the officers who first decided to apply for trust status? Does the Minister believe that these increases are in the interests of patients and if he does, will he say why the trust refuses to publish the figures?

Mr. Dorrell: When the hon. Gentleman asks a question, he should be better informed. Since the establishment of the NHS trust in Northumbria, four new accident and emergency vehicles have been introduced into the service, response times for the ambulance service have improved, standby services in Northumbria have been increased so that there is 24-hour manning on the A1 route to Scotland, there is now one paramedic per vehicle, and the Northumbria ambulance service has been approved by the British Standards Institution under the BS 5750 scheme.

Mr. Hayes: Is not it monstrous for Labour Front-Bench spokesmen to go grubbing round our hospitals and ambulance stations with their trade union friends, cynically manipulating the fears of the elderly and the frail for a few cheap votes? Will my hon. Friend ask the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) to come clean and admit that trusts are not opting out of the health service and that it is against the law for them to make a profit?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is a bit wide of ambulances.

Mr. Dorrell: I echo my hon. Friend's invitation to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). Perhaps I might also make a more modest suggestion, which is that he listens to the Devon branch of NUPE, which is anxious to ensure that the Devon ambulance service has the opportunity to become an NHS trust in the second wave.

Mr. Spearing: Is the Under-Secretary of State aware that the London ambulance service is applying for trust status, but at the same time has vehicles with inferior specifications, a reduction in the number of its officers by 50, a capping of the necessary overtime for emergency services and a move to divide patient transport services into 32 different organisations? Is he aware that the management is appointed entirely and directly by the Secretary of State, who, despite those deficiencies, has refused to see a deputation of London Members of Parliament? Is not this arrogant and undemocratic behaviour, which demands the condemnation of the House?

Mr. Dorrell: No. The hon. Gentleman has got it diametrically wrong. Mr. Wilby has offered on a number of occasions to meet hon. Members from both sides of the House—[HON. MEMBERS: "Who?"] Mr. Wilby is the man who has been charged with the management of the London ambulance service and he is accountable to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. Some of my hon. Friends have met Mr. Wilby. Labour Members have consistently refused to do so. If the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) was seriously interested in representing the intrests of his constituents, rather than those of NALGO, he would agree to meet Mr. Wilby to learn something about the affairs of the London ambulance service from its management.

Junior Hospital Doctors

9. **Sir Anthony Durant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to meet the British Medical Association to discuss working arrangements for junior hospital doctors.

15. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met representatives of the British Medical Association to discuss junior doctors' hours.

18. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has further to improve the working arrangements of junior hospital doctors.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We launched a new deal for junior doctors on 12 June aimed at reducing their hours of work and improving their living and working conditions. This has the full backing of the ministerial group on junior doctors' hours which includes British Medical Association representatives. This group, and its supporting technical group, will continue to meet to monitor progress in implementing the new arrangements. I spoke at the BMA's hospital junior staff committee conference on 15 June.

Sir Anthony Durant: Does my hon. Friend agree that that is a welcome new agreement, but that its success depends on the co-operation of the consultants, nurses and ancillary workers and that there will have to be some changes of attitude towards junior hospital doctors, particularly among some senior consultants?

Mrs. Bottomley: Indeed, Sir. However, the agreement is a great breakthrough. For 15 months the consultants, junior doctors and the NHS management worked together to hammer out the agreement setting explicit limits on the amount of time that junior doctors should work. It is not good enough that they should be working night and day. It is not good for the junior doctors; it is not good for the patients. The consultants and the royal colleges have had to think carefully about the implementation of the agreement and I am confident that, through the ministerial group, we shall continue to see vital progress.

Mr. Eastham: On junior doctors working long hours and the consequences for patients, has not it taken between five and six years to obtain the agreement and is not it true that it is not expected to be fully implemented until the end of 1996 and that even then junior doctors' hours will be reduced to only a 60-hour week? Will the Minister give us a guarantee that there will be no change of mind and that funding will be available?

Mrs. Bottomley: Before taking lectures from the hon. Gentleman, I remind him that when the Labour party was in government junior doctors worked an average of 91 hours a week. That is now down to about 81 hours. There is, of course, a difference between contracted hours of duty on call and actual working hours. We make it clear that the maximum amount of time on shift working should be 60 hours immediately and 56 hours by the end of 1994.

If the hon. Gentleman wants more details, he should go to the regional conference in Manchester on 25 July, one of nine regional conferences, where the guidance will be spelt out and those who have only a partial understanding of the agreement will have the opportunity to understand the full significance of the breakthrough.

Mr. Moss: I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend on her expert handling of the successful negotiations on junior hospital doctors' conditions of service. This is a major step forward—a view endorsed by the BMA in its recent letter to me. However, bearing in mind the fact that some 50 per cent. of medical students are women, what special steps, if any, does she propose to take to help women junior hospital doctors in particular?

Mrs. Bottomley: I pay tribute to all the junior doctors' leaders who worked so hard to secure the agreement. It is another example of practical working together, quite distinct from the rhetoric of adversity and conflict peddled by the Opposition, and building up solid achievements and making progress. My hon. Friend is right that half medical students are women and we are concerned about losing so many of them. There are growing numbers of women general practitioners and doctors. As a practical step forward we have quadrupled the number of part-time registrar posts and developed further initiatives to secure their future so that they can serve the health service on the basis of their training.

Mr. Nellist: The Minister will be aware of the case on which I have corresponded with her and the Secretary of State and which I raised with the Prime Minister about three weeks ago of a young junior hospital doctor who worked almost 120 hours during his first week at a hospital and who, at the end of those seven days, collapsed and died. Given that the agreement of which the Minister has spoken this afternoon means that in five years' time, in 1997, it will still be possible for junior hospital doctors to work 72 hours a week, is not that still too little of an agreement to stop the stress and strain on the young doctors replicating that experience, thus risking another death in the next five years?

Mrs. Bottomley: I agree that being a junior doctor is much more stressful than it used to be. Modern medicine is much more complex and detailed. Ensuring that juniors are better supported, a better pastoral system, and improved working conditions are all part and parcel of the agreement. It is important to ensure also that junior doctors are properly supervised and that their working arrangements are adequately considered. The 72-hour maximum applies to doctors on duty, but those working consistently on a shift system would work a maximum of 56 hours. To ensure that progress is achieved, we not only established regional working parties but provided 200 extra consultants this year and an additional 50 staff grades. We have backed the agreement with new resources.

Operations (Waiting Lists)

10. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people had been waiting for an operation *(a)* for more than one year and *(b)* for more than two years on 30 April; and what were the comparable figures a year before.

Mr. Waldegrave: Information on numbers waiting for operations is not available for April 1991, but provisional figures for all specialties show a fall of 20 per cent. in the number waiting more than one year since March 1990. The number waiting more than two years reduced by 39 per cent.

Mr. Smith: Is not that an outstandingly successful achievement in the course of one year? Does my right hon. Friend agree that it has less to do with the quantity of health service resources and more to do with the quality of management? How does that successful record compare with the achievement of the last Labour Government?

Mr. Waldegrave: I agree with my hon. Friend that the health service is getting better at avoiding long waiting lists and that it is treating more people more quickly. The last

Labour Government, like all previous Labour Governments, left waiting lists higher than they found them.

Mr. Galbraith: Is not the Minister aware that the number of patients currently awaiting treatment is at 906,406, higher than in 1979, when the figure was 752,400? Is he aware that the percentage waiting more than one year remains almost unchanged at 25 per cent.? Does the Secretary of State agree with Sir Terence English, president of the Royal College of Surgeons, who commented today on waiting lists:

"The overall provision of resources and manpower are currently insufficient . . . to provide patients with the benefits of modern surgery"?

Is not the real problem that identified by Sir Terence English—underfunding?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am a little disappointed with the hon. Gentleman, who should know better. He knows that he arrived at his first figure by not comparing like with like. In-patient figures have fallen. The hon. Gentleman was badly briefed on his second point. We have 40,000 fewer long-wait patients than did Labour, which is a drop of about 25 per cent.

I am glad that the hon. Gentleman gives me an opportunity to refer to our co-operative work with the Royal College of Surgeons, announced today, in respect of waiting list management. We welcome the college's contribution, which fits very closely with the guidelines that we issued.

Women's Health

11. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps have been taken by the Government to improve the health of women; and how it will build on this work for attaining future targets.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Government place a high priority on improving the health of women. We are one of the first countries in the world to introduce computerised call and recall breast cervical cancer screening programmes. We recently published a booklet to publicise the help and services available to women.

Mrs. Hicks: Is my hon. Friend aware of a recent survey of 5,000 women showing that cancer remains their single most worrying health concern? Does not that prove, if proof were needed, that the Government were right to guarantee a cervical smear to every woman between the ages of 20 and 64 and breast screening to every woman aged between 50 and 64? Were not the Government also right to hold out on targeting, despite all the opposition, to ensure that general practitioners encouraged women to come forward for cervical screening? I am pleased to report that all 70 GP practices in Wolverhampton have achieved one of the two targets set for them.

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend makes the point extremely powerfully. Labour advocates a two-tier health service in which inner city areas would have a lower target. We held out for all general practitioners to achieve higher targets, of the same standard, across the country. To help inner city areas, we introduced deprivation payments. That is the way to extend health care. My hon. Friend is right that health promotion and disease prevention for women have been a real breakthrough.

HIV Testing

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what conclusions the Government have drawn from the voluntary named HIV testing studies among pregnant women initiated by the Medical Research Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The results of the voluntary named testing studies in ante-natal clinics initiated by the Medical Research Council are being analysed. They will be published in the autumn.

Mr. Strang: What is the Government's response to the vote at the annual general meeting of the British Medical Association in favour of routine provision of voluntary named testing for all women who attend ante-natal clinics? Does the Minister accept that if the Government are to implement such a desirable policy, they must first tackle the insurance companies, which ask people whether they have been tested and downgrade them for insurance purposes, regardless of whether the results were positive or negative?

Mrs. Bottomley: Yes. The recent results of anonymised testing are worrying: in many inner-city areas, there is a risk of about one in 200 pregnant women being HIV positive, while in rural areas the proportion is about one in 16,000.

As a result, we have set up the AIDS action group, which will focus work on areas where the prevalence is high. We want to build on that and we shall give careful consideration to the BMA resolution, which states that it should be easier for women to present themselves voluntarily for testing.

I entirely endorse what the hon. Gentleman said about the importance of the insurance aspect. We have made it clear that we feel that someone whose test has produced a negative result should be treated in the same way as someone who has not taken a test. Research is under way and we shall be making an announcement shortly.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Trotter:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 16 July.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is hosting the economic summit.

Mr. Trotter: Is my right hon. Friend aware that many members of the electricians' trade union on Tyneside play a great part in the economic success of our region? That union is not tied to out-of-date practices. Did my right hon. Friend know that Eric Hammond had recently warned his members of the dire consequences of socialist policy and does he agree that those consequences should be made known to all trade union members?

Mr. MacGregor: I think that all trade union members are becoming increasingly aware of them. Eric Hammond was talking about the minimum wage policy, which he said would

"cause industrial unrest, discourage training, harm the economy, put more people on the dole and create a cycle whereby inflation continues to rise."

No wonder Opposition Ministers do not want to hear what a trade union leader has said. That is only one in a long line of devastating indictments of Labour's minimum wage policy. It is beginning to look like Napoleon's retreat from Moscow: bad news and more bad news every day.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the right hon. Gentleman take this opportunity to confirm that the Bank of England and the Treasury have known since the publication of the March 1990 Price Waterhouse report that serious irregularities were operating in the Bank of Credit and Commerce International?

Mr. MacGregor: The right hon. Gentleman knows that the Bank took action as soon as it was satisfied that it would have evidence—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] This is a very important point. It took action as soon as it was satisfied that it would have evidence to support the use of its statutory powers. It cannot act on mere suspicion.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the right hon. Gentleman now confirm that the 1990 Price Waterhouse report said that BCCI was then virtually bankrupt and that hundreds of millions of dollars were being given in unsecured loans? Does he not think that if businesses, individuals and council treasurers had been aware of those conditions, they would then have formed an appropriate opinion on whether to use BCCI? A great deal of hardship and misery might thus have been avoided.

Mr. MacGregor: The point is that the Bank must act according to the Banking Act 1987. Actions under that Act are subject to appeal and the Bank must therefore have evidence that would stand up in court before it does anything. It cannot act on rumours; it must have good evidence before acting. In this case, it acted as soon as it had such evidence.

Mr. Kinnock: We are not talking about the Bank or the Government acting on the basis of rumours. We are talking about both bodies acting on the basis of a serious report from the auditors. The bank has now closed, 200,000 people have lost all or part of their savings and councils of all political descriptions have lost scores of millions of pounds. Does not the right hon. Gentleman think that it is time that the Government accepted their share of the blame for these conditions instead of trying to shift the blame to the shoulders of people who simply could not have known what was going on in the same way as the Government could?

Mr. MacGregor: There is no question of shifting the blame. On the question of the individuals concerned, the right hon. Gentleman knows that under the deposit protection scheme compensation is paid to depositors up to certain levels of deposit. That gives considerable protection to small depositors. It is essential for the Bank to act on evidence that would stand up in court and it did so as soon as it had that evidence.

Q2. **Mr. Charles Wardle:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 16 July.

Mr. MacGregor: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wardle: Will my right hon. Friend take an early opportunity to reconsider the laws governing prison visits and the number of visitors allowed at any one time so that all 28 Labour Members who agree with the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields) about non-payment of the community charge may visit him together in gaol?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend asks an intriguing question, but it has a serious point. Since he raised the matter of the 28 Labour Members, it is worth mentioning that three years ago the Leader of the Opposition said that he would wipe out the Militants once and for all. He failed then, which is why we have called upon him to take action ever since. My hon. Friend has made the good point that the influence of Militant in the Labour party is still strong.

Mr. Rees: Will the Leader of the House bring to the Prime Minister's notice the serious allegations made in *The Guardian* today about a "World in Action" programme which reported the comments of a former member of the Joint Intelligence Committee and the fact that serious matters are not brought to the attention of Cabinet Ministers or Parliament? They are serious allegations which should be investigated. Will he ask the Prime Minister, when he has finished today, to institute an inquiry, because such allegations cast doubt on matters that should not be in question?

Mr. MacGregor: I have not seen that "World in Action" programme, but I shall arrange for it to be looked at and will draw the right hon. Gentleman's point to the notice of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Q3 **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 16 July.

Mr. MacGregor: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Sir Michael Neubert: Will my right hon. Friend find an opportunity to get a message to the Prime Minister at the economic summit to ask him to express regret at the assertion revealed today in *The Sun* that the election of Mr. Bush to the Presidency was based on a disgraceful campaign of slurs and attacks? Those assertions are apparently made in a letter from the general secretary of the Labour party.

Mr. MacGregor: I have seen the report and I hope that it is not true. If it is true, it is a disgraceful slur and I am sure that the Leader of the Opposition would wish to have it withdrawn.

Ms. Walley: With so many international leaders meeting in London this week, will the right hon. Gentleman take this opportunity to tell the House why his Government have no policy on British shipping? Now that the House has been denied the opportunity to debate and vote on this matter, will he tell us why he is not giving the support to British shipping that other countries enjoy?

Mr. MacGregor: There already is support for British shipping, but it was made clear in one of the debates last night that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer was considering proposals put forward during that debate.

Q4. **Mr. Knowles:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 16 July.

Mr. MacGregor: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Knowles: Will my right hon. Friend ensure that when he sees the Prime Minister——

Mr. Tony Banks: Will he recognise him?

Mr. Knowles: During the Group of Seven conference and discussions with President Gorbachev, will my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister make it clear that the Baltic states have not been forgotten, that none of the G7 countries has ever accepted the Soviet conquest of those three states and that that must be a starting point for any discussions about aid and investment?

Mr. MacGregor: I certainly take note of my hon. Friend's point.

Dr. Kim Howells: Is the Leader of the House aware that at this morning's annual general meeting of British Airways, Lord King announced that, because of the appalling incompetence of the Secretary of State for Transport in his dealings with American airlines, British Airways is considering selling off all but its core operations, including an aero overhaul plant in my constituency which employs 1,000 men and women? What is he going to do to prevent such a calamity for south Wales?

Mr. MacGregor: I certainly reject the allegation about my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. The whole House knows of the way in which he has conducted these matters.

Q5. **Mr. William Powell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 16 July.

Mr. MacGregor: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Powell: Will my right hon. Friend take time today to re-read the excellent speech made a few days ago by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister about the future of our education system and will he pay special attention to the passage which deals with the future of city technology colleges? Can we expect early action by the Government to ensure a great increase in the number of CTCs?

Mr. MacGregor: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. I thought that it was an admirable speech which showed the tremendous progress that has been made under our education policies. My hon. Friend makes it clear that one programme—only one among many—is that for city technology colleges. There are now 13 in operation or about to be in operation and two more in the pipeline. They are undoubtedly making a big impact in inner-city areas by extending technology and involving industry and commerce. My right hon. Friend mentioned two other ways in which the programme can be carried forward—allowing local education authorities to invest in CTCs and allowing grant-maintained CTCs. It is worth pursuing both ideas and I am sure that we shall do so as soon as legislative time permits.

Mr. Wallace: To revert to the BCCI affair, is the Leader of the House satisfied that in all respects the Bank of England and the relevant Government Departments took the proper action at the proper time?

Mr. MacGregor: I have already said that I believe that the Bank of England acted on the evidence at the proper time.

Q6. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 16 July.

Mr. MacGregor: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Thompson: Has my right hon. Friend had time today to read the report that has just been issued by the Department of Trade and Industry's Invest in Britain Bureau? Does he agree that it is encouraging to hear overseas business men say that we have better-qualified and better-trained engineers than the Japanese and that we now have almost no strikes in this country? Does not the report show that under this Government the British disease of the 1960s and 1970s has now been cured—*[Interruption.]* Would not that be reversed under a Labour Government?

Mr. MacGregor: I am not at all surprised that some members of the Opposition did not want my hon. Friend to finish his question, because they do not like good news. I believe that the Invest in Britain Bureau survey is the authentic verdict on the country's economic progress and policies. It is worth telling the House that the majority of those involved in the survey found that British factories were more productive than those in the rest of the world. They found our industrial relations excellent and improving. They found that our workers had the skill and expertise that they wanted and they intend to make further investments in this country.

Opposition Members did not like the comment that my hon. Friend made about the so-called "British disease" of the 1960s and 1970s. It is worth referring to the statement made recently by Gavyn Davies in reference to current trends on pay and prices. He said—*[Interruption.]* I am not surprised that Opposition Members do not like it. He said—it is directly relevant to my hon. Friend's point—"This means that Britain's perennial problem of excess labour cost is being solved."

Mr. Morgan: Will the Leader of the House confirm that in addition to describing the incompetence of the Secretary of State for Transport in giving away large chunks of British Airways' business to American Airlines and United Airlines, Lord King also said that he was reviewing the practice by British Airways of making large donations to the Tory party? He said that he was considering opening negotiations with the Labour party, because, unlike the Government, we have a transport policy. As the leader of a large transport undertaking, Lord King wanted there to be a Government with whom he could work in helping British transport undertakings to create more jobs and more business for this country.

Mr. MacGregor: I hope that any industrialist considering opening negotiations with the Labour party will ask it about its policy of an extra £35 billion on public expenditure and about the consequences of that for higher taxation, higher borrowing and higher interest. I hope that such an industrialist will ask it about its policy for the minimum wage and about its industrial relations policies which will take us back to a situation such as we had, alas, in the late 1970s and which we hope never to see again.

Points of Order

3.32 pm

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. A press conference is taking place at the moment to amplify an answer to Question 98 on today's Order Paper. It concerns the relocation or redistribution of responsibilities within naval bases in this country. It is of particular interest to Scottish Members and to Members in the south-west. The matter is sufficiently important to require the presence at the press conference of the Secretary of State for Defence and the Secretary of State for Scotland. They have already declined to come to the House to advise hon. Members of what is being said at the press conference. Do you consider that they should be required to come to the Dispatch Box to explain their actions?

Mr. Speaker: The whole House knows that I deprecate press conferences given in amplification of answers to questions. If I had had that knowledge before midday, I might have taken a different view when making my decision on this matter.

Mr. O'Neill: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Following up your helpful remarks, would you instruct the Leader of the House, who has answered questions today, to require his colleagues to come to the House? This is not a matter of party advantage. We do not know what the outcome of the question will be. The House is entitled to know and to have the same access to Ministers which members of the press have.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am dealing with a point of order already. The question was to me. I have no authority today to do what the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) asks, but I will look sympathetically at the matter tomorrow.

Mr. Bill Walker: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. If you examine today's Order Paper, you will see that the question is in my name. That will not surprise anyone because I have been campaigning in Scotland about the importance of the Scottish input in the defence infrastructure of the United Kingdom. It is quite proper that I, among others, should take an interest in having the question answered.

Mr. Speaker: That was not the thrust of the point of order. It is perfectly in order to answer a written question. The purpose of the hon. Member for Clackmannan was to seek my view about a press conference being given to amplify the answer. I have made my views clear.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I draw to your attention the fact that in the Scottish Grand Committee this morning, which did not finish until 1 pm, the Secretary of State for Scotland was pressed precisely on this issue and refused to give a reply? Does that not show contempt for the Scottish Grand Committee as well as for the House?

Mr. Speaker: I must ask the hon. Gentleman to repeat his last comment; I am afraid that I did not hear it.

Mr. Clarke: Several times this morning in the Scottish Grand Committee the Secretary of State for Scotland was asked a precise question. He refused to reply. He refused even to say whether a press conference would take place, although the Committee sitting finished as recently as 1 o'clock today. Does that not display contempt both for the Scottish Grand Committee and for the House?

Mr. Speaker: I do not know whether the Secretary of State had heard about the press conference; I certainly have not.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will know that in the last year or so hon. Members on both sides of the House have attempted to get an answer about naval bases. I understand from members of the press, who seem to have been told at about 12 o'clock today, that all the naval bases are mentioned. I wonder whether you, Mr. Speaker, have any power to ensure that an early statement is made to the House so that we can question Ministers. I understand that the news is good; Ministers may have felt that they had to come to the House only if the news was bad. We could offer them our congratulations—or, at least, we could find out where we are.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Allow me to deal with this matter first. The whole House knows my view that, if press conferences are to be held, a statement should first be made in the House. I feel strongly about that, and I have already made my views plain. I cannot do anything about the matter today, but I may seek to do so tomorrow.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that I raised this very point with the Leader of the House during business questions on Thursday. The right hon. Gentleman suggested that matters would be delayed—in effect, until the return of the House in October. I have no complaint about the use of written questions, but I have complained—and I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to take my complaint on board—that when hon. Members, assiduous in their duties, timeously ask during business questions what is likely to happen, it shows gross disrespect to the House if the Leader of the House does not exercise his responsibilities to the House as a whole and ensure that Ministers give us the information rather than giving it to the press.

I am not being wise after the event. I raised the question on Thursday. We need a strict undertaking from you, Mr. Speaker, that you will use your good offices on behalf of the House to speak to the Leader of the House, who has responsibilities to the House.

Mr. Speaker: I cannot say any more than I have said. I have already made it plain that tomorrow I shall look sympathetically upon any requests made to me.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sorry to prolong the points of order, but it is important to draw to your attention the fact that there were exchanges with the Secretary of State for Scotland on the subject during the Scottish Grand Committee this morning—they were most unrewarding in terms of information given. I should also draw to your attention the fact that I have just received a copy of a letter delivered today to the convener of Fife region from Vice Admiral Sir Hugo White, the flag officer, Scotland and Northern Ireland, which says:

[Mr. Donald Dewar]

"I am therefore writing to let you know that the Secretary of State for Defence will today announce a proposal to reduce progressively the base's capability"—

that is, Rosyth base—

"and that it will eventually support only minor war vessels. The base infrastructure will therefore be subject to a planned rundown related to the dates to be agreed for the changes to Type 42 Destroyer base ports. This will sadly but inevitably lead to significant job losses and the prospect of accompanying redundancies."

That information is being bandied about and supplied to people outside the House, which makes it doubly important that the House should be informed. We must be given the chance to hear the information today and to cross-question Ministers about what it means and why so many competing stories are being put about concerning the future of the base.

Mr. Speaker: I cannot say more than I have already said about it. If the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman thinks that the matter is so urgent that we must have a statement today, I remind him that that can be achieved only through the usual channels. I share the hon. Gentleman's view that the equivalent of press conferences should be given to the House by the Secretary of State, and not to outside bodies before us. If the Minister does not make a statement tomorrow, I shall look sympathetically on a private notice question.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. These are vital matters of national security and public defence. I understand that there is a possibility that, when President Gorbachev comes here, he will be accompanied by members of the KGB. In view of the recent evidence of KGB-type activities in the people's republic of Liverpool, where political dissidents have been subjected to clandestine photography and worse, if any statement is to be made, would it be possible to establish that these witch hunts are purely part of the digestive system of the Labour party and have nothing to do with the old guard in the entourage of President Gorbachev?

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In the light of what you have heard and the way in which you have responded to it, will you entertain the moving of a motion under Standing Order 20 so that the matter can now be properly debated on the Floor of the House?

Mr. Speaker: Not today.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. We all understand that you have repeatedly said that you deplore such situations and, equally, that you have no power to force Ministers to come before the House and make a statement, but may I ask you, Sir, to bear in mind the fact that you have powers that could influence Ministers' thinking very strongly? Ministers might well feel that a PNQ alone is an easier option than a full statement. But if you said now that you would consider sympathetically not just an application for a PNQ but an application under Standing Order 20 for an emergency debate the following day, it might have an effect on the Minister's disposition to come here tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker: That is hypothetical at the moment.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. We hear a great deal about parliamentary sovereignty and about how you are here to protect hon. Members. We fully accept that you are not responsible for Government business. However, we had the Leader of the House here a few moments ago, and he has now left. Would it not be appropriate to have some discussion behind the Chair that resulted in a statement being made on this matter at 7 o'clock tonight?

Mr. Speaker: I have already made my views about that clear. The hon. Gentleman is merely repeating what I have just said.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind hon. Members that we have a heavy day ahead of us on the Finance Bill.

Mr. Dewar: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sorry to prolong the points of order, but this is a matter of importance. Opposition Members are naturally reluctant to let the matter drift away without any firm understanding of what will happen. It seems to me that there is a firm view—which I think will be shared by Conservative Members with defence interests—that there should be a statement today, particularly in view of the letter that I read to the House from the flag officer. Would it not be possible to get some indication now—I know that the Leader of the House is not here—from a responsible Minister that there will be a statement later today, perhaps most conveniently at 7 o'clock?

Mr. Speaker: That would certainly be a possibility, but, as I have already said, it is a matter for the usual channels and not for me. I cannot force the issue.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) told the House that he had for a long time expressed a close interest in the developing plans for the rationalisation of the Royal Navy support infrastructure. No one would dispute that, Sir, but the hon. Gentleman happened to table last night the question that has been used as the reason for the press conference.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to look at the Order Paper. Questions 94, 95, 96, 97 and 98 were all tabled before 10.30 pm yesterday. All of them were tabled by Conservative Back Benchers and all of them call for statements from Ministers. I understand, Sir, that this is perhaps more appropriately a matter for the Procedure Committee, but it would greatly assist those of us on the Procedure Committee, and all those interested in good order, if you expressed your opinion about clearly planted questions being tabled the previous night, thus making it very difficult for Opposition Members to put in their four penn'orth.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is a member of the Procedure Committee and he can do that himself.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Further to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke), may I say that I had to be in Scotland this morning. At the same time that the Scottish Grand Committee meeting was held in this House, the news was broadcast at 12 o'clock in Scotland that the Government had confirmed, not the factual situation about Rosyth, but what we now know is a

version of events. We are dealing not simply with contempt of the Scottish Grand Committee or contempt of the House, but with news management in order to present what by any standards is a partisan account of events to mislead the House and the public. There must be a statement at 7 o'clock to clarify matters.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will know that in order to run this show there has to be a careful balance between yourself, the usual channels and the House as a whole. It has been obvious for some time that the Government are trying to upset that balance by the use of planted questions, not only at Prime Minister's Question Time, which has been commented upon in most of the newspapers lately, but also in questions to the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food a fortnight ago, who planted a question with a Conservative Member from Lancashire about the state of dioxin in milk in my constituency and nowhere else in Britain. We have seen a further usurpation of that balance today. There are occasions when Mr. Speaker must restore the balance

Far from just deprecating what is happening, it would make a great deal of sense today if the Speaker of the House of Commons made it clear to that bunch on the Treasury Bench that they should get someone to the Dispatch Box later today. You could say that, and it would help to restore the balance.

Mr. Speaker: I have already said it.

Mr. Bill Walker: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. As it is obvious from questions put to you that I am under attack, I must stress that my interest in the matter arose primarily because we knew that we would be debating in the Scottish Grand Committee this morning the Scottish economy and employment prospects in Fife, which are tied up with the naval base and its future. Therefore, I deemed it prudent to approach my colleagues in the Ministry of Defence to see whether I could have an early response to my many requests about the decision on the future of the Royal Navy support, and they gladly agreed that that should be done today.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Time was when Ministers always made statements to the House before they made them outside. I hope that we can get back to that practice. This Chamber is the forum of the nation. This is where statements should always first be made, not to those outside.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): You have made your views perfectly clear, Mr. Speaker, and you have dropped the broadest of hints. In order that there may be some time for mature reflection on what you have said, I beg to move, That strangers do withdraw.

Notice being taken that strangers were present, MR. SPEAKER, *pursuant to Standing Order No. 143 (Withdrawal of strangers from House), put the Question,* That strangers do withdraw:—

The House divided: Ayes 23, Noes 235.

Division No. 212] **[3.47 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Beggs, Roy
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carr, Michael
Cartwright, John
Douglas, Dick
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fearn, Ronald
Howells, Geraint
Johnston, Sir Russell
Kennedy, Charles
Maclennan, Robert
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Salmond, Alex
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Trimble, David
Wigley, Dafydd

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. James Wallace and
Mr. Andrew Welsh.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dixon, Don
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lamond, James
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*

Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
Loyden, Eddie
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morley, Elliot
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudd, David
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Page, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Neil Hamilton and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. When you consider, as you no doubt will, the stunt that we have just witnessed, I suggest that there are two points that you might like to bear in mind. The first is the time at which the television cameras stop showing the proceedings in the Chamber. There is a definite interest for those who do not wish good news to be announced in the House to prolong the proceedings so that there is no longer live coverage of them.

Secondly, bearing in mind what you said before the Division in relation to points of order, may I ask you to consider the rumours that have come to my ears at least that there might have been a statement this afternoon about the matter had the Labour party wished to have one —[HON. MEMBERS: "Not true."] Will you consider the matter, Mr. Speaker, remembering that if there is shown to be substance in it, that would shed an entirely new light on the behaviour of the Opposition?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. With respect, I cannot deal with rumours.

Mr. O'Neill: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Are you aware, following that time-wasting smear from the right hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow), that had the Government wished, they could have made a statement in the House at 3.30 and announced what they would regard as good news in prime television time? We requested through the usual channels that such a statement be made, but that was declined. That is the truth of the matter.

The four-page answer to the question is of such complexity that it requires the House to give it its considered opinion and concern. So it is important that the Government business managers should come to the House and explain what they propose to do about this state of affairs.

From a rough reading of the answer, I am led to believe that there will be in excess of 2,000 redundancies, with a sizeable number of people having to be moved across the United Kingdom. This is a major issue of security, defence and economic significance and the Government cannot escape that fact.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Richard Ryder): In the absence of the Leader of the House, may I clarify two points? First, it may be for the benefit of the House if the usual channels had discussions following the exchanges that have taken place in the last few minutes. Secondly, I shall report those exchanges to the Secretary of State for Defence. I must emphasise that discussions took place this morning and that it was understood that a statement would be required only if Rosyth was closed. Rosyth is not closed.

Mr. Douglas: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. With your permission, I should like to read the letter that I have received from the Minister of State. Without going into all of it, I wish to record how insulting the procedure adopted by the Government has been to the House. They held a press conference at 3.30 and the letter was put on the Letter Board for myself and other hon. Members. The letter, which partially explains the situation, says at the end:

> "I would be grateful if you would treat this as in confidence until the announcement has been made."

We are asked to treat in confidence matters that are in the public domain. That is an insult to the House and to all our procedures. We should receive from the Government a promise that a statement on the subject will be made this evening.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The right hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) referred to a stunt. I did not take part in the vote because, like several hon. Members, I hesitated to vote for a motion that would make people leave the Strangers' Gallery. Such motions and points of order—to which you have listened, Mr. Speaker, very courteously—would not have arisen had not the House been treated with utter contempt. If we are not to have the necessary statement, as a last resort hon. Members have a duty and responsibility to their constituents to ensure that their voice is heard by means of motions, points of order, or any other means.

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Further to the point or order, Mr. Speaker. In the absence of the Leader of the House, the Government Chief Whip told us something about the past. Will he say what the Government propose to do and whether there will be a statement tomorrow, as the House wishes?

Mr. Wilson: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. My question arises from the smears of the right hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow). The rules of the House state that we should not refer to the Press Gallery or the Strangers' Gallery. Is it within the rules that, in such a serious matter, an hon. Gentleman can suggest that concern about thousands of jobs being at stake is expressed simply to play to the cameras in television prime time? That is an outrageous and offensive suggestion, especially by a right hon. Gentleman who is supposed to hold a position of prestige within his party. Can the rules relating to galleries and the media be extended to television cameras?

Mr. Speaker: I think that I shall now close the debate by saying that this may serve as a lesson to the whole House and that, in future, important statements should be made in the House.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning) (No. 5) Order 1991 (S.I., 1991, No. 1608) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Question agreed to.

Helicopters and Heliports

4.7 pm

Ms. Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to make further provision with respect to helicopter safety and air traffic control; to amend the law relating to planning controls on heliports; to protect the environment by restricting noise levels and controlling the use of helicopters; to assign responsibilities and duties in relation to helicopters; and for connected purposes.

It is widely acknowledged that the law relating to helicopter movements and landing sites is unsatisfactory. Under the General Development Order, operators can use temporary or ad hoc sites for landing and take off for up to 28 days a year without planning permission, or consent from the Civil Aviation Authority. The days can be consecutive and there is no restriction on the number of movements. Helicopters can land on and take off from any site, so long as the pilot regards it as safe. They can use gardens, car parks, roofs of buildings, and so on. Planning permission may be required for the construction of hangars or landing pads, but it is not required when landing or taking off is incidental to the main use of the land—for example, when it is from an office building or a private house.

No one is responsible for monitoring that ad hoc use of helicopters and it is easy for the 28-day rule to be breached. The noise review working party of the Department of the Environment stated that the use of helicopters at private landing sites had greatly increased in recent years and was expected to increase further. However, because there is no requirement for the CAA to monitor helicopter overflights, especially in the central London zone, there is no record of landings, movements or routes flown.

For safety reasons, the CAA restricts single-engined helicopters in London to defined routes, especially following the River Thames. However, twin-engined helicopters are not restricted to routes and can fly anywhere over London in accordance with air traffic control instructions. Both the London Boroughs Association and the Association of London Authorities have been pressing the Government for licensing controls on commercial services to be given to a representative Londonwide control authority, which would consult local authorities.

Although a London helicopter advisory committee has recently been set up, its terms of reference do not include drawing up a Londonwide policy on helicopters. There is clearly a weakness with regard to strategic planning policy on the location and control of heliport and helipad facilities in London. The London planning advisory committee, set up after the abolition of the Greater London council, did not include a policy on heliports in its 1988 strategic planning advice for London; nor did the Secretary of State's planning guidance for London.

Helicopters create a particularly unpleasant and disturbing noise because of the volume, pitch and type of sound produced—the characteristic blade slap. The effect is that helicopters generate greater fears of crashing, induce feelings of visual intrusion and are generally perceived as more annoying than fixed-wing aircraft. In addition, there are problems in relation to measuring the noise because there is no consensus on a formula. According to the Airfields Advisory Federation, a widely

[Ms. Kate Hoey]

respected independent organisation, the current Government standards are widely regarded as outdated, and were not originally developed for helicopters.

Objection to helicopters on the basis of noise goes far beyond the simple syndrome of "not in my back yard", or nimbyism. The effects can be psychologically damaging and stressful for those living and working in close proximity to where the helicopters are used. The length of the Thames riverside is plagued by helicopters as it is considered the most suitable location for heliports and helipads. However, in its planning guidance to boroughs, the Department of the Environment specifically draws attention to the river being one of London's greatest assets and asks boroughs to give particular attention to the character of any development proposed on or near the river. That is precisely what boroughs from Richmond to Tower Hamlets want to do, but they do not have the powers to control the increasing environmental pollution from helicopters.

The River Thames is being allowed to become the noise sewer of London. A public inquiry into the plans for Cannon street heliport last autumn showed how strong the opposition to an increase in helicopter use in London was among people who live and work there. Any day now we expect the Secretary of State's decision on that proposed heliport. I hope that he refuses permission. A couple of weeks ago, the London Docklands development corporation applied for a helipad facility on Trinity Buoy wharf in docklands. As it is its own planning authority, it will be seeking permission from itself. I urge the Secretary of State to call in that application as a matter of urgency.

Surely no one sees the increase in helicopter facilities as an answer to London's traffic problems. Everybody, including the Department of the Environment, puts it way down the list of priorities in transport policies. But slowly and steadily, by stealth, more and more private individuals and businesses are making use of the helicopter to fly their way out of congestion.

I believe that the benefits, in terms of the numbers of users and time savings, can be argued as being small compared with the costs of the noise impact and environmental concerns. Overflying helicopters represent a noisy, intrusive assault on quality of life. Each flight disrupts and disturbs literally thousands of people. The economic growth that that flight would have to generate in order to lead to a net increase in quality of life would have to be massive. However, challenged to demonstrate overriding need, the applicant in the Cannon street case last year said that the heliport was necessary, for example, to speed a London architect's trip to examine brick samples in Wales.

In 1984, the then Secretary of State for Transport announced that he was terminating the helicopter link between Heathrow and Gatwick. He said:

"Noise can be a potent destroyer of the quality of life . . . Helicopters seem to have a special vibrating noise . . . in the light of the environmental disturbance caused by the service we could not justify allowing it to continue in operation".

If that was true of flights between Heathrow and Gatwick, it must be no less true of flights over the much more densely populated centres of our cities.

The final part of my Bill would clarify the registering of complaints, a process which at the moment is complex, confusing and unpublished. Time after time, the buck is passed between the CAA and the Department of Transport. A constituent of mine from the Waterloo area had her complaint passed backwards and forwards only to be referred to the British Helicopter Advisory Board, a company representing helicopter manufacturers and operators. Helicopter operators routinely and flagrantly ignore the routing and other regulations. Only the most persistent members of the public are likely to have their complaint registered. They need to sort that out.

I hope that hon. Members will support the Bill and take a step towards recognition that helicopter use in urban areas needs to be reduced and that helicopters and cities are not compatible.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Ms. Kate Hoey, Mr. Peter Shore, Mr. Tony Banks, Mr. John Cartwright, Mr. Harry Cohen, Mr. Toby Jessel, Mr. James Lamond, Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours and Mr. Nigel Spearing.

HELICOPTERS AND HELIPORTS

Ms. Kate Hoey accordingly presented a Bill to make further provision with respect to helicopter safety and air traffic control; to amend the law relating to planning controls on heliports; to protect the environment by restricting noise levels and controlling the use of helicopters; to assign responsibilities and duties in relation to helicopters; and for connected purposes : And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 18 October and to be printed. [Bill 215.]

Orders of the Day

Finance Bill

Order for Third Reading read.

4.17 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Francis Maude): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

This is my first Finance Bill. Previously, the attractions of serving on the Finance Bill Committee seemed somewhat abstruse, but I knew that many hon. Members returned, their enthusiasm unabated, year after year to serve on it. Therefore, it was with some interest that I engaged in the exercise to see what was so entrancing. Now that I have joined that happy band, I have been initiated into all sorts of obscure and riveting mysteries such as stock lending, manufactured dividends and approved share option trusts. We have had an occasional insight into the Opposition's taxation policies, although the insight was generally provided by the Government rather than the Opposition. It has been a useful exercise.

Those of us who have seen the Bill through from the beginning to the end have, by and large, seen serious debate undertaken in a serious spirit. There have been disagreements on important matters, but that is inevitable. The debate has, however, been conducted in a spirit of good humour from both sides of the House. I now begin to see the attractions of these proceedings, which provoke so much devotion among their followers.

My hon. Friends the Economic Secretary and the Minister of State are veterans of Finance Bills, but for them, as for me, this is the first occasion on the Treasury Bench, and I pay a warm tribute to the hard work that they have put in, both upstairs in Committee and in the still watches of last night on Report.

The Bill has received a thorough consideration. We have not always accepted the arguments made for amendments, but that is hardly surprising. Frequently, we have accepted arguments and have responded constructively to many of the amendments. All these issues have been properly ventilated and explored in a useful exercise.

We have introduced several new clauses and amendments since Second Reading. A number of those were foreshadowed in the Budget statement, but were not ready for the original publication of the Bill. For example, clause 5 provides for a reduction in the rate of pool betting duties from 40 to 37½per cent. That follows proposals for a Foundation for Sport and the Arts, which was announced by the Pools Promoters Association. That subject was discussed, shortly before we pulled stumps last night, by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell). My memory of what took place at that hour is somewhat hazy, but I seem to remember that they were the protagonists in that discussion.

Clause 65 gives effect to the Budget announcement of a new relief from income and corporation tax to encourage business gifts of equipment to schools and other educational establishments. This is a practical measure intended to give help to business and to help education and business work in partnership.

Since Second Reading, the Bill has gained an entirely new part IV, dealing with stamp duty. Clauses 105 to 110 abolish a raft of minor stamp duties. Last year we announced our intention to abolish stamp duty on securities to coincide with the introduction of paperless trading and the TAURUS system. Part IV means that stamp duties will be abolished on all property except land and buildings. That continues the splendid tradition in recent years whereby in each Finance Bill the Government abolish at least one tax. We have exceeded expectations on this occasion by abolishing not one or two taxes but a multitude of stamp duties, and I am proud to be the begetter of that measure.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): Does not my hon. Friend think that there is something rather quaint about our tax system which has no fewer than 88 reliefs and allowances against the six main taxes which, in the current year, cost about £87 billion, while the six main taxes in themselves raised only £82 billion? To my simple mind, that shows that either all taxes are twice as high as they need be, or we have twice as many taxes as we truly need.

Mr. Maude: My hon. Friend makes a fair point. For the first time we have set out in the Red Book the effective value of the various tax reliefs so that exactly the sort of comparison that my hon. Friend has made can be made. That does not involve a judgment on whether it is right or wrong to have such tax reliefs, but it does at least enable there to be informed discussion on the relative merits. I make no secret of our view that, in general, it is better to reduce reliefs and reduce the rates of tax. *[Interruption.]* That is a general proposition. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) agrees with it.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Maude: That is splendid. We now have full consensus on the matter and that enables us to proceed with renewed confidence.

My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to that point and it is also right that every Chancellor of the Exchequer should have in his mind when he frames his Budget the balance between overall rates of taxation and the reliefs that are given against taxation.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): This is a good point at which to ask my hon. Friend about the framing of future Budgets. It was announced last week that, in future, budgetary plans for taxation and expenditure will be submitted to a European Commission star chamber. Can my hon. Friend say when that will be done? Will it be done before the Budget statement is made to the House? If there is a conflict between the House and the Commission, whose view will prevail?

Mr. Maude: I do not recognise from my hon. Friend's description the exact proposition to which he is referring. I am not aware of any intention by the Government to submit their processes to such a procedure. Perhaps my hon. Friend will elucidate.

Mr. Favell: *The Daily Telegraph* of 10 July said:

"Mr. Lamont, Chancellor, yesterday agreed to submit Budget plans for taxation and expenditure to an annual EC 'star chamber' of Finance Ministers responsible for bringing the 12 disparate national economies into line."

Mr. Maude: There is no proposition that we should submit what we put in our Budget for anyone's scrutiny before we present it to Parliament. That would be a wholly intolerable proposition. I reassure my hon. Friend that we have no intention of doing such a thing. It has been agreed that, after the event, we will send the Commission a version of our medium-term financial strategy, which is a broad part of the Red Book, to help the Commission in reaching a judgment on how convergence is progressing. However, I unequivocally assure the House that we have no intention of submitting our Budget, with all its detailed fiscal measures, for scrutiny other than by the House.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): Perhaps the Financial Secretary has not studied the draft treaty on European economic and monetary union, but one of its articles clearly states that the budget balances of all member states will have to be examined by the Commission which, after observing certain procedures, can then make recommendations regarding those budget balances. That represents a transfer of power over fiscal policy to the Commission, which will be empowered to make recommendations.

Mr. Maude: I am reluctant to disagree with the right hon. Gentleman, who is very knowledgeable in such matters. He referred accurately to the draft treaty, which is the previous presidency's working document. At this stage, not a single word of it is agreed. It is a working document, and, as I told the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee a week or two ago, nothing is agreed until everything is agreed. Therefore, nothing in the draft treaty is taken as having the agreement of any member state.

Even if the draft treaty were agreed, it is a different proposition to suggest that a member state's overall budget balance should be subject to scrutiny and examination by institutions of the European Community after the event. If there is to be economic and monetary union—and I am not in a position to judge whether there will be—the convergence of budget deficits will be important. Everyone taking part in the negotiations agrees that monetary union could not be sustained if excessive budget deficits existed among member states.

Mr. Denzil Davies: The draft treaty makes reference to excessive budget deficits and, if the United Kingdom's deficit proved excessive, is it not the case that the Commission could consider that situation, make recommendations and, at the end of the day, bring a stop to that excessive deficit?

Mr. Maude: Such a provision may be contained in the draft treaty, but it is not agreed. It is agreed that if there were to be full currency union, it could not be sustained if excessive budget deficits existed among member states. We have argued consistently, as have other Community members, that the best sanction against excessive deficits is not binding limits and rigid, centrist, prescriptive rules but the market. Provided such a deficit is transparent, a member state would have considerable difficulty in financing it, so the market will provide its own remedy. That argument remains to be resolved. Some member states believe that binding limits and prescriptive centrist rules will be necessary, but we disagree. We will continue to discuss that aspect, but I assure the right hon. Gentleman and the House that the text of the draft treaty has not yet been agreed by the United Kingdom or by any other member state.

Clause 69 and schedule 15, which were added in Committee, extend the period over which companies can carry back trading losses and set them against profits from one year to three years. We believe that that will be particularly welcome to companies which, although fundamentally sound and with healthy profit records, are experiencing losses during the recession. That measure alone will be worth a quarter of a billion pounds to companies in 1992-93.

That brings me to the core of the Bill, which remains the same as it was on Second Reading. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor described his Budget as a Budget for business, and the Bill reflects that priority, easing the burden of taxation across the whole spectrum of industry.

Clause 23 cuts the main rate of corporation tax for 1990 from 35 to 34 per cent., reducing this year's tax bills by £380 million. Clause 15 halves the rating period for reclaiming VAT on bad debts, reducing it to one year. That means bad debt relief, which will give traders a cash flow boost of £340 million this year.

We are also providing help for next year, when the recovery will be under way. Clause 24, one of the shortest and simplest—but most splendid and significant—provisions in the Bill, sets the main rate of corporation tax for 1991 at 33 per cent. That gives the United Kingdom the lowest rate of corporation tax in the European Community, and among G7 countries. It means that, next year, companies will have an extra £83 million at their disposal to invest as they choose.

That was one of the issues on which the Government had an amicable but frank disagreement with Opposition Members. They wanted to give increased allowances to some forms of investment, which would, in our view, have taken investment choices out of the hands of business, where they belong. As we discovered when we examined the Opposition's amendment, it would have meant a higher rate of corporation tax overall—which was not heavily advertised by Opposition Members when the amendment was moved.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that we cannot increase any taxation by means of the Finance Bill; we are prevented from doing so by the money resolution.

Mr. Maude: The House will have heard that explanation, and can decide for itself how much weight to attach to it.

The Bill also helps smaller businesses. Clause 25 raises the profits limit for the small companies rate, and for marginal relief, by 25 per cent. That will benefit 30,000 smaller companies, and means that the limits have been raised by 150 per cent. since 1988. Clause 68 allows unincorporated businesses to set any trading losses against capital gains of the same or the following year.

Those are the highlights of the business measures in the Bill. To them must be added a number of deregulatory measures, announced in the Budget, which do not require legislation—such as the raising of the VAT threshold to its highest-ever level in real terms and the introduction of quarterly payments of PAYE and national insurance contributions for some 600,000 small employers.

Together, those measures fully justify my right hon. Friend's description of his Budget as a Budget for business.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): As I recall, the amount of relief that those measures would give businesses, in particular small businesses—according to the figures given at the time of the Budget—was exceeded by the amount that businesses would have to spend because of the Government's decision to impose a 10·9 per cent. uniform business rate increase in England and Wales. How does the Financial Secretary justify that extra imposition?

Mr. Maude: A great many taxes are—to use the technical phrase—buoyant: they increase their burden year by year to reflect inflation, with no need for positive Government decisions. Those taxes, which are levied on a percentage basis, have the effect to which the hon. Gentleman has referred, without the Government's making any positive decision.

It has always been understood, since the introduction of the uniform business rate, that it could not be increased by more than the rate of inflation. That is a much better deal for business than the deal offered by the old business rating system, under which businesses in some parts of the country were penalised by swingeing increases levied by hopelessly irresponsible councils with a malevolent approach to business. Some of our great cities have been devastated: swathes of land have been laid bare by councils that have levied such high rates that business has simply moved away. Businesses that suffered under such appalling regimes will have regarded last year's increase, which was limited to the rate of inflation, as relatively benign.

I have referred to the measures on business taxation and I should refer briefly to other measures, particularly on the themes of reform and fairness. Clauses 29 to 31 tackle different sorts of benefits in kind and, quite properly, they have generated a good deal of debate and careful examination. However, in all that debate, I do not think that anyone has sought to challenge the basic principle underlying our approach which is that, as far as possible, payments in benefits in kind should bear the same taxation as equivalent payments in cash. That is the only fair approach and I believe that it is widely accepted as the right approach.

Another matter of fairness is the taxation of non-resident trusts. Clauses 78 to 87 and schedules 16 to 18 are designed to counter avoidance of capital gains tax through the use of non-resident trusts. It is one of the technical areas in the Bill where the Government have benefited from helpful comments from some of the representative bodies. As a result of that, we introduced a number of amendments in Committee and on Report.

The Budget process is about deciding what the Government should spend and how they should raise the money to do it. That means that the Government have to cost every one of their proposals. They have to do so publicly and openly and then, openly and honestly, levy taxation to pay for that spending. The results are there for Parliament to scrutinise and for the public to judge. Curiously, the Opposition have been more reticent about their proposals. Nothing has been costed, nothing has been added up, but everything is a priority. So, as a service to the public, we costed the Opposition's proposals for them. We did so very modestly, with no fee charged and no exaggeration. We concluded that Labour's spending programme amounts to no less than an extra £35 billion —equivalent to an extra 15p——

Mr. Nicholas Brown: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What has Government speculation about Labour's public spending programme got to do with the Third Reading of the Finance Bill?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) is quite right. I hope that the Minister will set a good example by sticking to the content of the Bill.

Mr. Maude: I was endeavouring——

Mr. James Arbuthnot (Wanstead and Woodford): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Surely it is relevant to the rate of taxation that is to be applied by the Finance Bill. If the policies that were——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Our practice on Third Reading of any Bill is to confine the debate to the provisions in the Bill.

Mr. Maude: I am endeavouring to do that. I am endeavouring to give to the House an account of the deliberations in Committee when we spent a good deal of time discussing the standard rate of income tax. We had an interesting and illuminating debate on the clauses dealing with income tax which enabled us to draw attention to the fact that Labour's spending proposals would mean, unless they are wrongly costed, that there would be a 15p increase in income tax.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the Minister realises that if I allow him to discuss these matters, I have to allow other hon. Members to rebut his arguments. We would then start a debate not about Third Reading but about entirely different matters. I hope that the Minister will recognise what I have said and will observe it.

Mr. Maude: I submit myself fully to your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and accept entirely what you have said. The House might welcome the opportunity to allow Opposition Members to try to rebut what I have said, but I think that there will be sighs of relief from Opposition Members that they have been prevented from commenting on the costings.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham) *rose*——

Mr. Maude: I see that the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) is straining at the leash to leap to his feet and tell us in what particulars our costings of the Labour party's proposals are wrong.

Dr. Marek: I want to help the Financial Secretary. Clearly, it has escaped him that the clause to increase value added tax from 15 to 17·5 per cent. is contained in the Bill, so I invite him to discuss that. It would certainly not be out of order for us to know why the Government increased VAT.

Mr. Maude: I shall be glad to discuss that if the hon. Gentleman is keen to do so. We have already debated it and a further debate will not illuminate any dark secrets which have not been properly discussed.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Maude: I shall give way in a moment.

We increased VAT to raise £3·9 billion—if my recollection is correct—and to ensure that the books balanced when we reduced the headline figure of the community charge by £140 for every charge payer. It was an open policy which we have fully justified. We have had amusing debates about it and it is now on the statute book. It was especially interesting that when we announced that step in the Budget, the immediate response of the Leader of the Opposition was to huff and puff, to say that it was outrageous and monstrous and some such farrago of nonsense about how awful it was to tax children's sweets. A Labour Government introduced VAT 15 years ago—a fact which appeared to have escaped him at the time. However, when we had discussed the increase in VAT we waited with bated breath for the Opposition to vote against us and to try to vote down the outrageous measure to increase VAT from 15 to 17·5 per cent. on, among other things, children's sweets. But what did they do? They did nothing—one might almost say that they dithered. I am happy to renew the debate at this stage for the hon. Member for Wrexham, but I fancy that we shall have the better of the argument now as then.

Mr. Sayeed: May I ask my hon. Friend to deal with two matters? First, the Labour party did not vote against the change in the rate of VAT and, secondly, whatever promises Labour Governments have made prior to elections, every one of them has increased the basic rate of income tax.

Mr. Maude: On the first point, I confirm that my hon. Friend is right. The Labour party failed to oppose the measure to increase the standard rate of VAT. However, I must correct him on the second point, because there are two exceptions to his proposition. The Attlee Government of 1945-51 reduced income tax by 5 per cent. before increasing it again by 2½ per cent. thus making it 47½ per cent. The other exception involves the Ramsay MacDonald Government in 1924 who were in office for nine months and did not get round to increasing the rate. I am sure that they would have done so if they had had the chance, but, happily for the nation, they were routed out of office before they had the opportunity. However, my hon. Friend is right—in every other case Labour Governments have increased the standard rate of income tax.

Research discloses that in their manifestos to the British public Labour Governments oddly enough made no mention of such proposals. They were silent about them and, indeed, the impression given by the then leaders of the Labour party was that there would be no general increases in the rate of income tax. Indeed, the statements made by former leaders of the Labour party bear an uncanny resemblance to those made by the present leader: "There will be no increase in the basic rate of income tax, honest, guv. Nothing like that—we've never done that before. Not the sort of thing we do." However, they have done it every time.

We argue that under Labour's spending plans as they have been costed by us—and they have not been disputed by the Labour party—it is absolutely inevitable—*[Interruption.]* I issue a challenge to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith). Let him dispute our costings of his party's plans. Under Labour's spending plans, it is inevitable that any future Labour Government would increase the standard rate of income tax as previous Labour Governments have done.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I give the Financial Secretary a categorical assurance, as we have done consistently in the past few years, that the incoming Labour Government have no intention of raising the basic rate of income tax. While we are on the subject of the burden of taxation, will the Financial Secretary state what percentage of gross domestic product the tax burden represented in 1979 and what it will represent after the Bill is passed?

Mr. Maude: I shall answer that straightforwardly. The burden of taxation increased in the two years after this Government took office in 1979, because we had to pay off the massive burden of debt which the previous Labour Government had stored up for future taxpayers. When we talk about the burden of taxation it is important to bear it in mind that we are not talking only about the burden on today's taxpayers. When Governments run up debts, that places a burden on future taxpayers, so it is a question of when taxpayers have to pick up the bill. Under Labour Governments it is the future generations which have to pick up an ever bigger tax burden in order to pay off the debts of those profligate and incontinent Labour Governments.

Certainly, we increased the tax burden in our first two years in office in order to control the massive public debt placed on the country by the previous Labour Government. Since then, we have consistently and successfully reduced the tax burden.

Mr. Smith: The Financial Secretary is incorrect—the figures appear to have escaped him. When the Government came into office the tax burden as a share of GDP was 34·5 per cent. It is now 37·5 per cent. Of course, it went up dramatically in the first few years under the present Government—it stayed high and went up again in 1989-90 as a direct result of the introduction of the poll tax. If he examines the figures, the Financial Secretary will see that it rose towards the end of the 1980s as well as at the start.

Mr. Maude: By chance, I have the figures before me for greater accuracy and for the enlightenment of the House. It might be helpful if I read them.

In 1978-79 the tax burden as a percentage of GDP was 34¼ per cent. It then increased, and I freely confess that. We have made no bones about that and I can justify it in any circumstances. It went up in 1981-82 to 40 per cent. and that was to pay off the debt left by the previous Labour Government, a crippling burden of debt for which the hon. Gentleman should apologise rather than seek to pick an argument. From that high point in 1981-82 of 40 per cent., the burden of taxation has fallen. It has not fallen every year, and the hon. Gentleman was right to point out that in 1986-87 and 1987-88 it went up from 38¼ per cent. to 38½ per cent. Again, between 1989-90 and 1990-91—as forecast—it went up from 37½ per cent. to 37¾ per cent. That increase may be what the hon. Gentleman is calling in aid for his proposition, but it is timid support.

The clear trend is from a high point of 40 per cent. levied to pay off the burden of debt left by the Labour Government to 37¾ per cent. last year. We intend to continue that trend.

Mr. Wallace: For clarification, do those figures include local taxation or only national taxation? If they include local taxation, what impact does the poll tax have on them?

Mr. Maude: They include total taxation, including local authority revenue, if that helps the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Sayeed: Does my hon. Friend agree that the real effects of a Labour Government are as follows: the dead go unburied, the rubbish goes uncollected, the sick go unattended, and the International Monetary Fund ends up running our economy?

Mr. Maude: Certainly. My hon. Friend is exactly right. If one wants to see what a Labour Government leads to, one should take a train trip to Liverpool. One then sees in microcosm on the streets of Liverpool memories of 1978-79, the winter of discontent. There was rule by the unions. The Labour party was absolutely in hock to the unions and did what it was told. There was obedience at every point. The British people will want to avoid that——

Mr. Deputy Speaker rose——

Mr. Maude: You anticipate my next move, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which is to return to the Bill. It has put into effect my right hon. Friend's Budget, which was a Budget for business and a Budget which has been welcomed by business, which is valuable to business and which will set British business on the road to recovery, growth and prosperity in the 1990s in the same way that our Budgets in the early 1980s did for the rest of the 1980s. Having built a platform and a firm foundation of low inflation, we saw economic growth at levels that exceeded those of almost everywhere else in Europe. For the first time since the war, our rate of growth was faster than that of France and of Germany. That is what we shall see if we continue on this path in the 1990s.

The Finance Bill and the Budget are essential parts of our proposals and foundations. When the British people have the chance to choose between these economic and taxation policies and the profligacy and incompetence of the Labour party, they will unhesitatingly choose us.

4.51 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): The Financial Secretary has a pretty crummy line in political knock-about, although it is of a slightly higher calibre than that of his immediate predecessor. His immediate predecessor was pretty savagely treated after last year's Finance Bill by being demoted to the post of Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. I forecast no such future for the present Financial Secretary or for the other junior members of the Treasury team.

It is fair to say that during the passage of the Bill, when we discussed the details of the measures rather than some of the broader and more contentious political matters which lay behind them, Treasury Ministers responded to the issues of detail with unfailing courtesy and with as high a degree of accuracy as one could expect from Ministers. We appreciate that.

The Bill has the authentic hallmark of the Government who produced it. This is probably the last Finance Bill Third Reading in which I shall speak from the Opposition Benches, so it may be right to treat the House to a metaphor. It is as if the Finance Bill were a little furry animal trapped and staring fixedly into the headlights of an oncoming lorry made up of Britain's economic problems. Blinking into the headlights, the Bill completely fails to respond to the problems. The context is this.

Lords Commissioner to the Treasury (Mr. Nicholas Baker): It is an oxymoron.

Mr. Brown: I do not know about the oxy. The hon. Gentleman, being a Government Whip, probably has more experience of dealing with the rest than I have.

The economic context is that output is falling, the economy is contracting, investment is forecast by the Chancellor of the Exchequer to fall by 10 per cent. in 1991, and unemployment is rising, as it has done for the past 14 consecutive months. The Chancellor tells us that it is a price worth paying. He may believe that it is a price worth paying if someone else pays it. *[Laughter.]* Conservative Members may laugh cheerfully at that, which is generous of them. Unemployment is the price that they will have to pay for the way in which the Government have managed the economy.

We still have a trade deficit in spite of the recession. The previous Labour Government, to whom the Financial Secretary so derisively referred, managed to maintain, in spite of all the difficulties with oil pricing, a manufacturing surplus every year. Yet the Government have managed to turn that into a deficit and they look set to continue the deficit.

We still have high interest rates which have led to record business failures and to 44,000 homes being repossessed last year. The recession is suppressing inflation, but the underlying pressures are still there and are stoked up by public utilities' privatisation and the consequent price rises. The tax burden still falls unfairly on those of ordinary means rather than on those most able to bear their fair share.

As the juggernaut of economic problems steamrollers along the road, the little furry Finance Bill sits staring back at it.

Surely the most striking point is the dislocation between the measures in the Bill and the problems facing the British economy.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): What help is given to those on ordinary incomes who have had a very modest decrease in direct taxation but who face the burden of ever-increasing price rises, certainly for essential services such as gas, water, electricity, fares and dental charges? Only last week someone who lives in my borough complained to me that, because he is on a modest income and cannot be exempted, he had to pay £140 for dental treatment. What help is being given to such people when they face tremendous increases which they cannot get out of?

Mr. Brown: There is nothing in the Finance Bill for people in the position that my hon. Friend has outlined. If anything, the Bill makes matters marginaly worse for them because there is a 2·5 per cent. increase in VAT. In indirect taxation, the burden falls on every citizen, regardless of his income, who has to purchase taxed products. Not only has

[Mr. Brown]

the distribution of the tax system moved to place the burden on those least able to bear it, but the substantial increases in utility charges prior to privatisation have had a regressive effect. There is nothing in the Bill to help my hon. Friend's constituents.

We are confronted by the highest number of business failures on record—66 per cent. up on the equivalent half year last year. Every hon. Member has constituents who are affected by that, and the matter was discussed in the House yesterday. The Financial Secretary boasted about clauses 23 to 25, which introduce a concession on corporation tax. It is a modest counter-cyclical measure, but it is not much use to businesses which are in trouble because of the Government's high interest rate policy and which will have little charge to corporation tax to worry about. Indeed, the owners of those businesses might wish that they had.

As many Opposition Members have mentioned, there is rising unemployment. The Bill has nothing to say about that apart from clause 58, which says, "Let them build toll roads." If that is a public works programme to help to bring down unemployment, I can only say that it will not work.

Mr. Maude *rose*——

Mr. Brown: On toll roads? I give way to the hon. Gentleman on that.

Mr. Maude: The hon. Gentleman seemed to be talking about unemployment. He could help the House a little bit by telling us about the latest version of the Labour party's view on the effect of the minimum wage proposition on unemployment. Does he accept the universal view of learned economic commentators that it must inevitably cause higher unemployment to a greater or lesser extent?

Mr. Brown: Clearly that point has nothing to do with Third Reading. It is tacky of the Government to suggest that to ensure a basic, decent standard of living—a rate of £3·40 an hour—is unjust and unreasonable. Our European partners can do it and the United States can do it, yet somehow we cannot. Instead of saying that he does not want his friends in the private sector to have to pay more money in wages, the Financial Secretary has the nerve to say to the House, "Oh, we are concerned about unemployment." The Conservative party is concerned about unemployment? Since when?

Mr. Maude: I note that the hon. Gentleman does not dissent from my proposition that a minimum wage would inevitably lose jobs and cause higher unemployment. That is the verdict of every learned commentator. Is it now the view of the Labour party?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I cannot find anything about the national minimum wage in the Bill. We ought not to discuss that. Let us not have another debate about it. Let us get back to the Finance Bill.

Mr. Brown: I dissent strongly from the Financial Secretary's suggestion; the evidence from our European partners and from the United States of America is enough for me. But I shall not be drawn down that road—*[Interruption.]*—because you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have asked me not to be. I shall respect the Chair, although Ministers find it difficult to do the same when it is not convenient for them.

Yesterday the Labour party forced a debate on banking supervision in the wake of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International scandal. The Bill has something to say on investor protection. Clause 46 makes a modest proposition, setting out what most people thought that the law already was on the tax treatment of moneys paid into an insurance company for an investor protection scheme. That is welcome, in its way, but the dislocation of scale between that measure and the Government's inactivity on BCCI reveals their almost pathological unwillingness to tackle any of the major problems facing our country.

It looks as though the recession will not be shallow or short lived—although I suspect that one or two other things round this place may be shallow and short lived. In Paris the Chancellor of the Exchequer said:

"Consumer spending led us into this recession"—

I take that to be the Chancellor's final verdict on the 1988 Budget, which, as the then Financial Secretary, he did so much to implement—

"and I expect it to lead us out."

As an encouragement to consumer spending, he then slapped an extra 2·5 per cent. on VAT.

The Prime Minister, too, has focused on encouraging consumer spending. I understand that under his citizens charter there will be real and serious trouble for banks whose cash dispensers run out of banknotes over the weekend. Oh yes, that will get consumer spending going.

Ironically, with the possible exception of the offshore trust reforms, the only measure of strategic significance in the Bill is the VAT increase. That was designed to get us out of the worst taxation fiasco in modern times.

The Financial Secretary spoke of the number of taxes that the Government had abolished, but we hear much less from Ministers about the tax that they invented and created—the poll tax. If it had not been for the poll tax and the subsequent political problems of the Conservative party, there would have been no need for the 2·5 per cent. increase in the rate of VAT.

Mr. Arbuthnot: I should be grateful if the hon. Gentleman would clear up a point of genuine confusion for me. He mentioned the offshore trust regime introduced in the Bill. He may remember speaking on clause 77, concerning the offshore trust regime, when he said:

"I repeat that we have no plans to increase capital gains tax."

When I asked whether he intended to break the link between capital gains tax and income tax, he said:

"I think that the implications of what I have said are clear. The hon. Gentleman has correctly followed the point to its logical conclusion." [*Official Report*, 7 May 1991; Vol. 190, c. 683-84.]

On the other hand, the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), in an interview published about two weeks ago in the *Financial Times*, said:

"In principle we would like to align the rate of capital gains tax with income tax, but the whole issue of capital gains tax is complex and still under review."

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): I did not say that.

Mr. Arbuthnot: What is the hon. Gentleman's policy on capital gains tax and income tax? Does the Labour party have a policy?

Mr. Brown: Yes, we have. I believe that the hon. Gentleman quoted what the reporter said during the interview rather than what my hon. Friend said. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that capital gains tax and income tax are not structured in the same way. Our specific proposals have been discussed in several debates, so I shall not go into the detail again. I can remember at least four Friday debates featuring the direct tax structures proposed by the Labour party, and I believe that the details are well understood, at least by every hon. Member attending this debate.

We have made it clear that the changes that we intend to make will be effected at a very early stage of the lifetime of the Labour Government. That is incompatible with trying to make parallel changes in the capital gains tax structure. I should firmly oppose that.

We have no specific proposals to increase capital gains tax. The hon. Gentleman has said before that an anomaly could be created, and of course he is correct. It would not be possible to bring the rates close together because of our proposed income tax banding structure. We could say that we would eradicate the anomaly over time or that we would live with it. I am giving the hon. Gentleman as honest an answer as I can: we shall live with the anomaly, knowing that in principle there may be an intellectual case against it. We shall have to live with it because of the different structures of the two taxes. My answer does not seem to delight the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Will the hon. Gentleman confirm what I heard the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) say from a sedentary position—that she did not say the words that appeared in the *Financial Times*? If she says that she was misquoted, of course I accept that. It would be good to have that at least on the record.

Mrs. Beckett: I am delighted to do so.

Mr. Brown: The exchange has taken place and everybody seems happy. The hon. Gentleman has served on as many Finance Committees as I have, and I acknowledge and greatly respect his specialist interest in such matters.

I know that the taxation policies of the Labour party are fascinating to Conservative Members, because a number of them are paralleled in the Bill. I remember the Prime Minister, when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, roundly denouncing us for planning to freeze the married couple's allowance. Yet the Financial Secretary is presiding over a Bill that does precisely that. The then Chancellor—now the Prime Minister—also denounced us for planning to abolish the higher rate of mortgage interest relief. Yet the Government have gone on to do exactly that.

It is a bit cheeky for the Conservative party to denounce us for our proposals and then, when they carry out those proposals, to say that they are justified and reasonable. I was much taken with the explanation that the Financial Secretary gave in Committee. He said that the difference was all about motivation. If the Labour party were doing those things, we would apparently be badly motivated, whereas when the Conservative party did the same things they were well motivated, so that made it all right. Perhaps it does; perhaps it does not. I must say to the Financial Secretary, in all kindness, that that was one of his more feeble arguments.

While we are talking about tax, we should probably draw a veil over the Government's pledge to reduce rates of direct taxation. Clause 21 takes up that point: it says that the rate of direct taxation will stay the same.

The Financial Secretary was good enough to refer to the Opposition's approach to the Bill. The approaches of the two major parties when in opposition have been somewhat different. The Labour party has taken the view that we should have our political arguments on the Floor of the House and that, within the bounds of the normal to and fro of political exchange, we should apply a more detailed and workmanlike scrutiny to the Bill in Committee. In Committee especially, we take our responsibilities as the official Opposition seriously, for the reason that there is no other forum in which these matters can be scrutinised in detail. I must say that I am not entirely sure that we are right to structure our debates as we do. I am not sure that it is right that there should be no other forum for scrutinising these matters, but that is the way in which we conduct our affairs at the moment, and so be it.

It is appropriate to thank the staff who worked for our Front-Bench team and those at the Labour party headquarters for all the help that they have given us in dealing with matters of detail and, in particular, to express the thanks of the Front-Bench team to Mr. Steve Tovey for his invaluable help. Our achievements are a credit to him, and any shortcomings are the fault of others.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: What achievements?

Mr. Brown: The Whip asks, "What achievements?" That is good of him, as I am about to list them. There are a number of matters of detail on which we feel that the Government——

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): Oh, really!

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman seems to object to the fact that I am discussing the contents of the Bill on Third Reading. I remind him that we are not supposed to be discussing anything else. If he is irritated by it, his best bet is to go and get a drink outside the Chamber.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: Having listened to the hon. Gentleman for quite long enough, I shall probably take his advice. Quite honestly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Third Reading of a Finance Bill is hardly the time for the hon. Gentleman to be reading out a list of names and telling us of his approbation for all those who work in Transport house, or whatever the Labour party's headquarters is now called. That has nothing to do with the Finance Bill.

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman could not be more wrong; it has a substantial amount to do with the Finance Bill. The Government, for their part, have all the resources of the civil service behind them in bringing their policies —their version of those matters—to fruition. The Opposition have no such resources. I note that my counterpart on the foreign affairs team can obtain a briefing from the Foreign Office on a specific matter. If I try to obtain a briefing from the Inland Revenue, I am told that I cannot have direct access to the Government's professional advisers at the Revenue—not even on a matter that is not politically contentious—and that any advice that I require must come from the Financial Secretary. We do not regard the Financial Secretary—nice chap though he is, in many ways—as a neutral source.

Mr. Nicholas Baker *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Brown: The Whip seems to be criticising my remarks. I thought at first that he was going to suggest that the Financial Secretary was not a neutral source, but he seems to be taking issue with some other point that I made, and no doubt, on that, he is more knowledgeable than me.

There has been a range of successes, and it is right that the Labour party should take some pride in them. Remember that we have no realistic chance of voting the Government down in the Finance Bill Committee because that Committee's composition reflects the composition of the House.

Mr. Chris Smith: We nearly did.

Mr. Brown: My hon. Friend reminds me that, on one occasion, we almost did. Usually, however, our only method of securing concessions from the Government is by reasoned argument. I suppose that it is some small tribute to those in charge of the Government's affairs that that succeeds on occasion—in fact, on quite a few occasions. The proposal in respect of bad debt relief for VAT and the reduction of the period from two years to one is exactly what we pressed for.

On offshore tax, my own stirring contributions to our debates on tax avoidance last year clearly shamed a rather recalcitrant Government into eventual action. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury will take particular pleasure in the concessions made to members of the acting profession, both on agency fees and in respect of the concessions that followed this year. On the question of personal allowances, the concession of the Minister of State, Treasury, gained in response to what is now our new clause 30, is welcome, and we thank her for it.

On employee share schemes, last year we tabled a new clause containing what we felt was the innovative idea that a new selective executive share option scheme should not be allowed unless there was an all-employee scheme in place. The Chancellor of the Exchequer appears particularly to have liked that idea and this year the Government have introduced precisely such a proposal. On beneficial loans, my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury, among many others, last year raised the anomaly of a tax charge arising where employees had mortgages at market rates from their employer. The tax treatment of that issue, which created the anomaly, has been addressed in the Bill.

On donations to charity, last year we said that a £5 million upper limit on gift aid payments was fatuous and that we should either have a realistic upper limit or none at all. This year, the limit has been abolished. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) was grateful for the concession that he received yesterday in respect of developers' self-supply. We even managed to get some drafting amendments, to schedule 12(3), accepted. Usually, our amendments are rejected on the ground that they would make the Bill worse.

Compare all that constructive and detailed—albeit perhaps not particularly exciting—stuff with the behaviour of the Conservative party when in the same position. I have been re-reading, as someone in my position should, a book by Lord Barnett called "Inside the Treasury" in which he discusses the way in which such matters were dealt with when the Labour party was in government. Discussing the hours spent in the Finance Bill Committee, Lord Barnett has this to say, on pages 55 and 56:

"During those long hours in committee, often from 4 pm to 8 am the following morning"—

I should point out that the Conservative party could not have kept its Members there until 8 am the following day—

"I managed to keep my temper in the face of intense provocation from Opposition backbenchers like Graham Page, Nigel Lawson, Peter Rees, Ian Gow and Nicholas Ridley. They would go on and on, coming up with what they assumed to be hilariously funny examples of anomalies, such as the Capital Transfer Tax consequences of me being knocked down by a bus. Judging by the laughter of other Conservative Members, they clearly found this kind of stuff very funny. I could only feel grateful that I had missed out on public school debating societies."

That allows us to contrast nicely the two different ways of dealing with these matters—the responsible, sensible, workmanlike approach of the Labour party, and the approach adopted by the Conservative party.

Mr. Wallace: The hon. Gentleman makes a clear contrast, but does he not think that the real contrast to be drawn is between a Parliament in which the Government have a majority of 100 and a Parliament of the kind to which he is no doubt referring, in which the Government have a small majority or no majority at all? And how does he see next year's Finance Bill shaping up?

Mr. Brown: I certainly hope to see next year's Finance Bill from the other side of the Chamber. As for the difference in the size of the parliamentary majority, the hon. Gentleman is quite right to point out that the Opposition are labouring under a disadvantage because there are substantially more Conservatives in this place than there are of us. Nevertheless, I think that we have handled the cards in our hand very well, and our achievements are made all the more remarkable by the fact. I must also thank the Back Benchers who served with us on the Standing Committee.

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): I hope that my hon. Friend is not making a virtue out of what he has just outlined. As someone who was a Government Whip when we had a majority of only one, may I say that if this Government could not keep their troops in Committee until 8 am, some of us would like to know why we did not try to keep the Committee sitting through the early hours.

Mr. Brown: My hon. Friend's willingness to serve on next year's Finance Bill has been noted. The point that I was making is that we could have done that. We had a straight choice of tactics between filibustering in an ignorant and long-winded way—something that none of us would ever do—or, alternatively, having an informal day-to-day timetabling agreement with the Government to make measured and steady progress for which in return we would be able to subject each and every clause to detailed examination.

Mr. Favell: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brown: I will give way if the hon. Gentleman wants to make a sensible comment.

Mr. Favell: I will make a very sensible intervention. I am sorry that I was not a member of this year's Finance Bill Committee and was unable to listen to the hon.

Gentleman. However, is not the truth of the matter that the Opposition could not really oppose the Bill because it contains nothing but eminent good sense?

Mr. Brown: Actually, the Bill contains a substantial number of our proposals. We opposed the Bill in a reasoned and workmanlike way. Our only debate is between the relative merits of filibustering so causing a guillotine to be introduced which results in no debate on the rest of the Bill and taking the responsibility to probe everything carefully, including the schedules. We chose the second approach. That was the right thing to do and it has paid off. The hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) has not dissented from that. If he is still a Member next year, we will see whether he can serve on the Finance Bill Committee in opposition so that he can address the practicalities of the two different approaches. I am willing and able with my hon. Friends to have a go at handling whichever approach he decides to adopt.

I have served on the Committee of four Finance Bills under two distinguished and very able shadow Chief Secretaries to the Treasury. I have learnt a lot from them and it has been a privilege to serve under them. It has also been my privilege to serve with three good comrades—if it is not unfashionable to say that nowadays in the Labour party. I want to thank my hon. Friends the Members for Islington, South and Finsbury, for Wrexham and for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) for their comradeship, support and their contributions to the Bill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) has done so much to help my colleagues with their decision making. She has made an invaluable contribution to the Bill. Contrary to legend, she is quite a tender-hearted character. I know that she was worried about that little furry creature to which I referred in my metaphor at the beginning of our deliberations on the Bill. I referred to that little furry creature and the Government's response to the problems of the British economy and said that the little creature was about to be run over by a great juggernaut. I have some cheering news for my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme: there is a bandwagon behind that juggernaut, and that bandwagon is ours.

5.23 pm

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): I hesitate to intrude on the panegyric for fellow members of the Finance Bill Committee provided by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown). I am sorry that I was unable to serve on that Committee. It seems to have been a handsome combination. The dissenters did a good methodical job, and the Church of England—in the shape of my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, who won most of the points most of the time—did a reasonably pragmatic job.

Serving on a Committee is extremely exciting. I first sat on a Committee in 1974, when I was on the Opposition Benches in the Committee considering the Prices Bill, which was master-minded by the then hon. Member for Hitchin who subsequently became Mrs. Shirley Williams. She tabled an amendment to clause 1 of that Bill, which dealt with foods liable to subsidy. She wanted to increase the rate of subsidy and thus raise public expenditure, something to which Labour Governments are very prone. Her amendment to clause 1 related to line 1 and read "after 'butter,' insert 'cheese'."

In opposition at the time, we were led by my now right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon). At the first sitting of the Prices Bill Committee, my then hon. Friend wanted to know whether the cheese to be subsidised would be Gorganzola from Italy, Camembert from France or Gouda from Holland. It took a little while to refine what Shirley Williams wanted to do. In fact, it was two and a half days before she provided a solution and added after "butter" insert cheese of the hard pressed Cheddar type. That is how we used to proceed in Committee and I do not think that things have changed a great deal.

I wish to refer now to the Third Reading of this Finance Bill and in particular to consider the provisions in relation to foreign earnings. They can be considered in two ways: first, in relation to individual earnings and, secondly, in respect of national earnings and benefits. With regard to national earnings, it is clear that the shipping industry plays a substantial role in the nation's earnings.

My hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury is aware that that point has been a matter of considerable interest on the fringes of the Finance Bill. He would agree that, despite the enormous decline in the tonnage of British shipping, which now is one tenth of the tonnage which existed in 1980, the industry's earnings are still substantial and amount to around £4 billion—and that is apart from the insurance-related services which benefit the City of London and the balance of payments and amount to at least another £1 billion.

In the foreign earnings section, the Government sought to address certain aspects of the shipping issue. Clause 44 eases the tax burdens on those at sea with the merchant fleet or in other capacities. I thank my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary and the Government for making that significant concession. He will know that there is some anxiety in the industry that the provision may distort the pattern of employment between long-haul and short-haul vessels. However, the fact remains that the Government took a precise interest in the shipping industry by making that concession in clause 44.

Many of us are concerned that an industry which is sufficiently important to be considered by the Government in that way, and to be granted a concession where the Government thought that was justified, is still a hugely important national industry with a substantial reservoir of public support. The decline of that industry with a consequential loss of trade and prestige is causing considerable alarm on two grounds: first, because a huge national asset has been wasted through lack of nurture and, secondly, because with regard to the defence requirements, that element of shipping which is so vital when there are difficulties will not be there if—I hope that it will always be if rather than when—it is ever needed.

For that reason, my colleagues and I wanted to amend the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) moved an amendment in Committee, but it was negatived. That was bad luck and the issue was dropped—and correctly so—from our agenda today. However, the issue remains and it has already been given the importance which I suspect the Government are beginning to attach to it as a result of two developments.

The first development was that a working party was set up by the Treasury when my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was Chancellor of the Exchequer, comprising five Departments of State. It examined the problem of where

[Sir Giles Shaw]

taxation or relief can be applied and all other problems associated with the maintenance of the British shipping capacity. Those five Departments included the Department of Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Defence, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department of Transport, as well as the Treasury, which was clearly given the lead.

It was interesting that in yesterday's debate on new clause 9, which was moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw), my right hon. and learned Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury referred twice to this issue. He dealt with it first in column 98 of *Hansard*, but more importantly in column 99 when he referred twice to ministerial consideration of the matter. Referring to flagging out, he said:

"the report of a technical working party is being carefully studied. An important defence issue is being addressed by Ministers and in due course more can be said about it."

In response to an intervention from the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East, my right hon. and learned Friend then said:

"The matter is being considered and a statement will be made when a proper conclusion is reached. I cannot say whether that will be before the House rises but I wanted hon. Members to know that the defence issue, which is unrelated to these fiscal matters, has the serious attention of Ministers."—[*Official Report*, 15 July 1991; Vol. 195, c. 99.]

The most important element of information that I culled from that rather slender saga was that the British shipping industry will be a sharp focus for Government attention.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: I absolutely and entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman. The Chief Secretary's remarks about ships being taken up from trade were not only interesting, but also important. We should like a statement from the Government on that matter, if not before we rise, soon after we return from the summer recess. Like the hon. Gentleman, I lay enormous stress on the importance of merchant shipping and merchant ship building and on the need to retain crews.

Sir Giles Shaw: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's intervention and his committed interest in shipping, which is a cross-party issue.

Following my right hon. and learned Friend the Chief Secretary's comments yesterday evening, I should like to ask my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary some questions. Will he now state unequivocally that the Government recognise that there is a problem in relation to the rapid decline in tonnage and in its availability for defence purposes? Does he recognise equally that, although tonnage is an issue, our seafarers, their training, trained capacity and availability are also an issue? He will recall the difficulty during the Falklands conflict when many of the foreign-trained crews sought to be relieved of their posts and to be replaced by British seafarers and seamen who were trained and available. Happily, that was resolved, but my hon. Friend must agree that it is not simply a question of tonnage and of the acceptability of certain types of ship for certain defence needs—it is equally a matter of having trained and available seafarers who can man those ships if they are ever taken out of trade and deployed by the Ministry of Defence.

Is there now a genuine commitment to consider that issue? If so, that would be a major step forward. The solution itself does not matter so much—there are many possible ways of dealing with this—but the fact that the issue is being seriously addressed is in itself a significant development.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): The hon. Gentleman may be interested to know that the Select Committee on Defence has also considered that point in relation to merchant shipping and that we have expressed our concern. In another place, Lord Fieldhouse, the Admiral of the Fleet, said in his maiden speech:

"The number of British-manned ships, sailing under the British flag and available for defence purposes, is now at a crucial level and may already be too few. We ignore this situation at our peril."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 12 June 1991; Vol. 529, c. 1105.]

Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the Government should treat such comments with the seriousness that they deserve?

Sir Giles Shaw: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for drawing my attention to that. In 1988, the Select Committee on Defence stated:

"The availability of merchant shipping for defence purposes is governed by three key factors—the number of UK flagged ships, their accessibility when they are needed and the availability of a pool of British seafarers to man them."

It concluded:

"There are grounds for concern on all three counts".

That was the first point that I wanted to raise with my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary.

Secondly, if my right hon. and learned Friend the Chief Secretary was referring yesterday to the interdepartmental committee that has been set up to study shipping, and if that committee is to issue a report, it is important that such a report should be produced quickly. Will my hon. Friend confirm that that is the group that is reporting? If he can confirm that—I suspect that he can—will he consider consulting the interests that are involved prior to determining the Government's final view or policy on this matter? As he knows, the General Council of British Shipping. has had several close contacts with his good self and his colleagues on this matter, but where Ministry of Defence interests are also involved, it is important that there should be discussion with the industries involved prior to the Government firming up the proposal that they will lay before the House.

Thirdly, if my hon. Friend can confirm that those are the portents, I understand that the method by which the Government decide to act must be a matter for themselves. My hon. Friend was right to draw attention to the allowances issue. The corporation tax relief is spread right across the board and we must all welcome the moves in the general direction of reducing taxation on industries, whatever they may be.

I seek no special tax element for the industry, but I do seek a refined and clear answer to the problem that has bedevilled both the industry and those who seek to work within it. Somehow or other, the haemorrhaging must stop. It is vital that there is a transfusion—possibly only a small one—to help to maintain the health and capacity of the industry to deliver its best both in time of peace and, sadly, in time of war.

5.37 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): For years, there has been consensus in the House that something must be done to arrest the decline of the British merchant fleet. The hon. Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) has made his points in

a debate which has shown that that consensus still lives. It is time for the Government to introduce measures to address a problem about which many of us feel strongly. Something must be done.

The Opposition can agree with some of the measures in the Finance Bill. We can agree, for example, with the removal of higher rate mortgage interest relief. We can also agree with the Government's attempts to bring coherence into the tax position of non-resident trusts. That is a difficult area. We can also agree with the taxation of benefits in kind, which is another difficult area, as some of my hon. Friends and I can remember from when we were in government.

My prime concern relates to clauses 23 to 25, which deal with corporation tax. Incidentally, however, before you took the Chair, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Mr. Speaker allowed the Financial Secretary to answer a few questions about economic and monetary union. Although I do not wish to pursue that now, I was grateful to the Financial Secretary for answering reasonably frankly. The Government are, however, deluding themselves if they think that they could keep control of fiscal and budgetary policy if we had a common currency and a European central bank with its bankers controlling monetary policy.

The very idea that national Governments and national Parliaments could have control over budgetary policy is wishful thinking. I hope that the Financial Secretary is right in believing that the Government would retain control, but I just cannot see it. The draft treaty on economic and monetary union has an intellectual coherence about it. Powers over monetary matters go to a European central bank. Powers over fiscal matters go, not entirely but to a considerable extent, to the Commission. However, those are matters which we can debate on other occasions.

I return to clauses 23 and 25. As I am a Back-Bench Member, I am not afraid to say that I would prefer a higher rate of corporation tax, with a greater range of allowances for plant and machinery and for manufacturing industry. That is the basis of my objection to clauses 23 and 25. In Committee on the Floor of the House we had a debate on an amendment on this matter. I was sorry to see that, after 12 years of Conservative Government, almost every Conservative Member who spoke still had little sympathy for manufacturing industry. Indeed, there was some hostility to the idea of giving manufacturing industry some assistance. The only exception was the hon. Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer). He had to code his message somewhat because of the general dislike for manufacturing industry, but at least he showed his concern.

Mr. Gill: This is not a party political point. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that often the greatest help that the House can give to industry is to resist the temptation to legislate as much as we do ? Does he agree that a reduced flow of legislation would help British industry in many respects by enabling it to maintain a lower overhead, rather than increasing its overhead?

Mr. Davies: I agree with that. I have looked at the statutes passed by the House since 1980, virtually since the Government came to power. They get longer and more numerous as time progresses. This Finance Bill is much longer than some of the Finance Bills that the Labour Government introduced. I suppose that one of the penalties that we have had to pay in the past 12 years for a radical right-wing Government is considerably more legislation even than previous Labour and Conservative Governments introduced. I agree with the hon. Gentleman on that point, but my point is that I should prefer to see a higher rate of corporation tax and more allowances, yes for the shipping industry, but for manufacturing industry in general.

We had a debate yesterday on a new clause moved by the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) about allowances in general. Although the wording could not be aimed specifically at shipping, the new clause was aimed at the shipping industry. Again, little sympathy was shown. I do not think that there are many factories in the shopping malls and leafy groves of Putney, so the Chief Secretary showed little sympathy. He trotted out Inland Revenue fears that some North Korean shipowner would clean up on all the allowances and disappear to Lichtenstein or some other such place. That was an easy excuse to trot out from the Treasury Bench.

The rot set in and the problems started when the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) decided to reduce corporation tax from 52 to 35 per cent. and to do away with almost all the allowances—although not the writing down allowances—in respect of investment, mainly in manufacturing industry. Such allowances were an attempt to provide assistance to industries which have to buy large capital assets. The reduction in the rate of corporation tax did nothing to help those companies, but it was a great bonanza to companies that do not need large capital assets. Banks do not need large capital assets, apart from their premises. The retail industry and the service and financial industries do not need to purchase large capital assets, so they do not need that assistance. The decision of the right hon. Member for Blaby was a bonanza to them.

I should have preferred the benefits to be given to manufacturing industry. Perhaps as a by-product of that change, the right hon. Member for Blaby also increased the charge on capital gains. We have had a discussion in the Chamber about that matter already, and it was also discussed on Second Reading and in Committee, when the hon. Member for East Lindsey (Sir P. Tapsell) raised the point. I was surprised when the Government increased the tax on capital gains to 40 per cent. I never thought that I would see a Conservative Government increase capital gains tax to possibly the highest ever rate. I know that there are exemptions and that to some extent there is indexation. The tax on capital gains, as opposed to income gains dressed up as capital, is the highest that has ever been introduced in Britain. We now have a charge of 40 per cent. on capital gains and a top rate of tax on income gains, if I may describe it in that way, of 40 per cent.

In an earlier intervention, the hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) implied that the Labour party was wrong to propose to keep the rate of tax on capital gains lower than the top rate on income gains when we get into government. However, there always used to be a rule that one did not tax the tree at the same rate as the fruit. If a Labour Government did that, I can imagine the pompous, pedantic speeches that would be made from the Conservative Opposition Benches, the equally pompous editorials in *The Times*, *The Independent* and *The Guardian* and the lectures that we would be given about trees and fruit and not inflicting taxation on the tree. Adam Smith must have said something about that, too.

[Mr. Davies]

Yet we have not heard a whimper from anyone that the tree is to be taxed to the same extent as the fruit. Perhaps the editors of *The Independent*, *The Times* and the *Financial Times* were too busy enjoying the fruit of 40 per cent. taxation on their income to worry about 40 per cent. taxation on the tree. I find it strange. I remember a royal commission years ago in Canada on the taxation of income and capital. I forget its exact title. It concluded in the 1960s with the elegant expression: "A buck is a buck is a buck." One taxes a dollar as a dollar. Whether that dollar is a tree dollar or a fruit dollar, it makes no difference. That report was sat upon. It was considered to be impractical and wrong.

I find it strange that a capitalist party is prepared to tax capital at the same level as income. My right hon. and hon. Friends intend to increase the top rates of income tax when we get into government to 50 per cent., 57 per cent. or whatever it will be after the national insurance surcharge. So, following the pattern of the Government's legislation, why should not we increase capital gains tax to 57 per cent., too? The Government have conceded the argument that, subject to allowances, one taxes capital gains at the same rate as income, for which of course there are also allowances. That is an extraordinary, almost Leninist, proposition from the Conservative Government, who have operated over the years in a way which would have brought joy to the heart of Lenin.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): Of Stalin.

Mr. Davies: I did not like to say Stalin. I will confine it to Lenin.

I do not believe that the right hon. Member for Blaby made the changes in corporation tax out of malice towards manufacturing industry. The changes are repeated in this Finance Bill, too. However, those changes accorded with the indifference or outright hostility to manufacturing industry which, as an Opposition Member, I have witnessed in the Tory Government. The right hon. Member for Blaby reduced corporation tax because he believed in a level playing field in terms of allowances. It is a perfectly respectable view that there should be no allowances. The cost of allowances and deductions was mentioned earlier. It is a respectable view that we have no allowances, no exemptions and we reduce the rates of tax. But that is a Utopian view because life is not like that. The Finance Acts and income tax codes do not operate in that way. Governments of all persuasions have used financial legislation for purposes of social engineering.

Certainly the present Government have done that. They cannot argue for a level playing field because they have used one Finance Act after another to try to convert society—frankly, society cannot be converted by the use of Finance Bills, or taxation in general, although some politicians take the opposite view—to their own ideological beliefs.

The Financial Secretary more or less admitted that no Government can eliminate all allowances and deductions. So the priority, in corporation tax terms, should be manufacturing industry, not because we believe in dark satanic mills and regard banks as terrible places. As I endeavoured to explain yesterday, the products of dark satanic mills will buy food, whereas the products of banks will not, at the end of the day, across the exchanges, buy anything. That is the difference in terms of national interest between manufacturing industry and all the other parts of the economy.

Unfortunately, the British establishment, whether the civil service establishment in Whitehall or the financial establishment in the City, does not care or want to know about manufacturing industry. To operate properly, manufacturing industry demands certain technical qualifications and knowledge. The British establishment does not want to acquire those skills to enable it to take an interest in and run manufacturing industry.

History, politics, philosophy and economics, cultural studies and the rest are nicer and easier occupations to follow. One can make witty speeches at the Oxford or Cambridge Unions as a result of taking those subjects. It is more difficult, on the other hand, if one takes technical subjects, and the British establishment does not want to know.

Allied to that is the fact that, as Napoleon said, the English—I should say British; I do not want to be accused of being racist—are a nation of shopkeepers. We are involved with buying and selling and cash flow, with money coming in and going out. That is the problem that Labour Members will have to face when we take the reins of government, because there will be pressures on us also not to give to manufacturing industry the priority that it needs.

That priority might mean—I mention it as part of the whole picture—putting up the rates of corporation tax on banks, financial services and stockbrokers and giving, out of that extra revenue, the sort of allowances that should be given to manufacturing industry. We will not be able to run away from that. Not only will it have to happen, but the British public will want it to happen or we shall never bridge the gap in our trade with Europe and the rest of the world. Reform of the corporation tax system will have to occur again. The Conservatives cannot do it, because their heart is not in it. We shall have to do it when we take office.

5.53 pm

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): This is an excellent Finance Bill and I was honoured to be asked to serve on the Standing Committee which considered it. It was a particularly constructive and businesslike Committee this year and I am pleased that the Labour party Front Bench decided to play it in a constructive fashion. Even the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) was on his best behaviour this year and took a constructive part in our proceedings. As a result, we have a piece of legislation of which we can be proud.

I shall deal with two points. The first is that, as the Financial Secretary said, it is a Finance Bill for business. That theme runs right through it and no other course could have been taken in the present economic situation. The reduction in corporation tax rates and changes in the administration of VAT all occur in that vein.

Particularly important and welcome—because it brings tremendous relief to many businesses—has been the introduction of the three-year loss carry-back provisions. Loss carry-backs and carry-forwards are more than merely an emergency measure for business in a recession. They are a sensible measure to incorporate into our taxes legislation because they reflect the true cyclical nature of all business. Business should pay tax on its profits over the cycle. Cycles for different sectors are different and the business cycle is

not of the same duration or depth each time it comes round. It is reasonable that business should now have the possibility of averaging over a period, which certain professions—authors, for instance—have enjoyed for many years.

It is a good measure and, like most good measures, one can only say of it in retrospect by way of criticism that it might have been introduced earlier. It is an imaginative move forward and I hope that it will be a permanent feature of our taxes Acts. As I pointed out in Committee, however, it is regrettable that the possibility of carrying back losses for three years has been confined by the terms of the Bill to incorporated businesses. Persons trading as principals, or unincorporated businesses in general, will not benefit from that excellent provision.

I cannot see any reason, in equity or in economics, for discriminating against persons trading as principals and people running unincorporated businesses. The reverse should be the case, since if they are unincorporated, they are bearing the full risks of the business. The logical converse is that their customers, creditors, employers and stakeholders generally are better protected—therefore, society is better protected—by virtue of the greater risks that they carry. I hope that the Government will think further along that promising line and extend the concession to unincorporated businesses.

In that sense, I put a parliamentary question recently to the Financial Secretary about the cost of extending the concession to all businesses. We have heard this afternoon that the cost for incorporated businesses will be about £250 million in a full year. I gather from the written answer that I received that the cost of extending it to all businesses would be about 10 per cent. of that figure, so there appears to be little reason on revenue grounds to resist such a sensible and desirable move.

My second point is about fiscal harmonisation in the Community, to which the Financial Secretary referred and about which we had an intervention from the right hon. Gentleman who shares my surname, the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies). Compulsory fiscal harmonisation —agreement within the context of a new treaty or otherwise—to place legislative restraints on the spending programmes of individual member states seems neither necessary nor desirable. As it is not necessary, it should not —under the principle of subsidiarity, which I hope will also be included in any treaty—be desirable either.

It is not necessary because the ability of any Government to spend (this has been true of all Governments at all times) is a function of two simple variables—the ability of that Government to tax and to borrow. If we go forward, as I trust we shall, to monetary union and a single currency, with a single market representing an integrated market in which there are no capital controls or limitations on the free movement of labour, the ability of Governments to tax in practice will be constrained within a reasonable margin. If one member state taxes individuals or businesses disproportionately, those individuals or businesses will migrate. People may not migrate for 5 per cent. but they will migrate for 20 per cent. One never knows exactly where the margin lies, but Governments must be wary about overstepping it.

Therefore, in practice there will be constraint on individual member state's powers to tax, but if we have a single currency there will also be a natural constraint on individual member state's ability to borrow. By definition, they will no longer be in a position to monetise their deficits—a game that so many member states of the European Community and other countries have been playing for far too long, to the detriment of the interests of their populations. If we have a single currency, they will have to borrow in a single currency that they do not control. The markets will be well aware of that and of the fact that those countries will have to pay back any borrowings in real value. If a Government overborrow and their ability to pay back in that real value becomes dubious, the price of their bonds or other instruments on the market will immediately be marked down, the yield will increase and the interest rate at which that Government can borrow in future will become correspondingly greater. Again, a natural constraint will choke off individual member state's possibilities to borrow unduly.

Mr. Favell: As always, I have listened to my hon. Friend's argument with great interest. If he has his way with regard to a single currency, will the Budget process through which we have just gone still be necessary?

Mr. Davies: I am sorry that my hon. Friend has not paid strict attention to my remarks. I said that, within a prospective monetary union and in the context of a single currency, it will be neither necessary nor desirable to impose any legislative or constitutional constraints on the ability of member states to conduct their budgets as they see fit. I said that it will not be necessary because there will be natural market constraints on Governments' ability to tax or borrow. I hope that my hon. Friend will agree that if it is not necessary to impose constraints on Governments within the Community, it is undesirable that such constraints be imposed. That is the principle of subsidiarity, which is not merely a theological device that has evolved within the Community but should be a principle of the workings of any democracy. Governments should not intervene and liberty should not be constrained more than is necessary to conserve a society's minimum collective purposes.

I think that my point has been effectively made and I am pleased to have had the opportunity, thanks to the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell), to emphasise certain aspects of it. European Community member states should agree, before we reach economic and monetary union, that it is desirable to enforce some fiscal discipline on ourselves. In practice, that would not change the fiscal stance of the British Government because we have set an exceedingly fine example in the past 12 years. We have run consistent fiscal surpluses throughout the boom. Naturally, through the automatic working of the stabilisers in a recession we find ourselves with a fiscal deficit. However, it is a modest one —not merely by international standards but by previous standards in this country under a Labour Government. If we preach the values of fiscal probity and rigour, it is essentially to ensure that other EC member states do not, through irresponsible fiscal policies, destabilise the process of bringing about more convergence. I foresee no constraint on us in that context.

A red herring often pressed on us by our colleagues in the Community is the suggestion that a new treaty should provide for specific rules as to the fiscal policies to be adopted by member states. I hope that I have shown that that is neither necessary nor desirable. Indeed, I believe that it is exceedingly undesirable.

6.5 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The past two speeches have been thoughtful contributions to the debate, not least with regard to the detailed items relating to taxation. They underline the fact that the Finance Bill has two functions. The first relates to the Government's broad economic policy, which is often expressed through measures in the Finance Bill, and the second is the annual review of the different measures required to improve the taxation system, which is often not controversial but merely concerns matters of detail.

Could not we order our procedure differently? The Opposition try to do as good a job as possible to examine the minutiae of the proposals. However, in cases such as the separate taxation of women it might benefit the House, and, one hopes, the country, if in the period leading up to the Budget—perhaps from October to the beginning of the new year—the Government were to introduce the proposals on the taxation measures that they hope to incorporate in the Budget. They could then be discussed in advance and wider consultation could be carried out. Thoughtful contributions, such as that put forward by the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) on the nature of corporation tax, could then be made more deliberatively. In that way we could try to improve the process of government without necessarily taking anything away from the cut and thrust and the general drift of the Government's economic policy.

I regret that, although we are debating the Third Reading of the Finance Bill, neither the end of the recession nor even the first signs of an upturn in the economy seem any closer than they were when the Budget was delivered in March or when the Finance Bill received its Second Reading at the end of April. The Financial Secretary appeared on "TV-am" recently and suggested that the economy may show signs of an upturn in December. I accept that that is the second half of the year —*[Interruption.]* Perhaps the Financial Secretary will tell the House when he expects an upturn in the economy to start to show.

Mr. Maude: I knew of nothing and have seen nothing that is at odds with our forecast at the time of the Budget that the upturn would start in the second half of the year. I was merely pointing out, principally for the benefit of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), who seemed unclear about it, that the second half of the year runs from July to December.

Mr. Wallace: I am grateful for that clarification. I share the Financial Secretary's view that there seemed to be a lack of recognition from the Labour Front Bench about how long the second half of the year lasted. However, the Financial Secretary has not said any more about when the Government expect signs of the upturn to be obvious within the second half of the year.

Dr. Marek: I urge the hon. Gentleman to be a little cautious about what the Financial Secretary said, because there will be confusion between what may be a slight recovery from the recession and what will no doubt be a pre-Christmas boom.

Mr. Wallace: I am sure that Opposition Members will be quick to spot the difference and bring it to the attention of a wary electorate. I suspect that any boom may not be a pre-Christmas boom but a pre-November boom, if we are to believe the reports in *The Independent* earlier this week.

The great fear must be that the recession is so deep that even an upturn in the economy will not mitigate some of the damaging effects that have already been mentioned, including the number of companies that have gone into liquidation and the increasing unemployment rate. The unemployment figures for June will be announced later this week, and the great fear must be that the trend that we have seen during recent months will continue and unemployment will rise above 2·5 million. We have the fastest growing unemployment rate in Europe and unless measures are taken to curb that increase, there could be 3 million unemployed by the turn of the year.

When considering those figures, one might look for a series of measures designed to curb, or at least tackle, the increase in unemployment, but the Finance Bill offers little scope for that. The Financial Secretary knows that he cannot intervene in my speech to ask about the minimum wage, because the Liberal Democrats share the Government's analysis that a statutory minimum wage would lead to job losses.

There is consensus on both sides of the House, barring Ministers perhaps, that one of the most necessary responses to an increase in unemployment is the need to invest more in training. The Finance Bill contains clause 32 which, I do not dispute, gives some welcome relief for vocational training, but the estimated cost of £40 million is a drop in the ocean compared to what is required.

Since the Budget, there has been some success in reducing the inflation rate, but it was disappointing that the June figure showed no change on the May figure. Indeed, the underlying rate of inflation—which was 6·9 per cent. in June—showed an increase in the underlying rate for May. Therefore, even judged by the Government's own yardstick of the underlying figure of inflation—which last year, when the present Prime Minister was Chancellor of the Exchequer, seemed to be the favoured figure—signs show the reverse of what the Government would wish for.

Many businesses face problems because interest rates are still relatively high. That put particular pressures on small businesses, a large number of which, regrettably, will not be around to take advantage of lower interest rates, if and when they come.

The Financial Secretary said that this was intended to be a Budget for business. We welcome some of the measures for small businesses, such as the improvements in bad debt relief on value added tax and the increase of the VAT threshold. I certainly accept that the Budget contains measures that are to be welcomed by the business community. However, when I asked the Financial Secretary how he justified the increased burden on the business community of the 10·9 per cent. increase in the uniform business rate, he sought to give the impression that a degree of inevitability was involved. He accepted that the inflation rate, at 10·9 per cent., was the highest by which the Government could increase the uniform business rate. He seemed to think that businesses were, in some respects, welcoming what the Government had done. While 10·9 per cent. might be better than the business community might have feared under some local authorities —that issue is open to widespread debate—representations made to me and I am sure to many hon. Members show that the 10·9 per cent increase in uniform business rate is not welcomed by the business community. That was

the highest level by which the Government could increase that rate. They knew that the increase was due to take place on 1 April. If they had had any confidence in their projection for the inflation rate, they should have known that the increase would be substantially in excess of the inflation rate in April, which it was. The uniform business rate increase was a burden on business and continues to be so. That must be set on the scales against such reliefs as the Finance Bill brings to the business community.

We welcome the fact that the Government decided to restrict mortgage tax relief to the basic rate, which the Liberal Democrats had advocated for some time. That measure will remove a hardy annual from Finance Bill debates. We also welcome extending employee share schemes and profit-related pay, and national insurance contributions on company cars.

The hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) is not present, so perhaps I can whisper my following suggestion quietly before he arrives, so that he is not tempted to make another speech. It is regrettable that the Government have sought, yet again, to introduce retrospective and double taxation in relation to building societies in clause 52.

The principal political measure in the Budget was the increase of 2·5 per cent. in VAT to try to get the Government out of the difficulties that the poll tax had created. On Second Reading, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury said that that was a reasonable thing to do in the circumstances. He spoke as though fate had conspired to produce circumstances in which the Government were driven, against their will, to increase VAT by 2·5 per cent., with all the resultant consequences for the cost of living. However, the circumstances were not acts of fate, but the acts of the Government, who put the poll tax on the statute book. They recognised the immense difficulties that they found themselves in as a result, and had to take desperate measures to try to get themselves off that hook.

The 2·5 per cent. increase will not be forgotten. I have since had my poll tax bill from Orkney Islands council —it is all of £2 as a result of the £140 rebate. However, it is easy to ignore the fact that we have a further £55 water charge, for which those least able to pay do not receive a rebate. There is less scope for local authorities to exercise their own discretion. As the convenor of Shetland Islands council said, "How the hell do you exercise political discretion on 93p for the poll tax?" One may well repeat that question.

It has been reported recently that the £140 reduction in poll tax will not be passed on in respect of those people who do not pay the tax. That seems to be a further burden on those who pay the tax. I think that it was expected that if we had to pay the extra 2·5 per cent. VAT, there would be £140 for every poll tax payer. It seems that the Government are making things worse for those who honestly pay the poll tax, by not passing on the extra money. Will the Financial Secretary to the Treasury confirm that?

Although the Finance Bill is good in parts and undertakes some of the measures that the Liberal Democrats have advocated for a number of years, it has two fundamental flaws. First, it imposes an additional VAT tax to try to get the Government off the hook of their own creation. I am sure that the Financial Secretary to the Treasury would be the first to admit that the Liberal Democrats had the guts to put their votes where their voices were and vote against the increase. Secondly, the Finance Bill fails miserably to address the fundamental economic problems facing this country, where we have a recession with no light at the end of the tunnel and unemployment set to increase beyond 2·25 million. The Finance Bill offers no hope to those afflicted by the recession and unemployment.

6.18 pm

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): The Third Reading debate of the Finance Bill is always good natured. I am sure that the House is grateful to those who have worked hard and long to bring the Bill to our attention.

The hallmarks of the Conservative Government since 1979 have been, among other factors, that we have had but one Budget in each of those years. That is of inestimable assistance to people who run businesses and have budgets to meet, and is a far cry from those days when there were two or more Budgets a year under a Labour Administration.

The Government have sought to establish sound money, and risk unpopularity as a result. They have repaid debt and have a record of both abolishing and reducing taxes. All these things are entirely desirable and beneficial, and are in stark contrast to what happened under the previous Labour Administration and to what we know would happen if the Labour party were ever to form another Administration. A few moments ago, we heard the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) advocating an increase in corporation tax.

In an intervention, I said that our tax regime means that we have no fewer than 88 reliefs and allowances against the six main Inland Revenue taxes, and that these cost the Exchequer £86·7 billion in 1990-91 while those six taxes raised £82·9 billion. In other words, they raised £4 billion less than the reliefs and allowances.

In every society, one has spendthrifts, savers, speculators, the cautious, the rash, the honest, the dishonest. There is a great hazard in treating everybody alike because it is not only illogical but unrealistic. Having so many reliefs and allowances against our taxes distorts the natural and legitimate spending decisions that individuals make. We bribe taxpayers with their own money to make decisions that reflect the priorities of the politicians. We do not have a neutral tax regime.

There are essentially four choices for disposal of after-tax income. An individual may choose to put his money into bricks and mortar, to buy a pension, to save or to spend. The incentives to invest in bricks and mortar are mortgage interest relief, capital gains tax relief, and the knowledge that bricks and mortar have an unparalleled track record of being a good investment, quite apart from the utilitarian nature of the investment. All these meant that such a disposal became a priority for many people, causing the economy to overheat.

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): Is the hon. Gentleman advocating that we should do away with mortgage tax relief?

Mr. Gill: I am advocating that the Treasury should have a long hard look at all the reliefs and allowances so that we can get nearer to a neutral tax regime. That would mean that individuals making spending decisions would not be faced with incentives for one form of disposition of income as against another. Whether we choose to spend or save, to invest in stocks or shares or in bricks and mortar, there should be no tax advantage to influence our decision.

[Mr. Gill]

Pensions also have a tax advantage. That gives our financial institutions an enormous amount of power, and has been instrumental in the demise of the individual shareholder. Many hon. Members may care to speculate this week about the effect of that on various goings-on in the City. Getting rid of the individual shareholder has led to massive block voting power in the hands of institutions, with the result that some of the checks and balances that would previously have existed at shareholders' meetings no longer occur because there is not the raft of private shareholders that we previously had.

Millions of people will today spend their day working for insurance companies or building societies. That brings me to my next topic—savings. Savings are not as popular as spending. Savings out of earnings are generally taxed twice and savers are shy about saving because of the effects of inflation. The decision to spend is also affected by inflation. We live in a materialistic age where people want to spend. That is not to deny the fact that the modern economy depends on consumption.

Before the increase of VAT to 17·5 per cent. in the Budget, taxes on production—that is, broadly speaking, pay-as-you-earn, national insurance, business rates and corporation tax—accounted for 70 per cent. of the Inland Revenue's income. Taxes on consumption—bearing in mind that we live in an age that is trying to conserve natural resources and is conscious of the finite extent of those resources—brought in only 30 per cent. of revenue income. Therefore, I invite my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to look again at whether we have got right the balance between those taxes that impinge on production, which is so important to the economy, and those which impinge on consumption.

We need fewer and lower taxes, but above all we need a neutral tax regime such as that which I have set out. We have to balance spending decisions between spending on consumables or saving, and to balance spending on consumption and on production. We must never forget that individual spending decisions are preferable to Government decisions, and that manufacturing industry, contrary to what many people are telling us today, is without a shadow of doubt the engine of our economy. It is important to our economy, because it creates wealth.

I commend the Bill to the House and congratulate Ministers on introducing a Budget which did its best to reflect the needs of all sections of society. My plea is that we do all that we can in future Budgets to look after the wealth-creating sector and to make sure that spending decisions remain with the individual rather than drifting to the centre.

6.27 pm

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): Like the hon. Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw), I was not a member of this cosy club. I am not sure that the Committee examining the Finance Bill should be as cosy as has been made out. I have heard talk about gentlemanly actions and about how civil and good natured people were. This Finance Bill has done devastating things to people and should be opposed vigorously. I am sure that it was in Committee, and I am sure that its proceedings were not as cosy as has been suggested by Conservative Members.

Hon. Members will not be surprised when I mention one shambles in the Finance Bill—which is strewn with shambolic actions by the Government—the Foundation for Sport and the Arts, which I referred to earlier. In the early hours of this morning, my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) said that he thought that that was the first time that the foundation had been discussed. The Financial Secretary to the Treasury knows only too well that that is not the case. I raised the subject in the Budget debate on 20 March, in the debate on Second Reading of the Finance Bill on 30 April, and in an Adjournment debate on 23 May.

I am sure that many hon. Members have noticed that the Budget had two facets—one of panic and one of fear. That has continued throughout the proceedings on the Finance Bill. The way in which the Government have set about cobbling together proposals proves that Ministers have been struck down by another affliction—financial illiteracy.

Watching a variety of Ministers make contradictory claims about the amount of money that will be provided by the foundation has been a little like watching a magician's card trick. Ministers have been intent on plucking figures out of the air, and have refused to tell even their own colleagues how the last figure was arrived at. Very often, the figures have been doubled by the next Minister who has spoken. That might be an acceptable way in which to treat Tory Members, but it is no way to treat the millions of sports men and women and the millions of people who are involved in the arts in Britain.

The chief culprit for making suspect claims is our old friend the Minister for Sport. On 23 April at a press conference in the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre he said that the foundation would generate £75 million per year. When I asked him to justify that, he said in a parliamentary written answer on 29 April that that sum would be produced from increased pools betting take-up. I am sure that the Financial Secretary viewed that claim with astonishment because, to be fair, the Treasury has always said that the foundation will produce £60 million. That claim was repeated by a Minister in the early hours of this morning. When I pointed out the Minister for Sport's claim to the Financial Secretary during the debate on the Finance Bill on 30 April he refuted my remarks and said that the Minister for Sport would be surprised. So surprised was he that he repeated the claim on 23 May. It is extraordinary that Ministers still cannot agree on a common figure for the resources that will be generated for the foundation by the Bill.

However, if the Financial Secretary thinks that the Minister for Sport has made extraordinary claims, he should consider the figures given in *The Guardian* on 21 June by the Minister for the Arts. He said that the foundation will provide £1 million a week to sport and £500,000 a week to the arts. The Financial Secretary, with his recently acquired knowledge of financial statistics, might confirm that 52 times £1·5 million is not £60 million, nor £75 million, but £78 million. The Minister should advise his colleagues to read the figures contained in a parliamentary written answer to me on 12 July, at column *527*, from the Minister of State, Treasury, who said that in order to provide funds to the foundation of £75 million, the pools betting turnover would need to increase from £766,000 to £1 billion—an increase of 30·5 per cent. in one year. The Minister's answer also shows that pools betting duty increased by only 28 per cent. during the past four

years and has never increased by more than 8·9 per cent. in any one year in the past decade, which all goes to show that Ministers do not have a clue what will be provided by the foundation.

I do not have time to develop these points, because others wish to speak. Therefore, I do not wish to say more than that the foundation has been a shambles from the beginning. I hope that when the Financial Secretary replies he will come clean. At least he is listening to my remarks tonight; he usually gets them second hand from the Minister of State and, as I have said before, I do not think that he can read her handwriting. Is the figure £60 million, £75 million or £78 million? Who will the trustees be? Will the Minister for the Arts have an observer on the foundation? Yesterday I was told that he would not, but in the early hours of the morning I was told that he would. Throughout, the Government have been in a mess over the foundation and we all know why.

The foundation was concocted a few days before the Budget in order to stop a national lottery coming on the scene and, as a result, the Government have run into trouble. Why do not the Government put up their hands and admit that they are in a mess and say that they will look again at the whole question of how coherently to fund sport and the arts in Britain? They should not be pushed along this road by a pressure group which has bounced them into the scheme. Privately they admit that they have been bounced into it. They should come clean and say so, so that we can have a meaningful debate about how to fund these important areas of our life.

6.33 pm

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): This is an excellent Finance Bill. I well understand why Mr. Speaker was unable to select the two amendments that I tabled to clause 30 dealing with mobile phones, a subject which was discussed at great length in Committee. We should remember that we tax simply to raise revenue and, as a reforming Conservative Government, to level playing fields for the raising of revenue.

The tax on mobile phones is a tax too far and a rather unfortunate joke within the Budget speech which has backfired because it does not do what it was intended to do —raise revenue and maintain a level playing field. The £200 basic charge, which at the standard rate would be a £50 tax on an individual, or £80 at the higher rate—under a Labour Government it would be at least £100 at the higher rate—is a tax on enterprise which we should not be imposing. It could well reduce tax revenue, because I understand that there has been a reduction in the number of people ordering such phones and that many are now passing them back to their employers.

Technically, the private use of any business phone is taxable, but practically that does not occur. Anyone who has a phone on his desk in an office uses it for a certain number of private calls. The Government say that a mobile phone is different because the user is out of the office and cannot be supervised so closely. That is nonsense because a single phone, dedicated to an individual, locked up in a person's car can be used only by that person. With a switchboard with multiple extensions one cannot work out who is using a particular phone. That nonsense is further exacerbated because in the clause, which extends to two pages, the Government have decided to exclude the telepoint phone which allows calls to be made outside the office but not received.

We are attempting to stifle enterprise. People who are willing to be available 24 hours a day seven days a week and do not want to spend a lot of time working out which are private calls and which are not will be taxed. Moreover, it is ridiculous that the person who is using the phone as a perk, making many free calls without being charged the tax, will be getting away with murder by having a small charge.

Clause 30 will not raise any additional tax revenue. In practice, we will find that is does not do what it is supposed to do. The playing field is being tilted away from high technology, the mobile phone and all the developments of the next decade in mobile telephony, and that is a wrongheaded move. I hope that the Minister will look at that again.

Finally, non-incorporated businesses should have a carry-back for tax. There is no justification for a corner newsagent not being able to reclaim his tax while W. H. Smith, if it has a run of bad years, can do so. Those are two blots on an excellent Bill and I hope that they will be taken on board in future Bills.

6.37 pm

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): This has been my first experience of the Finance Bill. Much to the amazement of some of my more experienced colleagues, I volunteered to serve on the Committee. I was struck by the Government's barefaced cheek in bringing forward a Bill of such staggering irrelevance and complacency given the general economic situation. It is a Bill of bits and bobs with no strategy. When it started off, the revenue heart of the Bill was the VAT increase—a panic measure. It was born not out of any desire to achieve an optimal level of VAT, but out of the desire to bail the Government out of the mess that they found themselves in on the poll tax. As a result, the poor have been hit the hardest and the noose has been further tightened around the necks of small businesses which have been suffering so badly during the past 10 years.

Similarly, the tax changes that have been introduced could have addressed the poverty trap problem which continues to inflict great damage on many of my constituents. Some of them supplement their retirement pensions with tiny private pensions from their life's work down the mines. A pension increase is given to them with one hand, but tax is taken from them with the other. The Government could have addressed that anomaly, but they did not do so. The Budget is full of missed opportunities.

Clause 27 sets the level at which tax relief can be claimed on mortgages. That welcome change is one which Labour has advocated for many years. But instead of switching that money to providing additional relief to hard-pressed first-time buyers—many of whom cannot afford to buy a home even in today's depressed property market—the Government directed it at making extra provision for higher rate tax payers. Therefore, those mortgage payers who would have lost out under the change in the level of relief saw it equalised under the tax change. They are the same group of people who have benefited dramatically over the years from the Government's tax cuts for the rich.

[Mr. Peter Hain]

The Government also failed to address the crisis in training that they have perpetuated and intensified. Clause 32 of the Finance Bill will have little effect on west Wales, where the number of training weeks has been cut by 21 per cent., or by 43,200 places, over the past year.

I refer to the many other business measures, such as the capital relief given to companies engaged in the construction of toll roads, without any thought to a clear strategy. In Committee, I asked the Financial Secretary how much money that measure will cost the Exchequer, but he did not know. There is a need in my constituency to construct the missing link in the A465, but the Government cannot entertain that scheme because they are giving a little tax relief here and there, without even knowing how much it will cost.

The hon. Member for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce) rightly referred to the gimmick tax on mobile phone usage. That petty measure will hit small businesses the hardest, but it will generate hardly any additional revenue, if any at all. In May, a month after the Chancellor's announcement, there was the first fall in the United Kingdom cellular phone sector, of 460 subscribers, after a six-year period of uninterrupted growth. That proposal is technologically illiterate and petty in tax terms.

The Finance Bill presents a package of irrelevant measures while the economy continues to go down the plug hole. Welsh businesses are closing at the alarming rate of seven every working day. In the first half of 1991, a total of 880 businesses in Wales went under—an increase of 77·1 per cent. over last year.

Today, Lord King of British Airways announced a further loss of 1,000 to 2,000 direct jobs as a consequence of British Airways being restricted to its core businesses. The Secretary of State for Transport has behaved with monumental incompetence, echoing again the Government's failure to address the real needs of industry and the economy. That is particularly true of the south Wales economy, which, despite the public relations noises made by the Secretary of State for Wales, has suffered one shock after another.

The Bill's failure to address the central issues of our society and economy is evidenced by the continuing and relentless rise in unemployment, with the number of jobless in Wales reaching 100,000 for the first time in many years. Industry is at its wit's end. It views the Government with absolute contempt because of their failure to address the deep-seated problems of the British economy. The Bill reflects the Government's incompetence. While Government Ministers sit in their ivory towers devising tiny clauses for the Finance Bill, the economy is falling down around their ears.

6.44 pm

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): It is nice to have an open-ended debate, but, although we can continue this Third Reading of the Finance Bill as long as we like, the Chairman of Ways and Means has put down private business for 7 o'clock, so I will do my best to make sure that the debate can finish by then.

I particularly enjoyed the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr. Hain), who summed up the Opposition's attitude to the Bill, which tinkers with, but does nothing for, the economy, which only goes from bad to worse. Telling points were made also by my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies), in respect of capital investment, and by my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry), who spoke about funding of sports and the arts.

I share the view expressed by some hon. Members that the Finance Bill should be attacked in Committee in a co-operative way, but also in a way that reveals to the public what is wrong with its provisions. Very often, those two objectives cannot be met. The Bill contains many technical clauses, but also several—such as that which increases value added tax from 15 to 17·5 per cent.—whose impact can immediately be understood by everyone. There may be an argument for reassessing the way in which the House considers future Finance Bills, so that the Opposition of the day could have their objections carefully considered by the Government and their advisers, while the technicalities were allowed to progress with cross-party co-operation. That would allow important decisions affecting the public to be fought in the traditional way, across the Floor of the House—and I would not dare to suggest from this Dispatch Box any improvements to that system.

The Financial Secretary said that this is a Budget for business, and called in aid the lowering of corporation tax and the availability of VAT relief on bad debts after one year instead of two. There is not much for business in those two measures. They will help a little—one must not be churlish—but they are incapable of bringing much improvement to the economy and to industry as a whole.

The Government's growth record is abysmal. From 1979 to 1991, Britain's economy grew by only 1·5 per cent., despite the benefit of £100 billion of North sea oil. The Government are fond of comparing their performance with that of past Labour Administrations. From 1974 to 1979, the economy grew by 2 per cent., and under the Labour Government of 1964 to 1970, Britain enjoyed an average growth rate of 2·8 per cent. The Government's record of growth and of helping industry is not good—and I am being very moderate in that choice of words. Between 1979 and 1991, the United Kingdom was sixth from the bottom of the growth league among the 24 OECD countries.

From the time of the industrial revolution until 1982, we had a surplus in manufacturing trade. In 1982 we went into the red, and have remained in the red ever since. Manufacturing output has hardly grown since 1979, when the present Administration took office. Between then and 1991, it grew less than in any other OECD country.

Although welcome, the limited alleviation of the problems of corporation tax and bad debts will do nothing to lift us from the abyss that we have had to endure under the present Government. They have taken us from one bad recession, in 1980-81, through an unsustainable consumer boom and into another bad recession in 1990-91. Those were the two worst recessions since the great recession of the 1930s. The Bill does not address the problems of our economy; it merely increases indirect taxation.

The VAT increase—from 15 to 17·5 per cent.—was not introduced for any noble reason, such as a desire to make trains and buses run on time, to improve the roads or to reduce environmental pollution. As we heard from the Financial Secretary's own lips this afternoon, the Government simply wanted to reduce poll tax payments. The poll tax problem was entirely of the Government's making. They can provide no excuse: they brought the

problem on themselves by insisting on the original charges and, in an attempt to escape the consequences, they have now inflicted the VAT increase on everyone in the country.

Under the present Administration, people have had to bear higher rates of taxation than I can remember. The Financial Secretary has conveniently forgotten that, under the last Labour Government, VAT was running at 8 per cent. It rose to 15 per cent. very soon after the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) took office in 1979, despite earlier denials that any such increase would take place.

The Financial Secretary has also forgotten that national insurance contributions rose by some 2·5 per cent. at that time. It was news to him this afternoon—his civil servants showed him the relevant table—that taxation, as a proportion of gross domestic product, rose by quite a bit in 1979. Later, it fell, but it has since risen again. The Financial Secretary did not say that initially, but I give him credit for getting it right in the end. Having shot up in 1979, taxation, as a proportion of GDP, has remained 3 or 4 per cent. higher than it was under Labour in the 1970s.

There is no prospect of a fall in that high percentage rate; certainly the Bill will do nothing to bring it down. The only solution available to the British people is to get rid of the Government at the next general election—and, as the opinion polls show, that is exactly what will happen when the Government finally muster enough nerve to go to the country and test their policies before the public. Meanwhile, they have produced a Finance Bill which merely tinkers with an economy that is in dire need of repair.

6.55 pm

Mr. Maude: The hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) ended his speech on a brave and defiant note, and I do not begrudge him that—he is entitled to his little show of defiance in the face of opinion polls which are crumbling before his very eyes. Nevertheless, I set little store by those polls, for there is only one poll that matters—the one in which the British people give their verdict, and I am prepared to abide by that verdict as I am confident that it will be in our favour.

This has been a useful and, by and large, temperate and moderate debate. Our Finance Bill debates express very powerfully what the House of Commons is about. They illustrate its role in scrutinising public expenditure and legislating for the levying of taxation. We should take that role seriously, and I believe that we have done so.

My hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) mentioned the problems of the merchant shipping fleet, and suggested steps that the Government might take. As he probably knows, my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary referred to those problems briefly in yesterday's debate. My hon. Friend requested me to state unequivocally that the decline in tonnage was a problem. He also said—and I cannot entirely accept this—that it did not much matter what the solution was. In my view, it does matter. We must not simply say, "Here is a problem—something must be done; this is something—let us do it." We must ensure that any solution that we produce is a real solution to a real problem.

Let me reassure my hon. Friend that the Government take the matter very seriously. We fully recognise the contribution made by our merchant shipping fleet in times of conflict. We and our NATO partners keep the position under regular review and—as my right hon. and learned Friend the Chief Secretary said yesterday—we are currently engaged in an up-to-date study of our shipping requirements and the options for meeting them. As my hon. Friend seemed to accept, this is a complex subject. It is far from simple either to divine those requirements or to decide how they can best be affordably met.

We are confident that the taxation route is not the right one, and that has, I believe, been generally accepted by the House. I assure hon. Members, however, that we shall not hesitate to act—and, if necessary, to spend—if we consider that such action is justified by our defence requirements.

Sir Giles Shaw: Will my hon. Friend consult the industry as the results of the working party's review become known?

Mr. Maude: We have remained in close touch with the shipping industry, which has been at pains to keep in touch not only with us but with a number of right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House. I make no complaint about that; it is right that we should understand the problems.

The hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) talked about the sports and arts trust, and urged me to come clean. Let me reassure him, too. My right hon. and learned Friend the Chief Secretary came clean yesterday at about 1.30 in the morning, and I think that when the hon. Gentleman studies *Hansard* he will find his points well met.

This is a good Finance Bill and I have no difficulty in commending it wholeheartedly to the House.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 305, Noes 219.

Division Number 213] **[6.59 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert	Bright, Graham
Aitken, Jonathan	Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Allason, Rupert	Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Amess, David	Buck, Sir Antony
Amos, Alan	Budgen, Nicholas
Arbuthnot, James	Burns, Simon
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Burt, Alistair
Arnold, Sir Thomas	Butler, Chris
Ashby, David	Butterfill, John
Aspinwall, Jack	Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Atkins, Robert	Carrington, Matthew
Atkinson, David	Cartwright, John
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*	Cash, William
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Baldry, Tony	Chapman, Sydney
Batiste, Spencer	Chope, Christopher
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Churchill, Mr
Bellingham, Henry	Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Bendall, Vivian	Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*	Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Benyon, W.	Colvin, Michael
Bevan, David Gilroy	Conway, Derek
Biffen, Rt Hon John	Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter	Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Body, Sir Richard	Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas	Couchman, James
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Cran, James
Boswell, Tim	Currie, Mrs Edwina
Bottomley, Peter	Curry, David
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia	Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*	Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*	Day, Stephen
Bowis, John	Devlin, Tim
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes	Dickens, Geoffrey
Brandon-Bravo, Martin	Dicks, Terry

Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Sir Robert
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Sir Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Bosiseng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carr, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, Sir A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Huw
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael

Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Thomas McAvoy and
Mr. Robert N. Wareing.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read the Third time, and passed.

British Railways (No. 3) Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

7.15 pm

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The works set out in the Bill are designed to add capacity and to improve the flexibility of the rail system in the years following the opening of the channel tunnel. They represent a small but important part of the rolling programme of investment being undertaken by British Rail.

The year 1993 offers unprecedented opportunities: the single European market will be in operation and the channel tunnel will be ready to open. The development of the nation's infrastructure to maximise business potential is of vital importance. The final section of the M20 is now in place and it will link the tunnel with Britain's motorway network. British Rail is investing more than £1,500 million in new high-speed trains, in a new international station at Waterloo and in renewed infrastructure to meet the new needs. Many other changes are necessary, some large and some small. The works outlined in the Bill represent, for the most part, the latter type. Each item is in itself a modest measure but is vital to the infrastructure of the national rail system.

In brief, the Bill would connect the proposed Ashford international station with the existing channel tunnel route and provide for three new freight loops in Kent; for a railway chord link in north London and for improvements to the layout at Bickley junction in south-east London. Together, those works represent an important element of the investment programme in the rail network designed to carry the predicted level of passenger and freight traffic in the years before the opening of the proposed high-speed rail link at the end of the century.

However, it is worth noting that, although new powers are needed for the works proposed in the Bill, those works represent only a small part of the overall programme of works which the board has undertaken in contemplation of the opening of the channel tunnel in 1993, most of which are being carried out under existing powers.

Works Nos. 1A and 1B of the Bill provide for the construction of a railway connection to the proposed international station at Ashford which is excellently located, providing easy access from Kent and Sussex to mainland Europe without a journey into London. The introduction of the Networker express for Kent coast services and the proposed electrification of the line between Ashford and Hastings will ensure continuing improvements to the strategic benefits which the station will provide.

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): I am delighted to hear my hon. Friend, who is speaking on behalf of British Rail on this occasion, mention the introduction of the Networker express service. I agree that it is a matter of tremendous importance, but has he been informed of when British Rail might make even an application to the Minister for the investment authority to go ahead with the programme? I should be very interested to know.

Mr. Thorne: My hon. Friend raises an important point and I shall seek clarification if I have the opportunity to reply later. However, I expected that it was certainly to be within the next three or four years.

[Mr. Thorne]

The proposals currently before the Secretary of State have received outline planning permission and have been commended by the Royal Fine Art Commission. Work No. 2 in the Bill, the West Hampstead chord, will provide a 650 m line connecting the midland main line with the west coast main line. That will allow the proposed King's Cross low-level station to have direct access to the west midlands and the north-west on its completion, with or without the new rail link from the tunnel into central London.

Work No. 6 provides for an extra link between two existing railways at Bickley junction in the London borough of Bromley to ensure sufficient capacity to accommodate international traffic and existing domestic train services. Works Nos. 3, 4 and 5 look to the construction of three loops in Kent at Headcorn, Borough Green and Otford. The purpose of the loops, which are approximately 900 m in length, is to allow slower moving freight trains to be bypassed by current Network SouthEast and proposed international passenger services. Their sites have been chosen to avoid points of conflict between passenger and freight timetables. It is vital that the loops are constructed if British Rail is to maximise the opportunity for moving freight by rail with no disadvantage to existing Network SouthEast customers.

I am aware that the issue of how freight should be carried through Kent is of concern to many hon. Members from that beautiful county. The building of the channel tunnel and the single European market will lead initially to a growth in freight equivalent to about 400,000 lorry movements a year. British Rail proposes the introduction of up to 27 channel tunnel freight services a day each way. Those trains will be able to take the equivalent of up to 1,500 lorry loads each day off the already heavily congested roads of Kent.

The growth of freight traffic raises the issue of noise. That main environmental concern is being addressed by British Rail. Quieter welded track, new train and wagon design and the use of new electric rather than diesel locomotives will make a major contribution to noise reduction for residents living close to the railway. Many people in the south-east are accustomed to diesel locomotives hauling slow and heavy traffic, whereas the new freight train, like the new international passenger train, will be a different breed. I am sure that the people of Kent will welcome the change.

The House of Lords Select Committee on the British Railways (No. 3) Bill spoke of the need to address the issue of "major and relatively sudden" intensification of services on existing lines. The Bill will not in itself cause a major intensification of services, but follows naturally from the Channel Tunnel Act 1987 through which the House approved the principle of developing international freight and passenger rail services. British Rail is convinced that the net environmental impact of the channel tunnel rail freight business will be overwhelmingly positive. As I said, it will carry the equivalent of 400,000 lorry movements in Kent each year.

Kent county council has argued that the increase in traffic due to the channel tunnel is a unique case, but that is not so. Examples from the recent past include the introduction of the hourly night service on the Gatwick express, the introduction of channel tunnel construction material trains and coal traffic to the Aire valley power stations. British Rail has said that it is willing to discuss with Kent county council proposals for local measures of mitigation. Since the Report stage of the Planning and Compensation Bill, the chairman of British Rail and the leader of Kent county council have been in touch and they are agreed on the need to come up with some workable solutions.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): My hon. Friend mentioned the activity of trains carrying freight for the channel tunnel construction. I bring to my hon. Friend's notice the fact that constituents are already greatly disturbed by that traffic in a way in which they were not disturbed before.

Mr. Thorne: My hon. Friend raised the question of comparing those trains with the trains that are proposed to carry freight in the future. They will vary considerably. The point was not whether the noise that they make is disturbing. The question was whether such noise had existed before. Kent county council claims that the new network will be the first occasion on which such noise will occur. I was attempting to point out that that was not the case.

I remind the House that the works in the Bill are limited in scope, but important. As the House of Lords Select Committee noted:

"without the works in the Bill, British Rail would be compelled to find other means of operating services to the Channel Tunnel, although doubtless at some cost to operational efficiency."

The Committee said that it was the responsibility of British Rail to maximise the potential benefit of the tunnel and the single European market for rail traffic and that it must seek to do so without prejudicing its many customers in Kent and elsewhere.

With the permission of the House, I shall endeavour to answer further questions later. I have explained the purpose of the Bill and why I commend it to the House.

7.24 pm

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): I want to speak both generally and particularly from a Scottish and northern point of view. I speak with some trepidation because I am aware that there may be more local concerns into which I have no intention of intruding. When I look at a measure that includes the creation of passing loops at Headcorn, Borough Green and Otford in Kent, I fear that I may step into a hornets' nest and that there may be matters of intense local concern.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Whatever the hon. Gentleman's apprehensions, many of us welcome enormously the fact that he is prepared to speak this evening. One of the great problems in addressing the works needed to cope with the channel tunnel is that far too little interest has been taken by hon. Members from other parts of the United Kingdom. I know that I speak for all hon. Members here when I say how much we welcome the hon. Gentleman's taking part in our debate.

Mr. Wilson: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I want to extend his point a little. What he says is regrettable, but true. People—and hon. Members—in other parts of the country may be waking up pretty late in the day to the fact that by neglecting the debate that has been taking place largely in the south-east of England—

and I am sure that there are perfectly legitimate concerns relating to the channel tunnel and especially to the provision of links—the rest of the country is in danger of losing the benefits of the channel tunnel. Unless matters can be sorted out in the south-east, those of us who depend on links far beyond the immediate source of the controversies will also lose the benefits of the tunnel.

I make no apology for saying that my interest in the matter has been greatly stimulated by visiting France and by seeing what is going on on the other side of the tunnel. I have seen the construction project under way and the way in which the whole tunnel project is being approached as a great national undertaking, with the specific purpose of bringing maximum benefit to all parts of France, rather than simply concentrating the impact of the tunnel within the small corner of France which is directly related to it.

I have also looked at the parallel scene on this side of the channel. At this late stage, no direct route has yet been designated between the tunnel and London—never mind further north. There is still no station in London which has been designated in the long term. We still do not have approval for King's Cross. With one solitary exception which I understand will be the subject of a public inquiry, we have no freight depots designated in Scotland for the channel tunnel. The months and years tick away, and none of the infrastructural preparations which we are entitled to expect to ensure that the benefits of the tunnel extend throughout the country are being brought to a conclusion.

I remind the House that 75 per cent. of the freight that will pass through the tunnel will go north of London. This is not a parochial matter for the south-east, but is of far wider concern. I have a vested interest in supporting any small measure that can facilitate improvements.

The Bill does not prejudice the choice of route for the high-speed rail link and should not get caught up in that controversy. No domestic properties would be purchased in association with the works and, therefore, it should not get caught up in that concern. I am sure that the Bill is a small measure. I have no wish to impinge on other people's local controversies. I apologise for the fact that I shall have to leave the Chamber shortly after I have made my remarks.

This is a matter of wide concern. Let us get on with the project. The tunnel is potentially a wonderful project which should do much to link the whole of Britain with the whole of the continent, yet on this side of the channel we have got bogged down in local difficulties in the south-east. Let us get the routes built, the lines designated and the necessary infrastructure in place so that when the tunnel opens we have a realistic prospect of fast passenger trains and dedicated freight routes being ready to maximise the benefits for the whole country.

7.30 pm

Sir John Stanley (Tonbridge and Malling): I am taking part in the debate not because proposed Work No. 4—the Borough Green passing loop—is in my constituency, but because there is a significant omission from the Bill. Compensation for people who will be directly affected by the works that are the subject of the Bill has been omitted.

As the House is aware, I endeavoured during the Report stage of the Planning and Compensation Bill to set out at some length the case, which is supported by a considerable number of us, for compensation to be paid in connection with railway works on designated lines to the channel tunnel. The House will be relieved to know that I have no intention of reading out that entire speech verbatim——

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): It was a very good speech.

Sir John Stanley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and I believe that what I said then is just as highly pertinent and relevant now.

There was a sequel to our debate on new clause 16 of the Planning and Compensation Bill on 19 June. When my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport wound up the debate, he mentioned eight specific steps suggested by the Government and by British Rail to deal with the problem of noise. In connection with the first step, my hon. Friend said:

"First, the chairman of British Rail told me, after speaking with the chairman of Kent county council, that he is ready to discuss with that authority how British Rail can help in the further measures that it has proposed, to alleviate the prospective increased noise for the homes that will be most affected."—[*Official Report*, 19 June 1991; Vol. 193, c. 348.]

If I may say so, my hon. Friend's remarks were somewhat obscure, and the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), thought that he might have been alluding to the possibility of British Rail offering compensation as part of the package of further measures to be discussed between itself and Kent county council.

I then tabled the following specific question:

"To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the further noise alleviation measures to which his hon. Friend the Minister of State referred on 19 June, *Official Report*, column 348; and whether or not they included compensation."

My hon. Friend the Minister of State replied:

"My reference was to measures mentioned in Kent county council's paper: 'International Rail Services Noise Protection', which suggests action that could be taken where railway noise increases and exceeds specific levels at certain times of day or night. The suggested action includes the provision of noise barriers or sound insulation for people's homes. It is these physical measures which British Rail will be discussing with the council."—[*Official Report*, 26 June 1991; Vol. 193, column *462*.]

I am therefore sorry to tell the House that, sadly, compensation, as opposed to discussion of the further physical works, is apparently not on the agenda for the discussions between the British Rail chairman and officials and Kent county council. That is regrettable.

My first question is this: what responsibilities does British Rail accept towards those whose homes will seriously depreciate in value due to the noise from the railway works? The answer appears to be that where British Rail proposes to construct a new line, or a piece of new line, it accepts an obligation both to buy, through voluntary agreements, the worst affected houses, and to pay injurious affection compensation under the Land Compensation Act in respect of less seriously affected houses. However, where no new line will be constructed, although major railway works of another sort may take place, British Rail seems unwilling to contemplate compensation.

I ask the House to consider the impact of that policy on compensation in connection with the proposals in the Bill —not least with regard to the passing loops at Borough Green in my constituency and elsewhere in other Kent constituencies. In respect of the section of line approaching the passing loop, no compensation will be

[Sir John Stanley]

payable, but the moment the newly constructed passing loop splits off, compensation under the Land Compensation Act becomes payable. The moment the loop rejoins the existing line, compensation ceases to be payable. It is a lottery. The situation is grotesquely unfair. Compensation will not be payable on certain sections of line, although exactly the same noise disturbance, created by the same passenger and freight trains, will be suffered. A few hundred yards away, compensation will become payable, but it will be extinguished again as soon as the loop finishes.

Mr. Wolfson: Is not the position made even more ludicrous by the fact, which was pointed out in debate in the other place, that the loop lines tend to run clear of housing, as they do in my constituency?

Sir John Stanley: I agree with my hon. Friend. The situation is ludicrous in relation to the works proposed in the Bill, but that anomaly is a small forerunner of the even more grotesque situation that may arise when my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, whom I am glad to see in the Chamber tonight, announces his decision on the new high-speed line. If he announces that that line will enter London from the south-east, where new track is laid alongside the existing track, there will be full rights to compensation, whereas elsewhere in London, where the same trains, whether passenger or freight will run on existing track, no compensation will be payable. If the situation is ludicrous and anomalous now, in Kent, in connection with the Bill, such an announcement by my right hon. and learned Friend would create a far worse position.

What is the basis in law for British Rail's adoption of such a compensation policy? The answer is that there is no basis in law for the way in which British Rail chooses to interpret its obligations under the Land Compensation Act 1973.

British Rail has decided that, in its view, train noise approximates to car and lorry noise and it is therefore choosing to adopt the highway provisions of the Land Compensation Act to determine compensation in this case. That is an arbitrary decision. As I explained in introducing new clause 16 to the Planning and Compensation Bill, it would be equally possible to argue—indeed, some of us would argue most strongly—that train noise approximates much more closely to aircraft noise than to car and lorry noise and the airport and aerodrome provisions of the Land Compensation Act should therefore apply. That would entitle those living along large sections of the line to compensation. British Rail, however, is entirely ignoring what is said in part I of the Land Compensation Act about airport and aerodrome compensation and, equally, the specific provisions included in part I for payment in respect of public works being carried out under statutory provisions, as the proposed works in this case would be, in relation to neither highways nor airports.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): Can the right hon. Gentleman make it plain for our benefit that what he is saying is, in effect, that the extra train noise generated is to be compared with aircraft noise rather than with highway noise? Can he tell the House what impact that comparison, if accepted by the Government, would have on the prospects of introducing any new rail services anywhere in the country?

Sir John Stanley: The position with regard to the channel tunnel trains and the rail infrastructure for the channel trains is unique. In terms of its magnitude and intensity, the development is without parallel elsewhere in the country. If it were not, I venture to suggest that hon. Members on both sides of the House would have been campaigning for many years for a change in the compensation law. I do not believe that it has ever previously been the case that the value of such a significant number of homes has been faced with destruction or large scale erosion as a result of railway works of the magnitude of those proposed in the Bill.

I wish to refer to two points that were made in the report of the Select Committee in the other place. I am certainly not prepared to support the Bill tonight. I shall oppose it, because it is seriously flawed, and I wish to make that point on my constituents' behalf. But if the House decides to give the Bill its Second Reading, I certainly hope that the Select Committee appointed to examine it will consider the compensation issue in much greater depth and with much greater sophistication than appears to have been the case in the other place.

I was disappointed to read in paragraph 25 of the special report of the Select Committee of the other place, which was printed on 8 October 1990:

> "To propose compensation would therefore be to establish a new principle of compensation for disturbance caused by intensification of use."

It is simply not correct to dismiss the proposals in the Bill as a mere intensification of use. The Bill proposes massive new works—new works on a huge scale costing, according to the Minister's parliamentary answer, £700 million, even before the channel tunnel costs have been taken into account. The central question here is whether the proposed works are new works—new public works—which should trigger the entitlement to compensation. In my view, they most certainly should.

It is also claimed that a new principle of compensation would be established if our suggestion were accepted. That, too, is quite wrong. As the Land Compensation Act makes clear in relation to airports and aerodromes, it is not necessary for a new runway—in this case, new track—to be created to trigger entitlement to compensation. In cases where major new works permit a major increase in the volume of traffic and therefore in the magnitude of disturbance, an entitlement to compensation can already be created under the Land Compensation Act. We are not, therefore, talking about a new matter of principle.

The second sentence in the Select Committee's report with which I wish to take issue is the one which says that the proposals for compensation in these cases

> "would be better dealt with by general legislation."

I accept immediately that they can perfectly well be dealt with by general legislation. It is significant that, on 19 June, during the Report stage of the Planning and Compensation Bill, no fewer than 180 Members from both sides of the House supported new clause 16, and proposed that the matter be dealt with by general legislation. The point that I wish to make tonight is that it does not have to be dealt with by general legislation—it can be dealt with administratively, in a non-statutory form. If hon. Members are interested in precedent, I point them to what is done by the Ministry of Defence in relation to the

build-up of aircraft noise disturbance from military airfields and, in particular, to the answer that I was given by the Minister of State for the Armed Forces on 8 May, at column *506* of *Hansard*, in which he confirmed that the Ministry of Defence operates a policy of voluntary acquisition of houses that are seriously affected by noise and a policy of paying injurious affection to less seriously affected householders. Both policies are operated on a non-statutory basis. It would therefore be entirely possible for British Rail to deal with the problem on a non-statutory basis.

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): I do not wish to intrude on what is basically a Kent issue, but will the right hon. Gentleman accept from me that one of the reasons why some of us support the general principle of legislation is that our experience in the north-east and in Scotland is that undertakings from British Rail are not really worth the paper they are written on? Many of us gave way on the abandonment of the sleeper services to Newcastle and Edinburgh—my hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), who vowed to raise the matter in each and every British Rail debate, would not forgive me if I did not make this point—following undertakings to the effect that the services would be resumed on electrification. We were then given a whole lot of reasons why they could not be resumed, all of which were known at the time the original undertaking was given by BR. That is why some of us prefer to place our faith in legislation rather than in undertakings.

Sir John Stanley: I agree with the right hon. Gentleman that the preferred course is general legislation. When we proposed that course on 19 June, our proposal attracted widespread support. Personally, I am saddened by the fact that the Government missed an open opportunity to deal with the issue in a flexible, fair way when the Planning and Compensation Bill came before the House. However, the Government chose to let that opportunity go by and we are left with no suitable public Bill before the House. It is therefore right to make the point that it is wholly precedented, in matters of precisely this kind, for the question to be dealt with by administrative means.

I feel that I have no alternative but to oppose the Bill, which would place my constituents, and constituents elsewhere along the line, in a grossly unfair position. It is quite wrong, as a matter of principle, that people should have the value of their main asset destroyed, or largely destroyed, as a result of the public interest in improving our communications infrastructure. It is of the utmost importance that this serious injustice should be righted as quickly as possible.

7.48 pm

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): I confess that I am surprised to be speaking in this debate. The Bill completed its passage in another place at the turn of the year and we have been waiting ever since for it to appear in this House. It went into abeyance for some time, and curiously a carry-over motion in respect of the Bill appeared on the Order Paper a week ago. The motion was not passed and, hey presto, we find ourselves debating this Second Reading tonight.

I must declare a particular and precise personal interest; works No. 6 are not only in my constituency, but are only a few hundred yards from my house and literally within earshot, as I was reminded at midnight last night. Some work is already proceeding on the site. I am assured that it is simply preliminary work to the work for which parliamentary approval, as sought in the Bill, is required. However, it makes one wonder what noise levels will be involved in the construction work. We have had no information or assurances about that point.

The issue is allied to, although separate from, the channel tunnel fast link. That link may or may not follow the particular route which is the subject of the Bill. Uncertainty about the route continues and we wait anxiously for more information. It was reported in *The Daily Telegraph* yesterday that we could not expect a statement about that until October. I was told today that there is a rumour that my hon. Friend the Minister is to make a statement on Thursday. I do not know whether my hon. Friend the Minister can clear the air this evening, but that would obviously be helpful for all of us and our constituents. Wherever it is finally decided that the fast link shall run, between the completion of the construction of the tunnel and the use of the link, it is inevitable that the tunnel traffic will use the route that is the subject of this Bill, and that gives rise to my wider concerns.

The implications must be very much heavier use of the existing lines. British Rail has issued estimates of increased traffic along the line. Although I do not intend to burden the House with statistics, it is interesting to note that at Bickley, adjacent to works No. 6, it is estimated that, while four freight trains would have passed that point in 1990 every 24 hours, we can expect 32 freight trains in 1995. That is close to the figure of 27 referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) as the increase in the number of freight trains. Of those 32 trains, 15 will run between 11 pm and 7 am. We all know how very much more noise trains make at night than in the morning and their effect when we are trying to get a little sleep. There is bound to be a noticeable increase in passenger traffic. There must be more noise, especially from freight trains.

That point has not been denied. The Committee in another place stated that it accepted that

"there will be a substantial increase in noise levels once the Channel Tunnel opens."

What will be the effect of that noise? To answer that I call in aid a Department of Transport booklet entitled "Transport and the Environment", which states:

"Noise is a pollutant. It can cause stress and annoyance. It can disturb communication and, more subjectively, cause distress and irritation".

It is not difficult to visualise the effect on hundreds of properties in my constituency and those of my hon. Friends the Members for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook), for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) and for Ravensbourne (Sir J. Hunt).

What assurances have we had from British Rail about the effect of that increased freight traffic and increased noise? We have had no assurances of any value. It is incumbent on BR to provide forms of environmental protection to ensure that residents close to the line will not be adversely affected and, where that is not possible, to ensure that those people are adequately compensated.

British Rail denies that it has any legal obligation to provide protection or compensation. I accept that that is correct as the law now stands. However, BR also seems to be denying a moral obligation, and I cannot accept that.

[Mr. Roger Sims]

Amongst its literature about the channel tunnel fast link, British Rail issued a leaflet entitled, "Noise and the New Channel Tunnel Rail Link" which states:

"If the required noise level cannot reasonably be achieved by alternative means, BR will pay for sound insulation to be installed in homes that are affected. In addition, compensation may also be paid under the Land Compensation Act 1973 to people whose homes lose their value as a consequence of the level of noise that will result from operating the line."

However, that is in respect of the new link. If it applies to the new link, why should it not apply for the intensification on the existing lines which will carry the same traffic? To be fair, the Department of Transport has recognised and addressed that problem. In its booklet, "Transport and the Environment" to which I have referred, the Department states:

"The prospect of a possible major new railway line between London and the Channel Tunnel and increasing public sensitivity to noise generally prompted the Government last year to appoint a Departmental Committee to recommend a national noise insulation standard for new railway lines which relate equitably to the standards already set by regulations for new highways."

The Department then refers to the committee's report which was published at the end of February and then states:

"The Committee's recommendations are intended to provide the basis for making noise insulation regulations for new railways."

That is the nub of the matter. British Rail is prepared to take steps about new railways, but, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) explained, it seems quite unwilling to do so in respect of the intensification of use of existing lines.

The statement issued on behalf of the Bill's promoters reads:

"The Board have given assurances that, if Noise Insulation Regulations are made applicable to new railways in accordance with the recommendations of the report of the Mitchell Committee, then, to the extent that these Regulations apply also to the alteration of existing railways, the Board will apply them in relation to the works proposed in the Bill in the same way as would have been required if the Regulations had been in force before the works were executed."

That sounds all right in principle, but we should notice the saving clause

"to the extent that those Regulations apply also to the alteration of existing railways".

In other words, if British Rail is required by law to pay compensation, it will. I am glad to hear that but, by implication, if it is not so required, presumably it will not pay it.

I sought to argue in the debate on 19 June—I will not cover the same ground again—that, although physically we are talking about existing lines, to the extent that the channel tunnel will link existing lines to the entire continental rail network, that line is, to all intents and purposes, a new line and should be treated as such. As a result, therefore, we must contend with the environmental protection and planning issues to which I have referred. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling said, the Minister argued on 19 June that he could not accept the new clause that my right hon. Friend so ably moved because it had far wider implications. I have to accept that that may well be the case, and that that Bill had national implications. However, British Rail has promoted this Bill specifically to enable it to carry out the works that are detailed in the Bill.

Ideally, undertakings should be written into the Bill to deal with noise protection and, where that is not possible, there should be compensation. If we cannot have that written on the face of the Bill, we want cast-iron assurances about exactly what British Rail proposes to do in the circumstances that have been described. Those undertakings should include not only the payment of compensation, but the purchase of property. We are not talking only about a noise problem—although the noise can be such as to make it virtually impossible to live in property close to the line; vibration can also present a real problem, especially with the long heavy freight trains that we expect to use the line in the numbers that I have suggested.

The Minister and my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South should not be under any illusions about the strength of feeling on this matter in the London borough of Bromley and in my constituency. My hon Friend the Minister was good enough to visit the borough and has seen for himself how close many properties are to the railway, so I am sure that he understands the effect of the intensified use that we are discussing.

The threat of that intensified use has not simply devalued properties along the line; some are unsaleable. It has now reached the stage where some estate agents will not take such properties on their books. I have files of letters from constituents who are anxious to move away on retirement but who are unable to do so, and many more from people who prefer to stay in their own homes and who knew, when they bought the properties, that there was a railway at the bottom of the garden and who expected to have trains running along it, but who did not know—they could not have visualised—the enormous increase in traffic that will be the inevitable result of the line being used for channel tunnel traffic.

Neither I nor my constituents are being unreasonable or obstructive. Obviously, on parochial grounds, we can hardly be expected to welcome the extra traffic which the tunnel will generate coming through our district, but we accept that that is inevitable. For its part, British Rail must accept that it has obligations to us. If it is prepared to do that, in the form of firm commitments and not just pious phrases, I would not wish to impede the Bill's progress, but if those assurances are not forthcoming, I shall seek to oppose the Bill's Second Reading, and I hope that the rest of the House will join me in that.

8.4 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): I had better get the non-controversial part of the Bill out of the way first, before commenting on some of the speeches that have been made. The Bill is not solely and exclusively about Kent, Network SouthEast and the various routes to Dover; it also provides for the building of a chord at West Hampstead, thus linking international services with destinations on the west coast mainline about which I feel strongly, representing—as you do, Madam Deputy Speaker—a constituency close to Birmingham.

Those of us who have supported the channel tunnel project throughout our parliamentary careers have always been concerned to ensure that it benefits the whole of the United Kingdom. The provision of such a chord, linking

the east and west coast mainlines, is an essential part of the future success of the United Kingdom's passenger railway including, of course, that in Scotland.

I am a little surprised at the controversy that the Bill has already engendered. I understand the views of hon. Members representingKent and elsewhere about the likely disruption to the lives of their constituents once the Government have announced the preferred route for the new high-speed link. I join those hon. Members in pressing the Minister to put us all out of our misery as quickly as possible by letting us know the preferred option preferably before the recess—I, too, have read the conflicting press articles of the past week—so that those along the route will know their fate and those elsewhere can feel suitably relieved as soon as possible.

That might be the last time in my speech that I receive so many affirmative nods from Conservative Members, because the rest of this Bill, which is causing so much controversy, only sets out the need for a number of spur lines and loops to increase the capacity of international and commuter trains on the existing busy routes to Dover. The principle of routing trains to London via Tonbridge and Maidstone was established in the Channel Tunnel Act 1987.

As far as I understand the speeches that have been made tonight and the reasons for the blocking motion which has led to this debate, hon. Members representing Kent constituencies feel that their constituents should be compensated by monetary or other means for the additional traffic that will use the existing route after 1993 when the channel tunnel opens. It is somewhat surprising to hear them say that. Some of them have given the impression that, regardless of the opening of the channel tunnel in 1993, nothing—no railway—must be allowed to disturb the tranquillity of what they call the garden of England. I have always taken the view that that is a short-sighted attitude. If there is no new rail link and if there are no new improvements to the existing rail links, I have a feeling that the number of additional heavy goods vehicle movements that will result from the opening of the tunnel will cause more disruption to the tranquillity in the garden of England than any of the spur or loop lines that we are discussing.

Mr. Rowe: I know that the hon. Gentleman would wish to be totally fair-minded. There are those of us who accept the need for a purpose-built line between the channel tunnel and the rest of the country, but who feel that the people of Kent—and much of the rest of the country—would be better served by a route that passes only a few habitations rather than by a combination of routes affecting literally thousands of homes.

Mr. Snape: So say all of us. However, that is not what the Bill is all about. We do not have such a route at present, because there is a considerable amount of controversy about exactly where it should run. The Bill is about the improvement of the existing rail route. Without such an improvement the constituents of the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) and of other hon. Members who represent Kent constituencies will find their passage by both road and rail to and from London considerably inconvenienced. Perhaps it is just my innate pessimism, but I have a feeling that, regardless of the provisions of the Bill, inconvenience is coming.

To concentrate solely on the Bill, it appears to be the view of hon. Members who have spoken so far—or the view was inherent in their speeches—that there is something unique about channel tunnel trains using the existing rail network, so special and specific compensation should be paid to people in Kent who, in the view of some Conservative Members, will be adversely affected by the passage of those trains.

I have made the point previously—although it did not arouse great popularity among the people to whom I made it—that it is an odd philosophy to buy a house near a railway line and then complain about the noise of trains. I made the point during the Select Committee which took evidence on the Channel Tunnel Bill. People said, "Ah, but when we bought our houses there were not many trains. As the channel tunnel will mean extra trains, surely we are entitled to some compensation. Whether it should be paid by British Rail or the Government, we leave to you." Again, I find that philosophy somewhat hard to understand.

I am often accused in these debates of being such a rail buff that I am blinded to the realities of life for people who do not share my support for the railway industry. The hon. Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) indicates from a sedentary position some agreement with that. People are entitled to their opinion. I do not have any great affection for the railway industry, believe it or not, Madam Deputy Speaker. It did not pay my father or me one iota of what we were both worth. However, that is a purely personal view. I am prepared to accept that there might be some dissension in the ranks of the Conservative party about that opinion.

It struck me as surprising that the hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) said that his constituents found that their properties were unsaleable because of fears about the extra rail traffic that would be generated by the channel tunnel. If people who live alongside the existing railway line cannot sell their properties, I venture to suggest that the reason might be the depth of the current recession as much as the proposal to run extra trains on the line. I have often made the point, and I do so again, that I have never discovered a domestic property of which the value was reduced by its proximity to a comprehensive railway service to and from the capital city. If any Conservative Member can produce an example, I am willing to be surprised. It looks as if that surprise is heading my way.

Mr. Wolfson: I beg the hon. Gentleman to appreciate that blight has arisen which stems from fear of the unknown. It is real and significant blight. In the town of Swanley, houses close to the railway line have dropped in value by much more than comparable houses in other parts of the town as a result of anxieties about freight trains and the noise that will be produced, especially at night. It is real blight.

Mr. Snape: I have exchanged opinions with the hon. Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) on many occasions over the years. I accept the point that he makes on behalf of his constituents. I hope that it will not sound too callous about the anxieties of his constituents if I say that it is for hon. Members to reassure their constituents about the reality of the position. The hon. Gentleman specifically mentioned freight trains. There is nothing unusual about freight trains on railway lines—except under this

[Mr. Snape]

Government, because much of the freight that was previously carried by rail now goes on heavy goods vehicles which are much more obtrusive than any railway line in terms of the environment and pollution. I hope that together we can examine that in a moment.

Let me deal with the extra passenger trains, which I gather are also regarded as a problem. I remind hon. Members for Kent constituencies that increases and decreases in the number of trains on the main line from the Kent coast are nothing unusual. Let us confine ourselves to more modern times—say the past 50 years. The Kent coast electrification scheme about 30 years ago resulted in a large increase in passenger trains. Compensation was neither considered nor paid for the intensification of the railway service. I remind the House that the trains that were introduced following electrification were electrical multiple units running on the old-fashioned jointed rail tracks which were considerably noisier than the modern electrical multiple units travelling on continuous welded rails.

To turn to freight, I remind the hon. Members for Sevenoaks and for Chislehurst that during the 1960s there was a great deal more freight than there is now on the line to which the Bill refers and about which Conservative Members raise the anxieties of their constituents. I have looked back at freight flows by rail in the 1960s. They included coal from the Kent pits, oil for ships and for Richborough power station, and cars from Lenham. Soft fruit and manufactured goods were carried to a much greater extent by the train-ferry system than, alas, they are today. In addition, general goods were moved to local stations throughout Kent. There was the noise of shunting at yards at stations such as Faversham, Ashford and Tonbridge, to name but three, all of which are now empty of freight traffic.

The hon. Member for Sevenoaks mentioned the length of modern freight trains. Again I remind him, without seeking to score any points, that the freight trains of the 1960s were loose-coupled, unbraked small wagon trains which clanked and banged their way along in a much more noisy way than present-day freight trains. In the 1960s and earlier, for obvious reasons, many of those trains ran through the night because the intensive commuter passenger service, then as now, took up a good proportion of the train paths during the hours of daylight.

The other freight trains that ran in the 1960s but do not run today carried paper products and coal from Maidstone to New Hythe and coal, especially from the east midlands, to Southfleet cement works. Without exception, that traffic now travels by road. None of it uses the railway lines of Kent.

Before the war—to end these reminiscences, which I have gleaned from other than personal sources—there were no fewer than 40 freight transfer trips a day from Brent or Firm Park to Hither Green through Peckham and Lewisham, none of which uses the railway tracks today. So it is not true to say that the freight which will be engendered by this project is something new for Kent.

Does the hon. Member for Faversham wish to intervene? If so, he should do so rather than simply pull strange faces which do not do anything for the tone of the debate or to excite me.

Mr. Moate: I proposed to reserve my comments until later, but I will let the hon. Gentleman know why I was reacting. I was hoping he would appreciate that we have moved on a lot in the last 50 years or more, when clanking freight trains were part of the way of life. We expect a higher standard these days to help to prevent noise pollution. Perhaps he will come up to date and appreciate some of the problems facing people living along railway lines which can expect intensification of use.

Mr. Snape: The hon. Gentleman misunderstood what I said, or I did not explain myself well enough, or he was too busy pulling faces to listen to what I said. One reason why freight was lost by the railways and moved on to lorries —which, despite 30 or 40 years of progress, are no less obtrusive in the 1990s, despite the higher standards which the hon. Gentleman and I desire—was precisely because of those old-fashioned methods of freight carrying which were common in the United Kingdom, not just 40 or 50 years ago but until the mid-1970s.

The clanking and clanging of the unbraked freight train did not disappear from British Rail until comparatively recently. Some Conservative Members appear to be objecting to the very modernisation that the hon. Member for Faversham urges. We are talking now about modern freight trains with air brakes running on continuous welded rails and, under this measure, passing through newly constructed loops of up to 900 m in length. I cannot imagine any other country objecting to such progress, but it obviously makes the hon. Member for Faversham tuck his head under the bedclothes in terror at the thought of such trains running past his bedroom window. I hope that other, less easily frightened Conservative Members will use the opportunity to reassure their constituents about the so-called horrors to come, because the rest of us in the United Kingdom have an interest in the outcome of the debate.

The Government's pledge is that the new project will benefit as much of the population of the country as possible. Without the provision of passing loops and extra works, many of a minor nature, many of the bottlenecks in the south-east will make the passage of such freight trains more difficult for the rest of the country.

It is likely that if these works do not go ahead, the rest of us will suffer the same increase in heavy goods vehicles that some Conservative Members who represent Kent constituencies appear to look at with a more relaxed attitude than do the rest of us. I put it no higher than that. I think that I see the hon. Member for Faversham indicating dissent at those remarks. The freight must go by road or rail. If the improvements to the railway line inherent in the Bill are not carried out, it is not fanciful to suppose that it will go by road. Nor is it fanciful to say that that will be enormously more disturbing to the environment of the hon. Gentleman's constituents than any proposals in the Bill.

About 75 per cent. of international freight coming into the United Kingdom after 1993 will be going to destinations beyond London, most on direct services. It is, in our view, essential that that freight is not delayed in the south-east to the disadvantage of the west midlands, the north of England and Scotland.

I ask Conservative Members in a non-party way to reflect on the effect on transport patterns in this country of their wishes being acceded to as regards the payment of compensation resulting from intensification on existing

railway lines. The competition between road and rail, so beloved of the hon. Member for Faversham and others, would be distorted in an even more anti-rail form in future were their pleas to be accepted by the Government.

The cost of compensation under the provisions of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987, and particularly section 42, would have to be borne by the customer if the Government insisted, as did the Government of the day, that no public money should be spent on the project. Presumably the demands that are now being made would have to be met from the depleted resources of British Rail, so making it even less likely that rail freight could be competitive in its non-stop battle against road freight. Road hauliers face no demands similar to those being made on British Rail.

If the pledge of the Secretary of State—so far not backed up by any evidence or extra cash—to encourage freight traffic to transfer from road to rail is to mean anything, the Government must ensure that no additional burden is placed on any sectors of British Rail, particularly on rail freight.

Sir John Stanley: My constituents and those in south-east England and London will be noting carefully that the Labour party is opposed to compensation being given to those whose homes have been destroyed in value by channel tunnel traffic. That will be noted in many marginal constituencies in London and the south-east. Will the Labour party's opposition to compensation for the intensification of use of the railways be combined with the removal of compensation for the intensification of noise disturbance from airports, which currently carries compensation?

Mr. Snape: We are terribly impressed by those deep political points which, typically, came from the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley). If he wishes to spend the time of debates such as this making cheap political points, he will no doubt do so. But that will not earn him any greater respect than did his previous activities in the House. If we are talking about the proposed new rail link, there are circumstances in which compensation should be payable. We are talking about high-speed trains but not about a new rail link. We are discussing the intensification of service on an existing railway.

I remind the right hon. Gentleman, before he goes round Kent distorting the reality of the situation—and he must be desperate to have made those points in his intervention—that my hon. Friends and I would not allow such a concession to apply only in Kent. We hope that channel tunnel freight trains will pass through our constituencies, too, that channel tunnel freight terminals will be built in other parts of the United Kingdom. Will we be entitled to the same compensation, or shall we tell our constituents that the only people whom the Conservative party care about are those who live in the affluent suburbs of Tonbridge, or wherever the right hon. Gentleman temporarily represents?

Proposals for other railway projects will apply not only to London and the south but to other parts of the country. For example, proposals have been made to open existing freight railway lines to passenger trains from Nottingham, through Mansfield to Worksop, and through Leicester to Burton. If the principle of intensification is to be accepted, British Rail may show an even greater reluctance to reopen railway lines in the rest of the United Kingdom and the enormous additional cost will fall on the public purse.

The right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling may try to explain away his support for the channel tunnel to his constituents. His position is close to that of the former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher). He particularly supports section 42 of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987, which specifically precludes public support for the protection and provision that, belatedly and in the run up to a general election, the right hon. Gentleman seeks to establish during the passage of this Bill. I am not too bothered about the right hon. Gentleman, because, like most other hon. Members, I do not take him particularly seriously anyway.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): How very rude.

Mr. Snape: The hon. Lady has just arrived and cannot wait to get her name on the record. She has not heard any of the debate so far. The right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling should explain the discrepancies in his support for a Bill which led to a situation about which he now complains to his constituents and to people in the south.

I shall continue to argue that the railway alternative for moving freight is infinitely preferable, whether it is in the west midlands or in the more leafy suburbs of Kent. I hope that the Minister for Public Transport will make it plain that, if the pleas of Conservative Members are to be accepted, Opposition Members will expect such provision to extend throughout the country and to be funded directly from the Treasury rather than from the already over-stretched budget of British Rail.

8.35 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): The Government consented to the deposit of this Bill by British Rail. We support it and urge the House to give it a Second Reading so that the Committee can consider it in greater detail. It concerns the construction of the facilities necessary to carry freight and passengers through the channel tunnel and is therefore important for the whole country.

The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) raised the important issue of the treatment of road and rail freight. It is not my job to answer the points raised in the debate—that is for my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne), who would wish me to deal with some of the points that are not pertinent to the Bill. How the burden is placed on the road or rail operator is important for the schemes mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley).

As for rail freight, the Government believe that any rail operator—in this case, British Rail—should be responsible for undertaking any measures deemed necessary. In our debate on 19 June, I said that British Rail was already in contact with Kent county council to plan the works that both parties deem necessary. It is for British Rail to undertake those works. I agree with the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East that one must, in all fairness and equity, look at comparable situations throughout the country. It is not possible to isolate one particular problem

[Mr. Roger Freeman]

and the Government acknowledge that there is a problem in this case. I dissociate myself to some extent from the hon. Gentleman's remarks——

Mr. Snape: The Minister had better.

Mr. Freeman: —well, the serious remarks that he made pertaining to the issues that we are debating.

The Government accept that there is a real problem relating to noise caused at night by freight trains on those lines. That is not to say that there are not additional problems in other parts of the country. Several hon. Members have written to me about the problems on rail lines in constituencies which are not in Kent. Therefore, I hope that my hon. Friends are in no doubt that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and I take the issue seriously and acknowledge that a problem exists, although we may disagree about how to approach the problem.

As for road freight, through the regime of taxation, vehicle excise duty and fuel duty, our heavy goods vehicles bear one of the heaviest burdens in Europe. They contribute approximately four to five times the value of Government funds for the maintenance and further construction of our road and motorway system. Our hauliers pay a much higher proportion than those in many other European countries. Any financial burden that may be placed on road hauliers in the future in relation to noise mitigation measures is already amply covered by taxation. In their role as the highway authority for trunk roads, or through the revenue support grant to local authorities for their work on highways, the Government amply cover the expenditure.

In a brief intervention, my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) raised a point that is outwith the Bill and I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South will want me to deal with it. It concerns class 471s. I sought to deal with that issue in the British Railways Board (Finance) Bill which was debated recently. Although further work is needed on the detail of the investment submission, as I made clear in the debate, British Rail and the Government recognise the importance of replacing and improving the existing rolling stock for the Kent coastal services. It is a matter of investment priorities. It is important that British Rail completes the Kent link services first—a massive investment programme of more than £500 million—before turning to the 471s. In the course of this year's public expenditure survey, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will consider the relative importance of further assistance to British Rail to enable it to continue its investment programme. Although it is for British Rail to determine its investment priorities, we understand the importance of that project.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling raised several issues. He repeated the arguments deployed on 19 June and alluded to passing loops, the parallels with aircraft noise, and the fact that, in his judgment and in the judgment of my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims), the opening of the channel tunnel, the associated works and the new freight services constitute a major new work. The Government are aware of those arguments. The fact that my right hon. Friend outlined an alternative way to deal administratively with the issue is helpful. His definition of "administrative treatment" may be slightly different from that of the Government, but if by that he means a non-statutory approach, I hope that as time passes he and his constituents, and some of my other hon. Friends, will feel a little more assured about what British Rail is accomplishing with regard to noise mitigation. I am certain that those measures will not entirely satisfy some of my right hon. and hon. Friends, but that is the approach that British Rail and the Government are adopting at present. With the advice and representations of the local authorities involved, the rail operator is deciding what to do.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst raised similar issues. The Government in no way seek to exclude the London boroughs, including Bromley, from the wider issues of noise mitigation. Reference was made to Kent county council because it has made specific representations. I know that I speak for British Rail when I say that conversations with Kent county council in no way exclude similar conversations with other appropriate local authorities.

In my speech on 19 June, I said that the Government are considering the Batho report, which the House will have already studied and which deals with a range of matters associated with excessive noise, including those relating to aircraft, the intensification of use of railway lines, roads and other nuisances. The Government will make a statement on that in due course. I cannot envisage when, but the announcement will represent the Government's comprehensive approach to noise problems.

As for press speculation on the timing of an announcement about the rail link, I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst does not believe what he reads in the newspapers, and he should not be led to believe that there is any significance in any particular newspaper article. It is an important subject, and as soon as the Government have considered the issues, we shall come straight to the House to make a statement, but I cannot forecast whether that will be before or after the recess. Any suggestion that the announcement will be made when the House returns in October as a statement of Government policy is not true.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) will doubtless seek to speak later and I shall read with care what he says. He raised the important issue about the fear of the unknown. British Rail and the Government should take whatever action they can to mitigate that fear. In the debate on 19 June I announced that I intend to take an initiative, although it can probably be attributed to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) who originally put the thought in my mind. British Rail and the Government—I accept the key responsibility—will talk to representatives of the professional advisers from building societies, banks and firms of solicitors who can advise people whose properties are affected by the line. We shall seek to ensure that they are not alarmist and do not exaggerate the problems created either by the intensification of use of existing lines or by a new rail link when it is built. I intend to speak to leading representatives of some professional organisations shortly to see what can be done to ensure that we do not exacerbate a problem that we acknowledge exists.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and I have no illusions about the strength of feeling on the

subject. Although we support the Bill and believe that it should be given a Second Reading today, I assure the House that we shall continue to give the problems of noise as they exist throughout the country our full attention. We do not seek simply to ring-fence the problems of some of my hon. Friends in Kent, nor would they wish us to do so. I accept the logic of the argument of the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East on that score, as I have made plain on a number of occasions. We shall continue to give the matter our careful, close and continuing attention.

Mr. Snape: I am grateful for that assurance. Will the Minister comment on the likely attitude of his right hon. and hon. Friends at the Treasury to any such concession, whether applied in Kent or anywhere else? Would such a concession make railway expansion in the United Kingdom more or less likely?

Mr. Freeman: I have always said that I accept the argument advanced by a number of my hon. Friends, particularly my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden), that in any announcement and consideration of a new high-speed rail link, there must be——

Mr. Snape: That is what I am talking about.

Mr. Freeman: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me to answer in my own way.

Any announcement of a new rail link involves a massive increase in rail capacity and it is most important that there should be no doubt in the minds of those affected as to where they stand in relation to noise mitigation and compensation. I hope that the House will be persuaded by my arguments tonight.

8.46 pm

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I am most grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for making a number of assertions, not least on a day when some of his ministerial colleagues have shown discourtesy to the House by holding a press conference rather than making a statement to the House. I am grateful that my hon. Friend the Minister is contemplating that, when the decision is taken, a statement will be made to the House and not outside this place. I also welcome my hon. Friend's well-demonstrated, clear interest in compensation and noise protection matters. I shall return to the specific assurance that he gave about building societies because I wish to enlarge on that point.

We are discussing a simple matter. Wherever a form of public—or, in the case of roads, private—transport operates there is an agreed level of noise beyond which the Government believes that it is not right to subject citizens. That standard applies to transport, whether vehicles on roads, aircraft or railways. My right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) made an important point when he said that rail noise was more akin to aircraft noise than to the almost continuous roar of motorways or other roads.

The recent report of the Mitchell committee, which was set up to recommend to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Transport a national noise insulation standard, raised another important issue. It said that

"the traffic on a railway can be intensified by minor construction such as passing loops and re-signalling or traffic can be re-scheduled into previously lightly loaded times. This can lead to situations where intensification could not have been foreseen and is so great that it completely changes the nature of the line."

That is important—there comes a point when the intensification of use effectively means that we have a new line. What is more, at a time when we are linking our railway system to that on mainland Europe, it is interesting that some of our mainland European friends, such as the Netherlands, have taken that very point and reclassified some lines that have been subjected to intensified use as, in effect, new lines.

It is also important that the present expectation, and in some cases experience, of the noise on existing lines well surpasses the level which the Mitchell committee recommended as a tolerable noise level. Therefore, there is a powerful case for insisting on British Rail providing protection to the houses alongside some parts of those lines. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) will make that commitment rather than simply saying, as he appeared to say in his opening remarks, that if he looks hard enough he can find precedents to allow British Rail to escape that obligation.

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): Many people have a passenger line at the bottom of their garden which they have accepted as part of their way of life, but when this becomes a freight line overnight, with trains half a mile long rumbling through the night, the character of the line is changed. Is this not a new line, by any judgment?

Mr. Rowe: That is my view. It would be better if the trains rumbled through the night without cease, because a curious phenomenon of human hearing is that it adapts to continuous noise very much more easily than to sporadic noise. When I worked at Edinburgh university, it was in a purpose-built modern building of the kind with which we are all so familiar. One could hear everything in the room next door. One of the cheapest ways to overcome that problem was to have pumped into the room what was called white noise—a kind of toneless muzak—which would quickly become unnoticed but which would allow one to carry on one's business without being overheard from the room next door.

The European Commission has at last taken seriously the business of co-ordinating the railways of Europe. This will mean that there will be pressure to harmonise protection for citizens alongside railways in a way that will prove helpful to our constituents. I hope that both British Rail and my hon. Friend the Minister will keep abreast of what is going on in Europe.

I was disappointed by one statement in what was otherwise an admirable production from the Department of Transport about environmental protection. It said that freight is not "time sensitive". I think that that means that freight as conducted in the past by British Rail has never been time-sensitive because it has nearly always been late. I believe that there will be a massive intensification of the use of freight lines. Contrary to what British Rail believes, there is a great market for freight that is time-sensitive and that delivers even perishable goods to urban centres in the middle of the night, as is necessary. However, if we have such a system, people must be protected.

Of all the miseries that come to the surgeries and through the postbags of hon. Members, probably some of the most intense, and certainly the most common, involve those whose lives have been destroyed by blight. This is a massive problem. British Rail has, on the whole, handled

[Mr. Rowe]

the problem of individual sufferers from blight with as much sensitivity as it is easy for it to use. However, it has not shown itself capable of taking account of people whose misery has suddenly intensified. For example, somebody may have been widowed in the past month, or someone's marriage may have broken up. There is a constant need for British Rail to go on buying up the properties of people whose lives have been destroyed. I should like to see rather more generosity in that.

In any part of the country, properties are moving into blight, but a similar number of properties are moving out of blight. As blight is mainly a fear of what is to come, and often when it has come it proves to be much less frightening than people thought it was, there is scope for examining whether it would be possible to set up a national agency. This could be a purchaser of last resort for people who have made every effort to dispose of their property and who, as in the example used by my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims)—I share his experience—live in properties that estate agents will not even take on their books.

People in this position can have all their capital tied up in this one asset. They cannot move. If they are promoted, they lose the promotion because they cannot take the job. If a spouse has died, the widow or widower cannot get rid of the property. For 101 different reasons, people's lives can be in ruins. It should not be beyond the wit of the Government, the private sector and the voluntary sector, working together, to devise an agency as a purchaser of last resort. Once it had been set up, it would finance its continuing operation. I accept that houses would have to be bought at a discount and that there should not be a distress payment. The price paid should be between the going rate and a distress payment. The agency would then be able to sell the property at a profit once whatever was causing the blight had been overcome. If that were done on a large enough scale—a nationwide scale—it would not be out of the question to alleviate what is, for virtually every hon. Member, probably the largest single source of human distress.

8.56 pm

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) and my hon. Friend the Minister for introducing into our debate on the Bill the Networker express programme. It is particularly relevant, when considering the immediate future of our railways in the south-east, to know precisely what will happen to that programme. In some respects, we are talking about new rail lines. The Networker express service rolling stock is much more than rolling stock. It is almost a new railway line. It is of tremendous importance, because it will increase capacity on the Kent line by 50 per cent. Few other measures could be carried through at a relatively small capital expenditure—I use the word advisedly—and have such a dramatic effect on rail services.

It is a little galling that we are all encouraged to exhort the Government to approve a programme, but when we do so we are told that a formal submission has not been made. I welcome the comforting words that the Minister offered us, but what we want is formal approval this autumn, so that we know that that important programme can be put in hand as soon as possible.

I welcome my hon. Friend the Minister's helpful response to the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape). In contrast, the hon. Gentleman's irrational and irascible approach to the matter has done a great disservice to British Rail and to the Bill. If he calls himself a friend of the railways, I can only say with friends like that, who needs enemies? The hon. Gentleman has completely missed the point.

Mr. Snape: Not as badly as the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Moate: There are some moments when one has to agree with the hon. Gentleman although they are seldom.

The hon. Gentleman has completely missed an important development. There he was, believing that he was defending railway investment by arguing against compensation for those suffering from intensification of noise when already major and helpful concessions have been made. He has completely missed the point and his diatribe made him sound very callous. Many of our constituents will be surprised to find him saying that people living alongside a railway line knew what they were likely to get and so should put up with intensification of noise. That was the message he was delivering. However, British Rail has already taken steps in the right direction, which he should know about but clearly he does not.

Mr. Snape: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will also tell his constituents that if this minor Bill is not approved—I understand that some of his hon. Friends intend to vote against it tonight—in 1993 they will experience the misery that heavy goods vehicles on Kent roads will cause. I think that we are talking about some 1,500 heavy goods vehicles which will not be on Kent roads as a result of the freight trains about which he complains. Those heavy goods vehicles will have a far more damaging effect and so far I have yet to hear the hon. Gentleman or anyone else talk about the intensification of noise that some of the more rural roads will have to suffer when the channel tunnel opens.

Mr. Moate: The hon. Gentleman seems to be assuming that we are against the Bill, but he is wrong. Many of us enthusiastically welcome British Rail's investment in preparation for 1993 to have a first-class high-speed rail link ready for the opening of the channel tunnel. If the hon. Gentleman were to listen for a while instead of reacting so violently, he would learn something. The readiness with which the hon. Gentleman attacks is quite alarming. Most of the time he is attacking British Rail and the Government's record, which is infinitely better than the record of the Labour Government whom he supported.

We should emphasise that the Bill makes it possible to have in place a first-class railway system ready for the opening of the channel tunnel. It always surprises me that Ministers and British Rail seem to hide their light under a bushel when it comes to the building of the new railway. Because of the arguments about the new high-speed link, which was never going to be in place before the turn of the century anyway, we have failed to proclaim the fact that when the tunnel opens it will be possible to catch a

non-stop train from Waterloo through to Paris or Brussels, a three-hour service probably manned by a British Rail or a French driver.

The majority of the British public have become so used to the knocking campaign against everything British that they have come to the view that there will not be a rail service ready for the opening of the tunnel. But there will be and it will be a good service. As my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South said, it is coming as a result of £1·5 billion of new investment to make sure that the service is ready. Why are not we proclaiming the fact that Britain is not lagging behind? We will have a good, attractive rail service in place ready for the opening of the channel tunnel, and the Bill provides for that.

If the hon. Gentleman would listen for a while instead of reacting so violently, as he seems to do more and more these days, he would understand that many of us support the Bill. But with such legislation, we are entitled to tell British Rail that we want to ensure that the terms are right for all those of our constituents who are likely to be affected.

Mr. Rowe: Does my hon. Friend agree that it would help a lot if we had a station?

Mr. Moate: I am tempted to become involved in the much bigger argument. We are all aware of the need to make progress on the international station, but that is not my subject at the moment. We are fully aware of the need to make progress and we can all see the benefit of that.

Those who take the rather old-fashioned view that there should not be any form of compensation or help as a result of intensification of noise should consider what is happening. Some of us received a letter this morning from Kent county council—I will not read it all—which says: "a project team which will include Kent county council officers is in the process of being established by BR's Railfreight Distribution to look at the issue of noise protection for existing lines on the opening of the Channel Tunnel. Despite this, it still remains unclear at this stage whether there is any prospect of BR paying compensation to those affected, or funding noise protection measures." Doubt remains, but British Rail, working with the Kent county council, has taken the initiative in finding ways of ameliorating the problem for those living near existing lines, and we should welcome that major step. If everyone took the negative attitude shown by the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East we would not have progressed that far.

I should like to go further. Why cannot we ask British Rail to give an undertaking to examine ways of compensating—not necessarily under the statutory regime, but, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) sensibly put it, as a matter of administration—those who suffer the serious dislocation, disruption or damage caused by noise intensification? I suspect that the number affected would not be large and that British Rail could handle the problem. If it gave such an undertaking, that would be a major advance in not only securing the passage of the Bill—important though that is—but in railway development generally.

If we have secured, as I believe is the case, an important concession in Kent in respect of the amelioration of noise on existing routes through, perhaps, Faversham, Sittingbourne and other parts of my constituency—we hope that it will not happen, but freight trains might travel through those places at night, on lines that do not currently carry them—the same concession must apply to south London, which will almost certainly suffer noise intensification as well, in which case not only my right hon. and hon. Friends but many Labour Members will be clamouring for help for their constituents.

I do not believe that such a scheme would impose an enormous burden on rail development. Much of it will be concerned with noise insulation measures, the cost of which need not be exorbitant. I say to the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East—who I know cares passionately about railway development—that the best way to achieve broad acceptance of railway development in the rest of the 1990s and into the next century is to accept the logic of giving protection to those people who live alongside existing routes—by offering them help, particularly with noise insulation, grants, or even compensation if their property is severely damaged.

Mr. Snape: I put to the hon. Gentleman the same question that I asked the Minister, without receiving much of a response: would the countrywide provision of noise insulation or compensation make the Treasury warmer than it is at present towards future development, or would that have the reverse effect?

Mr. Moate: If one reverses the sense of the hon. Gentleman's question, it implies that he would be prepared to go ahead with railway development even where he realised that it would cause severe environmental damage—and that is something that few constituents would accept. The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is that we must get it right. If the modest price of intensification of usage of existing lines is noise insulation grants, we must face up to it. However, I do not accept that that would impose a great burden on British Rail or private investors. Any major development—whether it involves railways, roads, or the construction of new buildings—is subject to the polluter pays principle, whether noise or any other kind of pollution is involved. It is universally accepted that environmental protection should be built in, and I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman, alone almost, should fight that concept.

Mr. Snape: Can the hon. Gentleman tell the House of any cases in which, in respect of road intensification, compensation has been paid, or is to be paid, to people living alongside roads that have seen a dramatic increase in traffic in recent years?

Mr. Moate: The hon. Gentleman is reawakening memories of earlier debates about noise compensation. Many of us are not unhappy about the possibility that the concession already made by British Rail will lead to a re-examination of the principles that apply elsewhere. I am not saying that the Treasury will like that; in areas where traffic has intensified, however, many people feel that it is only fair for the Government to offer help with noise insulation.

Mr. Rowe: I believe that, because an absolute standard has been set in relation to the amount of noise that people are expected to put up with, protection is being provided in some areas where intensification has taken place.

Mr. Moate: It is all a question of degree.

We are not talking about a theoretical exercise. British Rail has been very helpful, and has gone some way towards meeting the point. My hon. Friend the Minister is

[Mr. Moate]

trying to resolve the problem: the Government, unlike the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East, are taking it seriously.

I believe that British Rail should consider providing compensation when serious damage is done to existing properties. In doing so, it would secure considerable public support. The cost would not be excessive, and the future path of railway development would be eased. If my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South can give us any encouragement on that score, I for one will not oppose the Bill.

9.11 pm

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): I am doubtful about the message that we have received from the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape). Again, we are encountering a divided policy. In the debate on new clause 16 of the Planning and Compensation Bill, many Opposition Members—not just Labour Members—firmly supported the provision of compensation.

Mr. Snape: What my hon. Friends supported was the principle of compensation. We all accept that the noise that will be generated by a new high-speed rail link constitutes a unique phenomenon, and is likely to cause a good deal more dislocation than any noise caused by the existing links. We are not talking about the intensification of traffic on existing railway lines.

Mr. Wolfson: The hon. Gentleman is clearly very badly briefed; he has not done his homework. The new clause and debate to which I referred specifically concerned the very line that we are discussing now.

I support the intentions of the Bill, but like many of my constituents I consider it incomplete. I therefore cannot support the Bill itself. As the promoters have said, it will allow British Rail to carry out major works on the line that runs from Ashford to London, via Maidstone and Otford. The works are part of an investment programme costing more than £1 billion, on which British Rail has embarked to meet the huge surge in demand for rail travel that is expected to follow the opening of the channel tunnel.

I should make it clear—especially to the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East, who tried to suggest that those of us who were concerned about protection and compensation were sticking our heads in the sand, and were not interested in progress—that in my view it is high time that Britain took rapid steps to provide not just an adequate but a top-grade infrastructure for British routes to and from the channel tunnel, both road and rail. We have many lessons to learn from the French who are already ahead of us in building their rail links, junctions and stations ready for the opening of the tunnel and the years that follow. There are major benefits to be gained from providing an adequate rail freight service which can compete effectively with lorry traffic.

I accept the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) about the estimate of the impact of the growth in trade after 1992. Part of the impact will be to increase by 100,000 every year the lorry movements on the roads of Kent and the south-east. In comparison, in the first years of operation after the opening of the channel tunnel, rail freight services will offer—depending on the vigour with which the services are sold—the equivalent of 400,000 trunk lorry movements a year over the same roads, so I accept that there are clear benefits to be gained from moving freight by rail. That gain will limit the growth of heavy lorry traffic. It will be an environmental and energy-saving gain and something that most of us will applaud. It is also a clear gain for Britain as a whole. Therefore, it seems even more of a pity that the individuals whose homes will be severely blighted or made unsaleable—and when their value is already depressed by the fact that they live close to a quiet and little-used railway—will overnight, on the day that the tunnel opens, find themselves alongside a main European railway line. Those people have, as yet, no recourse to compensation or to noise and vibration protection measures.

We are not asking for anything unrealistic. As my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) pointed out, we are asking for reasonable measures which could ease the passage of the Bill and future railway development all over Britain. We have had to fight for every concession on this. When British Rail first published its alternative routes for the channel tunnel—the high speed line—it had no concept of providing any sort of noise protection or compensation. It based its approach on the law for existing lines and that has been a public relations disaster. It is utterly inexcusable and a total contrast to the way in which Eurotunnel—a private company—has operated at Folkestone from the beginning, producing good compensation plans, which have been kept live over about 10 years, for dealing with people whose homes have been damaged in any way, whether financially or environmentally, by development there. So there are lessons to be learnt and we need to learn them fast.

Because we have had to fight every inch, it may sometimes seem to other hon. Members that Kent Members become unnecessarily worked up about the issue, but I believe that we are justified in doing so. We value the interest taken in the matter by those from other areas of the country. I could not be more strongly in support of the need to ensure that the national transport infrastructure is ready and in position to service the channel tunnel properly so that the benefits are spread all over Britain. If that is not so, there is no point in having the tunnel.

So far, there has been a sharp contrast between this country and others, and I am critical of the Government in that respect. The French have used the development of the high-speed rail link as a generator of economic development and have funded it accordingly. The line to Brittany was one-third paid for by Government money —separately from SNCF's two-thirds contribution—in order to achieve economic development. Some parts of this country—and certainly parts of the south-east—are not looking for dynamic economic growth because they are already over-heated, or were until recently. However, other parts of the country badly need such growth and that is where rail development will play a major part, as it should.

I refer to the passage of the Bill in another place and stress that when it reaches its Committee stage in this place I hope that it will be more fully examined and greater note taken of various issues. I hope that firm recommendations will be made to deal with the problems of those who are disadvantaged by the intensification of use of existing lines. While asking for a more in-depth consideration to be taken in this place than was carried out in another place,

it is interesting to note that, during the Third Reading debate in another place, all those who spoke referred to the concerns that had been raised in Committee and on Second Reading about the intensification of use, its environmental effects and its negative effect on people's houses. They asked that those effects should be taken into account by the Government and by British Rail during the further stages of the Bill, so it is wholly reasonable that precisely that issue should be emphasised now.

Some progress has been made and the Government have responded. I will summarise some of the steps in that progress. The Minister for Public Transport has made it clear—he confirmed it again today—that he and the Secretary of State accept that intensification of use of existing railway lines will pose a problem when the channel tunnel opens and that he would consider that problem carefully. I am grateful to him for confirming that again today.

The House of Lords Select Committee on the British Railways (No. 3) Bill concluded that, just as the Mitchell committee had been established to examine noise from new railway lines, a similar study should be undertaken into noise arising from intensification of use. The Committee's conclusion makes it clear that this is an issue of real import.

The recommendation of the Department of the Environment's noise review working party in 1990 was that

"consideration should be given to extending the regulations about the insulation of residential property against railway noise so as to include householders affected by the significant intensification of use of a railway line which could not reasonably have been foreseen."

Surely there is common agreement that for people who bought houses along many points of this line the intensification that they now face could not reasonably have been foreseen.

I refer to the Mitchell committee's recent report which has already been mentioned. Its conclusion was

"to recommend to the Secretary of State for Transport a national noise insulation standard for new railway lines."

We are asking for that insulation standard to be extended to intensification of use.

In this debate, as in the debate on the Compensation and Planning Bill, it is arguable whether we are talking about intensification of use on existing lines or whether the capital investment put into the lines plus the opening of the channel tunnel—the biggest ever infrastructure project in Europe—constitutes a new line with new traffic, operating in a wholly different way from anything that has happened before.

I ask for a narrower point than my hon. Friend the Minister is prepared to accept. I ask that the channel tunnel routes between London and Folkestone should be accepted as unique in terms of the volume of and increase in night-time traffic by rail. That is a major difference compared with routes in other parts of the country. I also ask that British Rail should be asked to confirm the lack of an equivalent level of night-time traffic elsewhere and should be asked whether similar increases are expected elsewhere in the next five years. That is a key measure of whether the situation in Kent and south-east London is unique.

Kent county council has put in an immense amount of work over the past three to four years on achieving sensible noise standards. I suggest that the Kent authority's noise standards should form the basis of any noise scheme unless we get subsequent national noise regulation standards which would obviously be better than the local ones.

British Rail should produce a noise action scheme which would concentrate first on protection by barriers and by insulation. Many examples of that exist on the continent, so we do not have to reinvent the wheel. We can use experience from abroad, evaluate the costs and know that such methods work. The noise action scheme should also include provision for compensation by monetary payments for the loss in value to which so many speakers have referred.

The Secretary of State should go further and require British Rail to implement an agreed scheme for a specifically defined area. If he did that, it would do much to restore confidence among people in Kent and south-east London, and it would help them to accept the fact that the benefits of an effective rail freight scheme are real and can help environmentally, as well as provide the right and proper method by which to move as much freight as possible on the railway lines between the channel tunnel and the rest of the country.

I am not against the intentions of the Bill, but I am dissatisfied with the fact that it still does not provide my constituents and those of all the other Kent and south-east London Members—other areas of the country could also be affected at a later state—with reasonable protection and compensation.

9.23 pm

Mr. Thorne: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, may I say that we have had an extremely useful debate on an important matter. The debate has been extremely constructive in that everyone has welcomed the need for providing a rail link to the coast. The major source of disagreement has been the question of compensation, and I shall deal with that in a few moments. My hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) asked a question about the Networker which was answered by my hon. Friend the Minister of State.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) was especially concerned about compensation, and the fact that there was virtually a new line, even if it might run on old rails—or, rather, run where the old rails used to be. He said that that circumstance should give rise to a special form of compensation.

We have to take two factors into account. We must accept that this is a national problem, and is not limited simply to railway lines. Roads, too, can be affected, and we run into serious difficulty in determining exactly where to draw the line. I do not say that that cannot be done, but national legislation is not now in place because of that difficulty.

Perhaps what my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) said about Kent county council's work on standards could represent a foundation upon which something could be worked out. It is a difficult problem, and we must make it clear that we cannot consider compensation in isolation; we must deal with all forms of transport, not just one.

Sir John Stanley: National legislation is in place for civil airports and military airfields, where public works leading to intensification of use trigger entitlements to compensation. The problem is that British Rail has chosen —arbitrarily, I suggest—to align railways with roads

[Sir John Stanley]

rather than with airports. The provisions exist; they are on the statute book and are administered by the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. Thorne: British Rail is going to considerable lengths to discuss the matter at a high level with Kent county council. We accept that the county council has done a considerable amount of work in the past few years.

There is no doubt that there are statutory provisions that apply to new railway lines, but we are talking specifically about lines being used more intensively. We must await the outcome of the discussions between British Rail and Kent county council to see whether there is a basis on which to work. Nevertheless, we must be careful not to treat one section of the community differently from others. Real problems arise on the road network, and it would be wrong if people affected by them were not taken care of in the same way.

The right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel) was concerned about sleepers. I know that he and one or two of his colleagues have had problems travelling on the sleeper to and from their constituencies. The right hon. Gentleman felt that British Rail had broken an undertaking, but I do not believe that it has. British Rail gave an undertaking to consider the matter after the electrification of the line to see whether the service could be made viable. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman would not dream of suggesting that British Rail should lay on a sleeper service especially for Members of Parliament. That would be entirely wrong. The service has to be financially viable, and I believe that British Rail has considered the matter.

Several hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks, raised the question of blight, with special reference to the value of property being seriously affected. I know that that can happen; it has happened in my own constituency. Conversely, where blight is lifted, the opposite can happen. I knew of a number of houses that were blighted because a flyover was to be built over a roundabout. When it was decided to re-route the road, the value of the properties affected increased by 50 per cent. overnight. So I know that it happens, but, nevertheless, we must ensure that we can cater for all those who lose and not just for one group, particularly when the funding is then thrown upon the users of the route. It would not be fair to pick some people out for special treatment. We must be consistent, and that is why this is a national matter which will clearly have to be resolved in due course.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) was anxious to have a cast-iron assurance regarding compensation and blight purchase. I am afraid that I cannot give him any cast-iron assurances, but I can assure him that every possible attempt will be made to arrive at an amicable agreement on this point between Kent county council—and, for that matter, the London boroughs, should they so wish—and British Rail.

The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) welcomed the Bill, and I was pleased to receive support from the Opposition Benches. The hon. Gentleman drew attention to the fact that the Bill is essential to northern England and Scotland. That is absolutely true. We must accept that certain inconvenience will be caused, and that is why we must go to great lengths to try to ensure that those who are inconvenienced by the extra use are not unduly out of pocket as a result.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport replied to many of the questions that were raised, and I do not want to repeat what he said.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) also referred to the question of intensification, and felt that if, as a result of the Bill, our rail system were connected to the European system, a new line would be involved. That is an interesting point, but it must also apply to roads, and we must try to identify exactly how what is proposed can be made separate and special. My hon. Friend also referred to the question of the blight, and I am grateful to him for acknowledging British Rail's sensitivity in trying to deal with the matter. My hon. Friend's suggestion of setting up an agency as the purchaser of last resort was noted by my hon. Friend the Minister, and it is to be hoped that we shall hear a little more about that in due course. Nevertheless, blight is a great worry to those trapped in such circumstances.

Mr. Moate: My hon. Friend was trying to be helpful in saying that efforts would be made to reach agreement between the local authorities concerned and British Rail with regard to compensation or forms of noise protection —I am not sure which. Earlier, however, he said that he felt that the matter had to be dealt with on a national basis. There is a problem in reconciling those two propositions. I wonder whether my hon. Friend can encourage me to think that British Rail is ready to make an undertaking to extend the scope of the committee with Kent county council to include compensation—or is that too optimistic?

Mr. Thorne: I think that my hon. Friend is being a little too optimistic, as he suggests. The matter will certainly be discussed in Committee, and any undertakings that are sought can be more properly directed in that way. I was referring to two separate issues—on the one hand, the Bill and the way in which British Rail is trying to reach agreement on compensation or sound-proofing—it is one thing or the other—and, on the other, belief that, ultimately, we must find a national yardstick by which we can determine whether compensation should be paid. If we do not have a national yardstick, there will tend to be enormous variations and much criticism from different parts of the country about the fact that they have been dealt with in different ways.

There has been a great deal of agreement about the Bill. I hope that the House will give it a Second Reading tonight, and that it will make progress in Committee.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 210, Noes 10.

Division No. 214] **[9.39 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan	Bellingham, Henry
Alton, David	Bermingham, Gerald
Anderson, Donald	Bevan, David Gilroy
Ashby, David	Blackburn, Dr John G.
Aspinwall, Jack	Blair, Tony
Atkins, Robert	Boswell, Tim
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*	Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Brazier, Julian
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Bright, Graham
Begg, Roy	Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'ts)*

Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carr, Michael
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duffy, Sir A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Durant, Sir Anthony
Emery, Sir Peter
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Flynn, Paul
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodlad, Alastair
Gordon, Mildred
Gorst, John
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Haynes, Frank
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hill, James
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Janner, Greville
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kilfedder, James
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamond, James
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Lord, Michael
Loyden, Eddie
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McAvoy, Thomas
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McMaster, Gordon
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Malins, Humfrey
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parry, Robert
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pike, Peter L.
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Raffan, Keith
Redmond, Martin
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rooney, Terence
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Sheerman, Barry
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Short, Clare
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tredinnick, David
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wilson, Brian
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wood, Timothy
Wray, Jimmy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Neil Thorne and
Mr. Gary Waller.

NOES

Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Dixon, Don
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Moate, Roger
Rowe, Andrew
Sims, Roger
Skinner, Dennis
Stanbrook, Ivor

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Mark Wolfson and
Sir John Stanley.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read a Second time and committed.

Criminal Justice Bill

Lords Amendments to Commons Amendments in lieu of a Lords Amendment and a Lords Amendment in lieu of one of their Amendments to which the Commons have disagreed, considered.

The Lords agree to the Amendments after Clause 22 proposed by the Commons in lieu of the Amendment made by the Lords to insert a new Clause (Court's duty on passing sentence of life imprisonment), namely:

Insert the following new clause—*Duty to release discretionary life prisoners—*

'.—(1) A life prisoner is a discretionary life prisoner for the purposes of this Part if—

(a) his sentence was imposed for a violent or sexual offence the sentence for which is not fixed by law; and

(b) the court by which he was sentenced for that offence ordered that this section should apply to him as soon as he had served a part of his sentence specified in the order.

(2) A part of a sentence so specified shall be such part as the court considers appropriate taking into account—

(a) the seriousness of the offence, or the combination of the offence and other offences associated with it; and

(b) the provisions of this section as compared with those of section 27(2) above and section 28(1) below.

(3) As soon as, in the case of a discretionary life prisoner—

(a) he has served the part of his sentence specified in the order ("the relevant part"); and

(b) the Board has directed his release under this section,

it shall be the duty of the Secretary of State, subject to subsection (7) below, to release him on licence.

(4) The Board shall not give a direction under subsection (3) above with respect to a discretionary life prisoner unless—

(a) the Secretary of State has referred the prisoner's case to the Board; and

(b) the Board is satisfied that it is no longer necessary for the protection of the public that the prisoner should be confined.

(5) A discretionary life prisoner may require the Secretary of State to refer his case to the Board any time—

(a) after he has served the relevant part of his sentence; and

(b) where there has been a previous reference of his case to the Board, after the end of the period of two years beginning with the disposal of that reference; and

(c) where he is also serving a sentence of imprisonment for a term, after he has served one-half of that sentence;

and in this subsection "previous reference" means a reference under subsection (4) above or section 32(4) below made after the prisoner had served the relevant part of his sentence.

(6) In determining for the purpose of subsection (3) or (5) above whether a discretionary life prisoner has served the relevant part of his sentence, no account shall be taken of any time during which he was unlawfully at large within the meaning of section 49 of the Prison Act 1952 ("the 1952 Act").

(7) The Secretary of State may defer a prisoner's release under this section for a period not exceeding six months if he is satisfied that exceptional circumstances exist which justify such a deferment in the public interest.

(8) In this Part "life prisoner" means a person serving one or more sentences of life imprisonment; but—

(a) a person serving two or more such sentences shall not be treated as a discretionary life prisoner for the purposes of this Part unless the requirements of subsection (1) above are satisfied as respects each of those sentences; and

(b) subsections (3) and (5) above shall not apply in relation to such a person until after he has served the relevant part of each of those sentences.'

with the following amendment:

No. 1, in line 2, leave out subsection (1) and insert

("(1) This Part applies to a person sentenced to—

(a) life imprisonment, whether or not for an offence the sentence for which is fixed by law; or

(b) during Her Majesty's pleasure or for life under section 53 of the 1933 Act; or

(c) custody for life under section 8 of the 1982 Act;

where the Court by which he was sentenced ordered that this section should apply to him as soon as he had served a part of his sentence specified in the Order.")

9.51 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): I beg to move, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 2 to 6, and the Government motions to disagree thereto; Lords amendment No. 7; and Lords amendments Nos. 8 to 18, and the Government motions to disagree thereto.

Mrs. Rumbold: The House will recall that when it first considered the Lords amendments to the Bill on 25 June, the Government tabled amendments on discretionary life sentence procedures in substitution for amendments which had been proposed by the Lords. These amendments were accepted by the House. While the other place has also accepted these amendments, it has sought to amend them further, in the ways shown on the amendment paper.

The main question raised in these Lords amendments is whether the new procedures that we have proposed for the review of discretionary life sentences should also extend to prisoners who receive the mandatory life sentence—that is, those who are convicted of murder. The House will recall that the new procedures for discretionary life sentences have been proposed in order to respond to the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of Wilson, Gunnell and Thynne.

Under the new procedures, when the judge passes a discretionary life sentence, he will announce in open court the period of time for which the prisoner should remain in custody to punish the offence. After that period has expired, the grounds for the prisoner's continued detention will be solely that the offender continues to pose a danger to the public. He will be entitled to have his case reviewed periodically by the Parole Board, acting under the special procedure, and the Home Secretary will be required to release the prisoner if the Parole Board decides that he is no longer a danger to the public.

Mandatory life sentence cases, however, raise quite different issues and the Government do not agree that it is appropriate to extend a similar procedure to these cases. In a discretionary case, the decision on release is based purely on whether the offender continues to be a risk to the public. The presumption is that once the period that is appropriate to punishment has passed, the prisoner should be released if it is safe to do so.

The nature of the mandatory sentence is different. The element of risk is not the decisive factor in handing down a life sentence. According to the judicial process, the offender has committed a crime of such gravity that he forfeits his liberty to the state for the rest of his days. If necessary, he can be detained for life without the necessity for a subsequent judicial intervention. The presumption is, therefore, that the offender should remain in custody until and unless the Home Secretary concludes that the public interest would be better served by the prisoner's release than by his continued detention. In exercising his continued discretion in that respect, the Home Secretary must take account not just of the question of risk, but of how society as a whole would view the prisoner's release at that juncture. The Home Secretary takes account of the judicial recommendation, but the final decision is his.

It is within that framework that it has been possible for Ministers to adopt and apply policies to ensure that those who murder police officers will serve at least 20 years in prison.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): May we have an assurance that it is still the policy of the Government that people who murder police officers shall serve at least 20 years in prison? If so, why is it that the average period served in prison by a person involved in the murder of police officers in Northern Ireland released within the last five years has been not 20 years but 13 and one third years? Does the Minister believe that it has been appropriate for only that amount of time to be served in prison in a situation where the danger is greater and where the need for detention is also greater than in the circumstances with which she has been dealing?

Mrs. Rumbold: As I said, in cases where police officers have been murdered, it is very much the Government's belief that the Home Secretary should have accountability and should be able to ensure that such people spend at least 20 years in prison. To transfer that responsibility to the Parole Board or to some other body would represent a fundamental departure from the principle that major decisions of public policy and the public interest should be taken by Ministers who are accountable to Parliament.

We do not agree that the ECHR judgment in the Wilson, Gunnell and Thynne case contains any implication that our procedures on mandatory cases should be changed. If anything, that judgment suggests the contrary, because it is based on the argument that if risk is the only factor in a prisoner's continued detention, that continued detention is lawful only for so long as the prisoner continues to be a risk, as determined by a court-like body.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): My right hon. Friend said that Ministers were accountable to Parliament for the decision about how long a life sentence should be served. Where does the Home Secretary announce his decision and how is that transparently made available to the House for debate?

Mrs. Rumbold: This is not a case where the Home Secretary announces his decision at a given time. When the judiciary passes sentence in court, that sentence is passed as a life sentence or as life imprisonment, which means that anyone who commits murder will for the rest of his or her days be subject to the judgment of the court that it is a life sentence. When that person comes out, or if they do not come out, is for the Home Secretary to decide when he takes into account, not just the usual elements, but the public interest element, and that element is the most important part of a rounded and larger decision.

Mr. Wells: How do we know that?

Mrs. Rumbold: It is not a question of how one knows that. It is a matter which Parliament has decided. That decision is that the Home Secretary shall be accountable, and if my hon. Friend permits me to develop the point further he may understand precisely the reasoning behind it.

As I said, it is not the same for mandatory sentences. I am reinforced in that view by the decision of the European Court on Human Rights in the case of Bamber, a mandatory life sentence prisoner. Like Wilson, Gunnell and Thynne, Bamber claimed that the lawfulness of his continued detention needed to be considered by a court-like body, but the commission decided that in that mandatory case the lawfulness of detention was incorporated at the outset in the original trial. We believe, therefore, that the court would accept that different considerations apply in mandatory cases and that such different considerations should be reflected in a different set of procedures.

Were Parliament ever to consider another method, it would require the most serious study of how it would be otherwise discharged. Parliament would have to be satisfied that its influence in these matters was not lost because the Home Secretary was no longer accountable to it for the decisions involved. That might involve far-reaching changes in the way in which sentencing for murder was conducted, perhaps including statutory guidelines on the length of time that those convicted for different kinds of murder should serve. Such an exercise would, of course——

It being Ten o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *interrupted the proceedings.*

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Lords Amendments relating to the Criminal Justice Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Lords Amendments to Commons Amendments in lieu of a Lords Amendment and a Lords Amendment in lieu of one of their Amendments to which the Commons have disagreed, again considered.

Mrs. Rumbold: Such an exercise would, of course, be fraught with great difficulty. The Government are therefore firmly of the view that no substantive change in the arrangements for mandatory life sentences for prisoners should be made at present; nor could that be contemplated in the future without a great deal of further thought being given to its implications.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Does the Minister accept that it is an offence to those of us who are fully committed to and fully support capital punishment for murder to have to accept inconsistency in the United Kingdom? The murder of a policeman or member of the security forces in Great Britain seems to be treated in a different manner from the murder of a policeman or member of the security forces in Northern Ireland. When will the Government ensure that there is consistency of treatment of those guilty of such murders?

Mrs. Rumbold: During my time in Parliament we have had a number of votes on exactly those matters and, on each occasion, Parliament has voted not to reinstate capital punishment. I think that the hon. Gentleman knows that those debates are taken seriously and hon. Members consider, as a matter of conscience, where they stand on that issue. It is a matter for Parliament, and Parliament has decided, which is exactly the right way for us to conduct ourselves in this country.

Of the other Lords amendments, No. 2 would require the judge to state a term in every discretionary life sentence case, after which the prisoner would be entitled to be released if the Parole Board concluded that he was no longer a risk. The amendment does not, however, take account of the possibility that a discretionary life sentence might be imposed not because the offender is judged to be a danger to the public, but solely because the offence that the offender has committed is so serious as to justify a life sentence on that account. In other words, this would be a discretionary life sentence passed in accordance with clause 2(2)(a) of the Bill, rather than clause 2(2)(b).

A discretionary life sentence based purely on the seriousness of the offence would of course be very rare. The vast majority of discretionary life sentences are passed because there is an element of mental instability which means that the prisoner will be a risk to the public for a period which cannot be predicted in advance. But occasionally discretionary life sentences are passed not because the offender is perceived to be a risk to the public, but because of the nature of the offence which he has committed. In such cases, it would be inappropriate and illogical to require the court to state a term within the sentence which was appropriate to the seriousness of the offence. In those circumstances, the whole of the life sentence is there to punish the offence, not just part of it.

I should emphasise once again that it will, of course, be entirely at the discretion of the judge whether to pass a discretionary life sentence of this nature. I am sure that it would be most exceptional, but I do not consider that it would be appropriate to limit the judge's discretion in this matter in the way that the Lords amendment does.

Amendment No. 3 would permit the Parole Board to direct that the licence of a discretionary life sentence prisoner should be lifted after a certain period. That would mean that the offender involved was no longer subject to any form of supervision, and could not be recalled to prison if he showed signs of reverting to his former ways. It seems that the amendment makes nonsense of the whole concept of a life sentence. If a life sentence is passed, surely that must mean that the offender is subject to some restriction for the rest of his life, whether he is in custody or out on licence.

The offenders whom we are talking about in this context will have been given life sentences because there has been judged to be an element of mental instability in their behaviour. It seems to me to be quite wrong to get into the position where no action could be taken if, for example, someone had received a life sentence for sexual assaults on young children, then showed signs—even some years after his release on licence—of wanting to put himself in a position to commit similar offences again.

So long as the licence remains in force, steps can be taken, through tighter supervision, the attaching of new conditions of the licence or, ultimately, the offender's recall to prison, to ensure that potential victims are not exposed to danger from him. I am sure that the House will agree that it would be quite wrong to deny the public the protection that is conferred by the existence of the licence for the remainder of the offender's life.

Finally, I refer briefly to Lords amendment No. 7, which would remove the power that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary would have to keep a discretionary life

sentence prisoner in custody for up to six months after his release had been ordered by the Parole Board, if he considered it to be in the public interest to do so. That very limited power was sought to cater for the exceptional circumstance where the prisoner's release at a particular moment might, for example, exacerbate a public order situation or complicate the handling of some sensitive terrorist incident.

We believe that such a limited residual power for my right hon. Friend would be in accordance with the recent ECHR judgment, which referred to the possibility of the Executive's being able to detain the prisoner further on grounds of what it termed "expediency". However, having reflected on the views expressed on this matter in another place, my right hon. Friend has come to the conclusion that the kind of situation which this power is intended to cover could be handled without recourse to the exercise of that kind of reserve power. The Government are not, therefore inviting the House to disagree with Lords amendment No. 7.

The remaining Lords amendments are consequential on the ones to which I have referred.

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): The Minister of State made a brilliant job of a very bad brief. The principal Lords amendments provide that, in all cases where a life sentence is imposed, the trial judge shall fix in open court the minimum period that a life sentence prisoner should serve, rather than make a private recommendation to the Home Secretary, as happens at present.

We have debated that subject at length. I was astounded that, even when the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) intervened in the speech of the Minister of State to ask about accountability, the Minister's response was unconvincing. The hon. Gentleman seemed to be trying to get her to say something more fully about the disparity between the judiciary and the Executive. When most of us learnt about the British constitution at school we thought that there was a healthy separation between the judiciary and the Executive, and that when the Executive nakedly interferes with the judiciary it can only be at the cost of justice.

The Lords amendments also provide that the Parole Board, operating under a special review procedure, shall take decisions on the release of life sentence prisoners and their recall on release, and not merely make a recommendation to the Home Secretary.

The Lords amendments are more detailed than that and I shall go through them briefly, one by one. Lords amendment No. 1 extends the Government's proposals to prisoners serving mandatory life sentences. Lords amendment No. 2 removes the power of the courts to determine that the new release procedures for discretionary lifers should not apply to the case before them. Lords amendment No. 7 removes the power of the Home Secretary to defer release for up to six months.

We are delighted that the Government have seen the light on one of those amendments. I suppose that that is a 25 per cent. success rate. If the Lords keep up the process of attrition, even more enlightenment may come to the Government. However, I suspect that that may be our last small victory.

Lords amendment No. 3 gives the Parole Board the option, in discretionary life sentence cases, of ending the licence after a period of time, rather than its having to remain in force until the offender's death.

I do not intend to make any arguments about the case that we have won, so I shall concentrate on the three remaining amendments. We take extremely seriously Lords amendment No. 1, which extends the provisions for mandatory life sentences. The insight displayed in the House of Lords was a textbook example for this House. The clarity and perception of that insight were remarkable, as one would expect of Members of the other place, who often have more experience in matters judicial.

In accepting the need to change the operation of discretionary life sentences, the Government are attempting to comply—reluctantly, as we all know—with the decision taken last October by the European Court of Human Rights in the case of Thynne, Wilson and Gunnell. While the European Court's findings in that case were restricted to discretionary sentences, the procedures for those serving mandatory life sentences for murder are just as objectionable.

Whenever a convicted murderer is sentenced to life imprisonment, a simple but astounding process is set in train. Until I got involved in this Bill, I did not realise what happened and I feel that many hon. Members still do not realise that. The trial judge informs the Home Secretary, via the Lord Chief Justice, who adds his own views, of the minimum period of imprisonment that he considers necessary to meet the requirements of retribution and deterrence. Taking those views into account, a Home Office Minister—not the Home Secretary—lays down the minimum level of time that the prisoner will actually serve, otherwise known as the tariff. When that minimum time has lapsed, the decision on when to release the offender is based on an assessment of his or her risk to the public. That decision is made by the Home Secretary following a recommendation by the Parole Board.

Figures on the operation of the procedure, prepared by the Home Office for the House of Lords Select Committee, show that in most cases Home Office Ministers required prisoners to serve longer minimum periods than their trial judges considered appropriate. Between 1 April and 30 September 1988, minimum periods were set for 106 persons sentenced to life imprisonment for murder. In 63 of those cases, Home Office Ministers laid down longer minimum periods than the trial judge had recommended. In 34 cases, Ministers accepted the trial judges' recommendations, and in nine cases they set lower minimum periods.

More recently published figures show that, of the 274 mandatory life sentences considered in 1990, Ministers set a longer period than that recommended by the trial judge in 90 cases and a shorter period in 43 cases. We believe that it is wrong in principle for Ministers to lengthen sentences by executive influence and decree. Unlike the judge, the Minister makes his decision without having heard the evidence in court; in effect, it is a sentencing decision taken behind closed doors and against which the prisoner cannot appeal.

We feel that it is contrary to justice for the Executive to interfere in the judicial process in that way. Some Conservative Members demand longer sentences—often without thinking through the arguments—but I ask them to consider the problem. We are not arguing for longer or shorter sentences. We are arguing on the principle that it is wrong for the Executive to become involved.

Members on one side of the House or the other might be extremely angry with one Home Secretary for consistently reducing the length of sentence or consider

[Mr. Barry Sheerman]

that another was a good Home Secretary because he consistently increased the length of sentences. The problem arises because the Minister involves himself or herself in the judicial process in an arbitrary manner—arbitrary because how can a member of the Executive make such a decision without any experience of the court trial, without having heard the evidence, and without having been able to make a fair appraisal of what went on?

10.15 pm

Similarly, decisions for or against the eventual release of life sentence prisoners and on their recall from licence can result in further lengthy periods of imprisonment. Such decisions are also taken by executive process whereby the Parole Board makes recommendations to Ministers.

The Lords amendments, which the Opposition believe are pure, good, common sense, would ensure that decisions on the release and the recall of prisoners serving life sentence were made by a process which, unlike the current system, would satisfy the requirements of natural justice.

It is difficult to see any logic in retaining the Home Secretary's veto over the release of prisoners convicted of, say, domestic murder in circumstances of extreme stress while relinquishing it in cases where a long sentence had been imposed for a calculated series of rapes or following a manslaughter verdict on an unpredictable and unstable mentally disordered killer. Where is the logic in that?

The Government have argued that Members of Parliament have been willing to support the continued abolition of capital punishment only because of the assurance that the Home Secretary will retain control over the release of prisoners convicted of murder. Opposition Members consider that a highly dubious argument. The case for the reform of the life sentences on the lines proposed by the Lords Select Committee has widespread support from many people and groups within the criminal justice system who are also opposed to the abolition of capital punishment as well as from those who support it. If life sentence procedures were changed, most Members of Parliament would vote on capital punishment in precisely the way that they do at the moment.

Although the case of Thynne applied only to discretionary life sentences, it is widely felt that when the case of mandatory life sentences comes before the European Court of Human Rights it will apply the same principle that is established for discretionary life sentences. We understand that such a case will come before the European Court shortly. Once again, the British Government will be found lacking.

Lords amendment No. 2 involves removing the power of the court to determine that the release procedure should not apply to the case before it. In its wisdom, the other place saw that under the Government's proposals the trial judge had the power to determine that the new release proposals would not take effect in relation to the case before him by not specifying a term after which release can be considered by the Parole Board.

In another place, it was suggested that that power was needed for the exceptional case where the crime was so serious that the trial judge felt that the offence warranted life imprisonment irrespective of the risk to the public. However, in the Bill that power is very wide. I hope that the Minister will take this point. In effect, the court is given the power to opt out of the new release procedures and the circumstances in which it should exercise that power should have been clearly defined in statute.

I am not trying to have my cake and eat it too—that is the other side of the argument that I was putting earlier. It is bad when the Executive interferes with the judicial process. It is also bad when the legislature does not make its legislation clear enough to the judiciary. We want the Bill to make it clear to the judiciary that only in exceptional cases will the judge have that power. As it stands, we believe that it will be taken as a wide power, in which case the legislation would not achieve its intended objective.

I shall not need to deliver that part of my speech dealing with amendment No. 2, in view of the Government's change of mind, but I will delay the House a little longer to comment on Lords amendment No. 3 which in the case of discretionary life sentences gives the Parole Board the option of ending the licence after a period of time.

The Thynne judgment made it clear that when it comes to a discretionary life prisoner, a court or the Parole Board must have the power to bring the licence to an end. That argument was well made by hon. Members on both sides of the House in our debate on 25 June. The debate during the long progress of the Bill has not been party political. Right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House have agreed or disagreed with one another—it has been that kind of Bill. The argument for providing such a power is accepted not only by Members on both sides of this House but by the majority of their Lordships.

In the debate on 25 June, the Minister of State said that the Government would make statutory regulations specifying that the Parole Board should follow a judicial process in such cases. Can she say when we shall have sight of those regulations? It seems odd that we are reaching the end of the Bill's passage through the House without knowing the content of the regulations that are to flow from it. It is impossible to judge whether or not they are acceptable without having sight of them. We hope that they will be available when the Bill returns to another place.

We feel strongly about the central, constitutional arguments that we have made concerning the nature of the relationship between the judiciary and the Executive, and between the legislature and the judiciary. We have taken a consistent line on both. We are unhappy with the Government's reaction to their Lordships' amendments on that matter of principle, and that is why we shall eventually divide the House on the amendments.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): I sense that the mood of the House is not to delay our consideration of the Lords amendments.

When moving the amendments before us, Lord Nathan argued that, although the European Court judgment related only to discretionary life sentences, in time that court would reach a similar judgment in respect of mandatory sentences. I do not believe that that is the inevitable conclusion to be drawn.

In the Thynne case, the European Court drew a distinction between mandatory and discretionary life sentences in respect of a mandatory sentence for murder involving a premeditated killing. Thynne was not in that category. That is entirely in keeping with our criminal law, which distinguishes between murder, which involves the intentional killing of another, and manslaughter, where

the intention is less clear. The premeditated nature of murder singles it out from all other crimes, and provides the justification for a mandatory life sentence, which reflects the heinous nature of the offence alone, without any assessment of the future risk to the public.

Their Lordships argued that some murders are less serious than sadistic or brutal crimes that stop short of murder. Even if that proposition is entirely valid, I cannot see how that can justify the watering down of the mandatory life sentence that the Lords amendments would bring about. In my judgment, the converse is true, and justifies the discretionary life sentence. It also justifies the provision for the trial judge to announce in open court a term within a discretionary life sentence that reflects the seriousness of the offence, and for the prisoner to continue to be detained if he would pose a risk to the public on his release.

Alternatively—my right hon. Friend touched on this—a judge, when passing a discretionary sentence, might choose to reflect the seriousness of the offence by not setting a term. The law should do what the Bill did before it went to the other place, and provide the opportunity for a discretionary sentence to be placed on a par with a mandatory sentence in response to the seriousness of the crime in question. Their Lordships seemed to be suggesting the opposite. The original wording reflected more accurately public anxiety about the rise in violent crime, and public opinion about the most appropriate sentence for murder.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Greenway: No, I will not. I want to be brief, and we have now discussed this matter on four occasions.

Mr. Bermingham: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If the hon. Gentleman is talking about mandatory sentences, that must be outside the terms of the Lords amendment. The Lords failed to reach a conclusion on mandatory sentences; we are now discussing discretionary sentences.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is a matter for debate, not a point of order. I remind the House, however, that we are now dealing with a group of Lords amendments.

Mr. Greenway: The hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham), whose opinions I normally respect, has shown appalling ignorance of the issues, which are of considerable importance to the British people.

Now is not the time to rehearse again arguments about whether sentences have a deterrent effect. Let me say, however, that the increase in the number of murders and in the use of firearms in crime—and the total disregard for human life displayed by the criminal fraternity—demand that, at the very least, we adopt a cautious approach to changes in sentencing. The other place has now accepted that this is no time to abandon the mandatory life sentence. Nor is it the time to extend the Bill's new procedures in regard to discretionary sentences to mandatory sentences. It is on that point that the House must disagree with the Lords.

Mr. Trimble: I, too, will try to be brief—if only because I was in the House until 3.30 this morning, and have no wish to repeat the experience.

The Government are drawing a distinction between mandatory life sentences and what they call discretionary life sentences. They are establishing a procedure for discretionary sentences that they believe will be sufficiently judicial to satisfy the requirements of the European convention, while retaining the existing system for mandatory sentences—that is, leaving matters entirely to their own discretion, which will be exercised in the manner described by the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman). The Lords would have extended to mandatory life sentences the quasi-judicial procedure that the Government propose to confine to discretionary life sentences.

I support the view taken in the other place. I do not approve of leaving the matter to the Government's discretion. That would be bad, partly for the constitutional reasons mentioned by the hon. Member for Huddersfield—reasons of principle. It is also bad because it can lead to policy changes that produce alarming results.

10.30 pm

We have had confirmed this evening the Government's present policy for part of the United Kingdom, which is that people who murder police officers should serve 20 years. That may have been the Government's policy for another part of the United Kingdom during the first few years of the previous decade. Between 1981 and 1984, no person sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of members of the security forces was released on licence in Northern Ireland. For some reason, which we can explore at another time, there was a change of policy in 1985. From 1985 to 26 June 1991, 51 persons convicted of murder of members of the security forces—policemen, prison officers, regular soldiers and members of the Ulster Defence Regiment—were released, and not one of them had served 20 years. The longest sentence served was 17 years and that was served by only one person. The shortest sentence served was seven years and that was served by three people. The average length of sentences is interesting. I mentioned one such average to the Minister during an intervention, but I did not receive a reply. I hope that the right hon. Lady will reply during the wind-up.

For persons released between 1985 and 1991, the average term served by those sentenced to life imprisonment for murder of members of the Ulster Defence Regiment was 13·55 years. For persons sentenced to life imprisonment for murder of members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the average period served was 13⅓ years. In the same period, for those sentenced to life imprisonment for murder of members of the Regular Army, the average sentence served was 12 years. That demonstrates the exercise of Government policy.

We have been told about the Government's policy for this part of the United Kingdom and I have demonstrated what a change of Government policy produced elsewhere. It is objectionable that we have a system that can accommodate such changes of policy and that such changes can occur surreptitiously, without the necessary public debate. For that reason, together with the reasons of general principle adduced by the hon. Member for Huddersfield, it is objectionable for such decisions to be made by the Executive. There should be a form of judicial procedure—one could argue about its exact nature—that is more open and more accountable and not subject to the whims of changing policy. That would be much more desirable.

I should have liked an opportunity to expand on this. At an earlier stage of the Bill I should have liked to deal with the concept of mandatory life sentences, which I think is objectionable. It would have been better if the Government had accepted the earlier Lords amendments to dispense with mandatory life sentences. Unfortunately, due to having to attend somewhat abortive discussions some distance away from this building, I was unable to participate in such a debate. We want to register our support for the Lords amendments and the hope that, at some time in the near future, we will see Government and ministerial discretion over periods served in prison replaced by a more open, logical and accountable system that more closely reflects the gravity of the offences.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I do not blame the House of Lords, but these amendments are an attempt to get by the back door what they have conceded should not be given by the front door—the abolition of the mandatory life sentence and the introduction of an element of discretion by someone other than the Home Secretary. That cannot possibly be acceptable to the House, and we should reject it if there are no better arguments.

Only one argument has been suggested. It has been said that this will result in an appeal to the European Court and the inevitable rejection of what we are deciding today. I doubt very much whether that confident assertion made by Opposition spokesmen here and by the movers of the amendments in another place would be upheld. In the case of Thynne in the European Court of Human Rights, a clear distinction was drawn between the mandatory and the discretionary life sentence. The court said:

"the principles underlying such sentences [i.e. discretionary sentences], unlike mandatory life sentences, have developed in the sense that they are composed of a punitive element and subsequently of a security element designed to confer on the Secretary of State the responsibility for determining when the public interest permits the prisoner's release."

It could not be clearer that making that distinction is what the court is doing. Therefore, I believe that the confident assertion made by the Opposition and their Lordships is invalid and should not weigh with us. Accordingly, there is no reason for us to accept the Lords amendments on this matter.

The amendment dealing with the removal of the court's right to make a decision about life sentences is puzzling, because it is contrary to the argument advanced by their Lordships and advanced relentlessly by the Opposition during our previous debate on the subject—that the judiciary should have the final say. Now they do not want the judiciary to have the final decision in the matter and are therefore standing on their collective head. That shows the total insubstantiality of the Lords amendments, and the Government are right to reject them.

Lord Natham said that accepting the amendments would enable the matter to be considered in this place. We have considered them, and we should reject them.

Mr. Bermingham: What I have——

Mr. Sheerman *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) has not started speaking yet, so how can the hon. Gentleman intervene?

Mr. Bermingham: I was, as ever, being courteous to my hon. Friend.

What I have just heard from the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) amazes me. He has not a little knowledge of the courts and of how the judiciary thinks. He must have heard—as I have over the years—what the judiciary thinks about mandatory sentences: it does not like them. It does not like the idea that it can send a recommendation to the Home Secretary in respect of a murder case that the sentence should be six, eight or 10 years only to find that a junior Minister at the Home Office who has *absolutely* no knowledge of the case——

Mr. Sheerman: He might be a geography lecturer.

Mr. Bermingham: As my hon. Friend says, he might be a geography lecturer or a part-time car mechanic, but even if Mr. Justice So-and-So believes that the sentence should be 10 years, he can say that it should be 18 years.

I am a tired old lawyer who must declare an interest as a barrister. I notice that the once-striker-out of judges' comments—the Minister of State, or goodness knows what he is called nowadays since he has been promoted—once crossed a line through—and I declare yet another interest—a sentence passed on some constituents of mine. He increased the sentence passed by the judge but knew nothing about the case. That worries me, and when the hon. and learned Member for Burton says so glibly, "Never mind the European Court or anything else", we must remember that we are talking about people.

I remember a comment made by the common serjeant, the senior judge at the central criminal court. It was made to a jury not so long ago. It was something like, "Members of the jury, you have found the man guilty. I will write a letter to the Home Secretary recommending the sentence. What I say will in all probability be ignored." That is a tragedy. As the common serjeant rightly said—and I was there when it was said—"What I know about this case, what members of the Bar who were present in the court know about this case and what police officers know about this case will never be known by the civil servants will advise the Minister in years to come. Those civil servants will know nothing about the case." That is secret justice, and it is anathema.

When the judiciary said in the House of Lords that mandatory sentences were wrong, they were right. The Government, for reasons which must be known to their heart and which are political because they seek to strive in the face of adversity to win an election, think that the idea of being punitive is in their political interests. They destroy justice.

As a practising lawyer, I say that there are those of us who believe that justice should be above political thinking. We say gently, "Wait a moment. We are talking about real human beings and about the sentencing of people who should serve a sentence for the crime that they have committed. We are talking about the courts of tomorrow."

I look at my own Front-Bench colleagues and I say to them as gently as I say to the Opposition—[HON. MEMBERS: "You are the Opposition."] I say to the Opposition of tomorrow that, when the Lords made a series of decisions, they were talking from experience. If we fly in the face of experience in the interests of expediency, the real sufferers are human beings—the people outside.

I ask the House, please, to accept the Lords amendments. They do not go far enough, but at least they will go some way down the road to reaching justice. Justice

is precious and we must not sacrifice it on the altar of political expediency for any part. I ask the Government to listen to the other place because it has something to say.

Dr. John G. Blackburn (Dudley, West): My intervention will certainly be short, but I pray that it may be saturated with intelligence. I say that because I oppose the Lords amendment. I had the opportunity of speaking on the Bill on Second Reading and I made clear my views on the subject. I have also had the opportunity as a constituency Member, like all other Members, of mourning the terrible deaths that have been caused in my constituency by murder.

One thing has been forgotten in this short debate. If I do nothing else, I want to speak about the sanctitity of human life. Every contribution this evening has concerned justice—which I applaud, and of which I am a disciple—towards those who are guilty of the offence. However, I take the view that it is about time that we discussed in the House the sanctity of human life and the question of protecting human life.

I hold the view that the Lords amendments do nothing that will in any way enhance the sanctity of human life, and I oppose them. I oppose them for another reason, which I hope the House will find acceptable.

We have spoken about the judiciary and the Executive. I want to speak about the practical experience of murder and of people being brought to justice before the courts. What mandate do I have to speak on that? Probably like no other hon. Member, I had the task of serving as a police officer on five murder inquiries. In addition, I have had the opportunity—and I found no pleasure in it—of arresting somebody for the capital offence of murder. I hold the view that this House should consider the sanctity of human life and that, saturated with common sense and justice, we should oppose the Lords amendments.

10.45 pm

Mr. Sheerman: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not wish to prolong the debate, but having served for so many months on the Bill I thought that a last word—or at least, a penultimate word—might be appropriate.

We have made the argument clearly. We agree with all four of the Lords amendments, and we are glad to see that the Government have accepted one of them. We have done so not because we believe, as the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) believes, that this is a way of getting our own way by the back door, but because, as usual, the House of Lords has confronted the issues of principle head on and brought them back to us. It is the Lords' job in our constitution to do that, and I applaud the way in which they have done it.

Having said that, we propose to divide the House because we believe that it is wrong for the Executive to interfere with the judiciary in this way.

Mrs. Rumbold: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, like the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman), I shall be brief.

I am grateful to the House for the views that we have heard. I share the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) that the Wilson, Gunnell and Thynne decisions in the European Court of Human Rights did not confirm anything other than that we were talking about discretionary cases. Quite clearly, the decision on discretionary life sentences is a matter for the Parole Board to consider from the point of view of risk only, whereas in relation to mandatory life sentences, which are life sentences for murder, the court gives a whole life sentence, the discretion lies with the Home Secretary and the decision is to be considered on much wider issues than simply those of risk.

In answer to the query raised by the hon. Member for Huddersfield about the rules for setting up the Parole Board, I should explain that those rules will be drawn up in consultation with the board and will fully meet the ECHR requirements.

I will pass the comments made by the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, as the hon. Gentleman is clearly worried about certain disparities between the two countries.

I ask the House to disagree with the Lords in their amendment, but to accept Lords amendment No. 7.

Question put, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 153, Noes 52.

Division No. 215] **[10.48 pm**

AYES

Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Bellingham, Henry
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Burt, Alistair
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Sir Anthony
Emery, Sir Peter
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mans, Keith
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick

Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tim Boswell and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

NOES

Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beggs, Roy
Bermingham, Gerald
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carr, Michael
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Darling, Alistair
Dixon, Don
Fearn, Ronald
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Morley, Elliot
Nellist, Dave
Parry, Robert
Pike, Peter L.
Redmond, Martin
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Salmond, Alex
Sheerman, Barry
Skinner, Dennis
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Trimble, David
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Frank Haynes.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment disagreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 2 to 6 disagreed to.

Lords amendment No. 7 agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 8 to 18 disagreed to.

Committee appointed to draw up reasons to be assigned to the Lords for disagreeing to their amendments Nos. 1 to 6 and 8 to 18 to the Bill: Mr. Carrington, Mrs. Golding, Mr. Greg Knight, Mr. John Patten and Mr. Barry Sheerman; Three to the be the quorum.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

To withdraw immediately.

Reasons for disagreeing to Lords amendments Nos. 1 to 6 and 8 to 18 reported, and agreed to; to be communicated to the Lords.

PETITION

Staffordshire Ambulance Service

11.1 pm

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): This petition of 740 signatures was collected within two hours last Saturday morning in my constituency of Newcastle-under-Lyme and shows the opposition to the Staffordshire ambulance service becoming a trust. It says:

To the honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom and Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled. The humble petition of people living in Staffordshire sheweth

That there is great concern over the proposals to make the Staffordshire ambulance service a self-governing trust.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House take steps to prevent the Staffordshire ambulance service from becoming a trust after the holding of public meetings at which our discontent can be heard.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

I beg to ask leave to present the petition.

To lie upon the Table.

Holcombe Moor, Bury

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

11.2 pm

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to raise this important matter for my constituents.

In many ways, the history of the Holcombe moor application is the history of my own time in Parliament and, indeed, of a major part of my life. To explain the background to the debate, I remind my hon. Friend the Minister that the Army has a long connection with the north-west and with my constituency. Bury is proud of its connection with the Lancashire Fusiliers, which were stationed there for many years, and Bury parish church is still the garrison church of the regiment. When I was at school, I was in the cadet force attached to the regiment. Eventually, the regiment became part of the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers in a previous amalgamation. The Minister will appreciate, however, that I do not intend to discuss Army amalgamations this evening.

As a schoolboy, I also walked on an area of land known as Holcombe moor. I am fond of the area and know it extremely well. The village of Hawkshaw, which is close to Holcombe, has also had a long connection with the Army. From the early part of this century, the Army had a range in the Hawkshaw area and the relationship between the villages and people of the area and the Army in that training area grew up over a long period.

When I was elected in 1983, certain disputes were becoming clear. The nature of the area was changing. People's leisure habits were changing. There was more walking in the area and disputes and confrontations began to arise between the Army and residents. They were always disagreeable because, while the Army wanted a good relationship with the residents and the residents wanted a good relationship with the Army, for one reason or another a problem arose, there were difficulties on each side and matters became tense and unpleasant. Attempts were made on both sides to improve the atmosphere. I recall at a public meeting in the area trying to improve matters, and I believe that the Army and others sought to make the best of the relationship.

Matters came to a head with two planning applications in 1986. Early that year the Army made an application for an area of land, known as Simon's Sundial cottage, to add to its training area at Hawkshaw. That provoked local concern and I took a position against that application for about 14 acres. Towards the end of the year, the Army applied to extend its training area in the Holcombe moor area by about 916 acres, a substantial acreage, and sought to extend its dry training area by that amount.

After the initial announcement about that towards the end of 1986, extensive work was done during 1987 in preparation for the inquiry. A Minister came to view the area, the Army made its proposals, invited the public to comment on them and tried to interest people in what it intended to do, and various residents groups were set up to counter the proposals.

The inquiry began in March 1988, adjourned shortly afterwards and resumed later in the year. The inquiry was extensive and I pay tribute to those who put much work into it. Various local interest groups were represented. For example, the Redisher residents association, through the work of Mr. Roy Walsh and Mrs. Christine Bolton, did extensive work. Those who have been involved in planning inquiries will be aware of the imbalance of resources available to those who protest, particularly against a Government Department. They did a great deal of work and mobilised much support in the area.

That support was not universal. Groups such as the Hawkshaw village trust, which had maintained a long and pleasant relationship with the Army, supported the Army's application. It was also supported by Army cadet units in the area, which made a plea for more training land. A variety of interested individuals and parties made representations by letter, and environmental groups, including the National Trust, were involved. On balance, however, there can be no doubt that the number of objections that I received outweighed the number in support.

By the end of the inquiry I felt it right to explain further my position on the matter, which I had first made clear in October 1986, when I gave qualified support to the Army's position. By the time of the inquiry, in October 1988, I was able to make my position even clearer. I did so, and I stick to it—I was in support of the application made by the Army for the 916 acres, though I retained my opposition to the smaller application for about 14 acres at Simon's Sundial cottage. The two applications were taken together.

The reasons for my support are not hard to fathom and I made them clear in a submission. I recognise the difficulty of the modern Army in obtaining its training areas, particularly for urban-based territorial forces. We raise many soldiers in the Manchester area and I spoke earlier of our long and proud connection with the Lancashire Fusilliers and other regiments in the area. I am conscious of the obligation that society owes to the Army, obligations which have become more clear and stark since 1988, particularly with the Gulf war, in which soldiers from my part of the world were involved and in which one of my constituents died. There is no doubt that there is strong support for the Army, and I felt that on balance the Army could live with the people in the area.

The use that the Army was requesting of the area did not seem too extensive—the Army was not seeking exclusive use and there would be dry training and not live firing. For a variety of reasons, provided that certain reservations were accepted by the Army in its use of the land, I felt that the application was reasonable. I therefore opposed a number of my constituents, but supported others who supported the Army.

The conduct of the protesters was extremely good. They worked hard and presented a good case. Much work having been done, the inquiry sat for some time and we all sat back and waited for the inspector's decision. We started to sit back and wait in October 1988 and, frankly, we are now sick of waiting for an explanation. It has been too long and the silence has become deafening. It is about time that we had a decision. At first, we accepted and understood—whatever side of the argument we took—that it would take time before a decision would be made. No one was surprised that no announcement on the issue was made in 1989, because it was a significant year when great changes were made to the armed forces because of the momentous changes in eastern Europe, for which this country had held firm. However, concern began to be expressed shortly after that, particularly because at the end of 1989 the Army had to exercise an option on the purchase of land in the Holcombe moor area. Although no

[Mr. Alistair Burt]

decision had been made on the inquiry, the Army had to move and quite properly did so in order to exercise the option to take the land. Naturally, that raised constituents' concerns that some form of deal was being done behind the scenes and I was asked to inquire about it.

I wrote to the then Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces in another place and received an explanation of why the option had been taken up. At the same time, I pressed the then Under-Secretary of State at the Department of the Environment, my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan), for an explanation of why the inquiry was taking so long. He replied to me in a letter dated 22 March 1990:

"I can understand local anxieties about the outcome of the proposal which is taking longer than usual to conclude. It is, however, being taken forward as quickly as possible and I shall let you know the decision as soon as I am in a position to do so."

In April 1990, I was required to write to the then Under-Secretary once again. By then, my constituents were pressing me firmly. My letter said:

"The continuing delay in announcing the result of the Inquiry is adding to speculation and difficulties in the area. I am telling my constituents that I am 'appalled' at the length of time it is taking to resolve the matter, and I thought I had better put you in the picture."

On 24 May 1990, the then Under-Secretary wrote to thank me for my letter and said:

"I am afraid that there is nothing I can add to my letter of 22 March. I am sorry that consideration of this proposal is taking longer than usual, but it is being taken forward as quickly as possible. I shall let you know the decision as soon as I am in a position to do so."

On 13 June 1990, Christine Bolton, one of the Redisher residents, wrote to me saying:

"We find it impossible to comprehend this delay. Surely the issues involved in the matter of the land use must have been resolved months ago, and we can only assume that the delay is due to political reasons. If you are not in a position to discover what is going on there is no hope for us!"

She continued:

"You may be aware that 'World in Action' dealt with the issue of M.O.D. land in a programme this Monday. We were included in the programme, and it was interesting to see what is happening elsewhere."

I raise that matter with some concern because, if the media were taking such an interest, clearly the position of the Army and the Government was being put in a poor light. Therefore, in the Defence Estimates debate on 19 June 1990 I raised the issue once again. I said:

"we are still awaiting the result of the inquiry even though the last hearing was more than 18 months ago. Such a delay is intolerable. The arguments at the inquiry were difficult enough, and my constituents know that, providing certain conditions were met, I supported the Army's application for extra land."

I said that I appreciated that the responsibility was not that of the then Defence Ministers, but I said:

"I hope that some notice is taken of the lengthy and involved process necessary to deal with the acquisition and use of training land"—[*Official Report*, 19 June 1990; Vol. 174, column 874.]—

because the delay was becoming even more intolerable.

During the summer recess last year, the matter went quiet, but by November and December Mrs. Bolton was again writing to me expressing concern at the changes in the nature of the forces. She said that some thought was being given about whether Holcombe moor training camp would be expanded to take one of the battalions returning from Germany. Again, I sought to check with the Ministry of Defence. The suggestion was given no time by the Minister for the Armed Forces, but it illustrated how, with no decision having been taken, speculation damaging to the Government was arising once again, and I was most concerned.

I met Christine Bolton again at Easter time this year. She referred to another television programme, in which it had been suggested that the decision would be taken not by the Department of the Environment but by the Cabinet. On 22 April, I wrote to the Secretary of State for the Environment, my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), to ask what was going on and when an answer would be given. I told him that I was writing repeatedly to Ministers and receiving no answers.

Another friend of mine, a solicitor called Colin Dawson —an excellent solicitor with a fearsome manner whom I would not like to face in court—has done a good job on behalf of residents who are involved in these matters. Colin began chasing me and asking me to get the Secretary of State to visit the area and explain why the decision was not being taken. I started to feel that I was under intolerable pressure, but I understood that it was being properly imposed by residents.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment kindly responded to me on 15 May and 3 July. On 15 May, he wrote:

"I too am disturbed at the exceptional length of time that this has been before the Department and I am urgently considering what can be done to bring it to a conclusion."

On 3 July, he wrote:

"I can assure you that I am vigorously pursuing the matter."

To come to the present, two questions of mine have been answered today—one by the Department of the Environment and one by the Ministry of Defence. Both answers are rather revealing, both relate to costs, and both were prompted by Mr. Dawson. In my question to the Secretary of State for the Environment, I asked if my right hon. Friend would quantify the cost to his Department of the public inquiry. The answer is that the costs to the Department of employing the inspector

"to conduct the inquiry and to write his report were about £10,000."

Fair enough. I thank my right hon. Friend for the answer. I asked my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence if he would quantify the costs to his Department of the inquiry into the extension of a dry training area on Holcombe moor, Bury in 1988. The response of my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces was as follows:

"No. It is not our normal policy to provide such costs."

Why ever not? What is the point of not providing the costs in this instance? Why should there be no costing? Can the Ministry not undertake the exercise? What is the purpose of concealing the costs of the application? Surely no element of secrecy is involved. Does the Ministry of Defence not know the costs? It seems intolerable that such a straightforward question, which can be answered by the Department of the Environment, cannot be answered by the Ministry of Defence.

A series of questions have been raised by the delay that I have described. First, who is in control of the process? Is it the Ministry of Defence or is it the Department of the Environment? Who have been dragging their feet? If responsibility lies with the Ministry of Defence, it should recognise that there is concern about the delay. All the hard work that has been done locally to improve

relationships between the Army and residents, which I strongly support, is being put at risk by the delays that are taking place in London.

If the delay is the responsibility of the Department of the Environment, I remind it of the criticism that it experienced in relation to the decision at Stainmore. A dry training area application was made by the Army, the inspector turned it down, but the then Secretary of State for the Environment, my right hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley), overturned the decision and allowed the application. That caused great concern. Democratic processes were apparently not being adhered to, and an atmosphere of suspicion and concern was created. In the case that I have presented to the House today, there is in addition the delay to which I have referred.

The Government are much concerned with a citizens' charter and other such matters. Given a delay from October 1988 to date for a decision to be made on the matter which I have introduced, I do not know how much compensation might be suggested under the charter.

I bow to no one in my support of the Army. I am proud of my local relationship with it, which I have emphasised today. No one is unaware of my support for the Army and for its application in the case that I have outlined, but I am bitterly disappointed at what has ensued. The essence of the relationship between the public and the armed forces is consent and understanding. That requires the Army, which must have the ability to undertake its work, to offer explanations and to abide by decisions that are arrived at democratically. It also requires the Department of the Environment and the Government, with the enormous advantage that they have in these matters—certainly over opponents to planning proposals—to deal with a matter as quickly as is reasonably practical in providing an answer.

In this case, either the Department of the Environment or the Ministry of Defence has lamentably failed. My constituents, who include the Army and all their supporters, whatever their points of view—some agree and some disagree with my position—deserve rather better than they have had so far. I hope that the Minister can provide some enlightenment, and some answers to the questions that I have raised.

11.19 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tim Yeo): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) on his success in obtaining the opportunity to raise the matter of the Army's proposals for extending its training facilities at Holcombe moor. My hon. Friend's appearance at the public inquiry and the evidence that he gave there testify to his concern, which he emphasised in his remarks this evening, that a fair balance should be struck between the Army's needs and the public's rights and interests over this important area of open land.

My hon. Friend made a powerful and eloquent speech, beginning with some fascinating personal reminiscences, and throughout it he was at pains to stress his support for the legitimate training needs of the Army. His approach to the issue has been typical of the way in which he has championed the interests of his constituents over the years. I hope that he will be here for many years in the future, continuing to serve their interests.

The inquiry was, as my hon. Friend said, held in 1988, and the inspector's report has been with my Department for two and a half years. My hon. Friend rightly considers that this is an excessive delay, and he has drawn attention to the great and understandable anxiety of his constituents to see the matter resolved. Not only do I understand that concern, but I think that my hon. Friend has been extremely patient in this matter. I agree that we must bring it to a conclusion as soon as it can be done.

My officials have now written to the local authorities concerned and to all those who appeared and gave evidence at the inquiry. The letter sets out the present position in the matter and encloses a copy of the inspector's report. I regret that it also makes it clear that, for the moment, we are not in a position to finalise the decision. That is because we now have before us evidence that was not discussed at the inquiry. In fairness to everybody, an opportunity must now be given for representations about it to be made.

My hon. Friend raised a point about the costs incurred by different Departments at the inquiry, and I shall draw this to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

Mr. Burt: The Minister has said that certain matters not before the inquiry have now been raised by the Ministry of Defence. Is that normal practice? What would give rise to a new inquiry and the consideration of new evidence?

Mr. Yeo: I hope to explain the new evidence that was not discussed at the inquiry, and the reason why I have had to write to those people who appeared at the inquiry. I shall develop the point, and then if my hon. Friend is not satisfied with the information I shall give way again.

Before I describe the evidence in more detail, I should say that development by the Crown generally does not require planning permission. Government Departments have, however, agreed to follow an informal procedure, which is set out in Department of the Environment circular 18/84, which closely follows the procedures for planning applications. Departments notify local authorities of their proposals and if, after any necessary negotiations, an unresolved disagreement remains, the matter may be referred to the Department of the Environment for determination. This may be given on the basis of written representations, or in an informal hearing. If the matter is controversial or of wide interest, as in this case, a non-statutory public inquiry may be held.

The inspector's report recommended that the Army should be allowed to use both areas of land, that is to say, the main area of 916 acres at Holcombe moor, and the 10 acres around Simon's Sundial cottage. It is clear from his conclusions that he recognised that there was a very difficult balance to be struck between satisfying the nation's defence needs and the public's rights and interests in this land—a balance which my hon. Friend also recognises the difficulty of. He said that if the Army succeeded in its application, it would have to be tolerant of the problems of others. In his view, it would be unusual to allow the Ministry of Defence to own urban common land and to do so would be granting them a special privilege. The matter was a very sensitive one and many responsible groups of people had given evidence of the difficulties which the Army's proposal would give them in their

[Mr. Yeo]

businesses and leisure time. Nevertheless, the inspector considered that the Army's need for the land outweighed the annoyance that its use would cause from time to time.

The inspector's conclusions closely mirrored the views expressed at the inquiry by my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North. He also spoke of the apparently irreconcilable conflict between the Army's needs and the requirements of conservation, but felt that in the case of the moor the Army's needs should prevail. My hon. Friend's balanced approach required the exercise of good judgment and, in the light of the opposition of some of his constituents, some political courage.

The inspector welcomed the extensive undertakings and assurances which defence representatives had given to the inquiry about how they would conduct their operations if their proposals succeeded. He also asked that careful consideration should be given to a number of suggestions for measures to reduce the impact of training on the amenity of nearby property and to provide safeguards for its users and wildlife.

The letter which has been sent to the parties today explains that, if final clearance is given for the Army training, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment would propose to include conditions covering all the matters referred to by the inspector.

My hon. Friend will be pleased to learn that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State disagrees with the inspector in one important respect, and that is with regard to the smaller proposal, the 10 acres around Simon's Sundial cottage, on which my right hon. Friend shares my hon. Friend's opinion that it should not be used for training.

This brings me to the matter of new evidence which I mentioned earlier. The inspector's report records evidence given by the Ministry of Defence about how often it expected to use the new areas for training if its proposals are allowed to go ahead. He found as a fact that the use was expected to be, by day, three weekdays a month and three weekends a month, and, at night, three nights a week and one weekend a month. The inspector did not suggest that a restriciton to that amount should be imposed on the Army's use of the land, but it is clear from his conclusions that it was a factor which the inspector had in mind in reaching his recommendation that training should be permitted.

In view of the very delicate balance which has to be struck in this case between the Army's need for training facilities and the public rights and interests in this land, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State felt it right that he should go further than the inspector and that he should impose a limit on the Army's use in the terms of the inspector's finding of fact which I have just quoted.

We now understand, however, that the evidence recorded by the inspector on this matter does not reflect the Army's needs. These are now said to be a daytime use of up to three weekends a month and 100 weekdays a year, with night time use of up to one night of the available weekends, and 50 weekday nights a year. That is different from the evidence considered by the inspector. It is a greater use than was stated at the time of the inquiry. Therefore, we consider that, in the interests of natural justice, we must inform all interested parties of it. The letter that we have now sent does that and offers the parties an opportunity to make representations on the new evidence in the 21-day period expiring on 6 August.

I can assure my hon. Friend that we shall carefully consider all further representations which may be made on the matter during the period, including, of course, any representations that my hon. Friend wishes to make. He will not expect me to say anything more about this new evidence, on which I must keep an open mind until I have considered all the representations which may be made during the limited 21-day period.

Mr. Burt: This is a revelation to me and I am extremely obliged to my hon. Friend for this information. It is all new to me. It is a considerable advance on anything that we have had before. It is as near to a decision as makes no difference. My hon. Friend referred earlier to my patience, but it is not my patience that is concerned; it is the patience of my constituents and all their feelings. Although I have only just heard the inspector's report, he seems to have found an admirable balance between need, which I strongly support, as I strongly support his action in passing this matter back to people, and insisting, or appearing to insist, that at this stage great notice is taken of the Secretary of State's recommendations so that the Army sticks to what it originally asked for rather than go further. However, although the case has already taken a great deal of time and we do not want any further unnecessary delay, a 21-day period for representations may be rather tight for some of the parties concerned. Is my hon. Friend the Minister prepared to consider representations to extend, within reason, the time available for that process?

Mr. Yeo: The period allowed is meant to reflect the concern that my hon. Friend properly expressed about the protracted period that the matter has remained unresolved. However, I will certainly reflect on his remarks. If my hon. Friend finds that the parties concerned consider that 21 days is too short a period in which to make their representations, I will consider whether it is possible to extend it.

We are anxious to ensure that those involved have sufficient time to consider properly the additional evidence. As I said, I have to keep a completely open mind until I hear what representations may come from people holding differing views. However, we will not let the matter drag on for longer than necessary, as far as is consistent with a proper examination of all the representations, for reasons with which my hon. Friend is more than familiar.

It is most regrettable that it has taken so long for that clarification of the Army's requirements to emerge, but whatever weight may properly be attached to it in the final decision, it must be taken into account, and it was necessary for my Department to await that additional information before it could proceed towards a decision. Now that information has arrived, it has been communicated to the parties concerned without delay.

I fully understand the anxiety and uncertainty that lack of a decision must have caused all those with an interest in the land—whether they be common right holders, walkers or riders, or public authorities wanting to plan for future conservation and informal recreation. I know that they will be disappointed that even now a final decision is not possible, but I hope that the issue of our letter today, and the inspector's report, will remove some of the uncertainties and pave the way to a decision in the near future.

Question put, and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-eight minutes to Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 17 July 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[Mr. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LONDON UNDERGROUND (SAFETY MEASURES) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Order for Third Reading read.

To be read the Third time tomorrow.

LLANELLI BOROUGH COUNCIL (BURRY PORT HARBOUR) BILL *[Lords]*

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the Llanelli Borough Council (Burry Port Harbour) Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office of their intention to suspend further proceedings not later than the day before the close of the present Session and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

Ordered,

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agents for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by them stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

Ordered,

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be deemed to have been read the first and shall be ordered to be read a second time;

Ordered,

That the Petitions against the Bill presented in the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

Ordered,

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

Ordered,

That, in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words 'under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)' were omitted;

Ordered,

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

Ordered,

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Message to the Lords to acquaint them therewith.

KING'S CROSS RAILWAYS BILL

Motion made,

That the Promoters of the King's Cross Railways Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read) and, having been amended by the Committee in the present Session, shall be ordered to lie upon the Table;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Housing Finance, Glasgow

1. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his total consent for Glasgow district council to meet capital expenses on the non-housing revenue account block of housing in 1991-92; how much of that total he requires the council to borrow, and at what anticipated rate of interest; and how much he expects to be raised from *(a)* the disposal of capital assets, *(b)* the repayment of principal on loans, *(c)* insurance claims, *(d)* leases in specified categories and *(e)* any other non-HRA receipts.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): The gross non-HRA allocation issued to the City of Glasgow district council for capital investment in private housing in 1991-92 is £24·1 million. Estimated non-HRA capital receipts in 1991-92 are £766,000, all of which is expected to be generated by the repayment of principal on loans. Capital receipts from other sources are estimated to be nil. Details of the extent, terms and conditions of proposed borrowing by the council in 1991-92 are not held centrally.

Mrs. Fyfe: Will the Minister explain why, when Glasgow district council, the housing associations and the co-operatives have been so successful in restoring Glasgow's tenements, the permission to borrow money is limited to £24 million this year when even four years ago it was £55 million? Does he realise that, as a result, no fewer than 1,500 tenement owners have been turned down by the council for repair grants this year and the housing associations' programmes are being held up irrevocably until the problem is solved? Will the Minister commit himself to improving those resources forthwith?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am aware of the problems in Glasgow that the hon. Lady mentions. Similar problems arise in Edinburgh. They will be borne in mind and if there is a possibility of making supplementary allocations later in the year, the points that she made will be fully considered. About £500 million has been spent by housing associations in Glasgow, which is almost half the total for Scotland. That has made an enormous impact on the tenements in the hon. Lady's constituency as well as elsewhere in Glasgow. In addition, 40 per cent. of the housing support grant is spent in Glasgow, so Glasgow receives the lion's share of the funding.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: The Minister mentioned Edinburgh. Will he come clean with the House and the people of Edinburgh and admit that hundreds of homeowners are on the waiting list for repair grants? Why does not the Minister put his money where his mouth is and clear that backlog?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We allocated to Edinburgh district council £8·25 million for this year to enable the repairs grant backlog to be cleared. That was precisely the sum requested by the district council. We later discovered that the estimates were inaccurate, in contrast to those given by Glasgow officials. We shall bear in mind the points that the hon. Gentleman makes.

Infertility Treatment

2. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the in vitro fertilisation success rates in Scottish hospitals; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Michael Forsyth): The Interim Licensing Authority publishes information on a United Kingdom basis about the outcome of in vitro fertilisation treatment programmes in its annual reports.

Mr. Ernie Ross: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: What has arisen as a result of what the Minister said?

Mr. Ernie Ross: Can we honestly start Scottish questions without a single Scottish Tory Back-Bench Member being present?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter for me.

Mr. Forsyth: Perhaps I may repeat the answer. The Interim Licensing Authority publishes information on a United Kingdom basis about the outcome of in vitro fertilisation treatment programmes in its annual reports. That information is grouped according to the number of treatment cycles attempted by each clinic.

Mr. Thurnham: I hope that the success rates will be published. We can all take pride in the fact that Britain leads the world in this area. Will my hon. Friend press for strict control of costs in the new licensing authority? Surely £1 million should be enough for the budget in the first year if clinics are paying half the costs.

Mr. Forsyth: I agree with my hon. Friend about the quality of the work being done in this area in the United Kingdom. I will certainly ensure that his point about the publication of the information is drawn to the attention of the authority. I share his views that it is important that the costs of the authority are kept well under control, because, as he points out, half the costs will need to be met through licensing fees, which are raised by the authority.

Dr. Godman: Will the Minister give the House an assurance that no married couples will be denied access to such treatment because of where they live in Scotland? Does he agree that there should be equality of access to such treatment?

Mr. Forsyth: I hesitate to make too much of a habit of agreeing with the hon. Gentleman at Scottish questions. As he knows, provision is made according to health boards and the priorities that they set for this service, particularly IVF services. I think that the hon. Gentleman is pressing me to consider the need for an overall Scotland approach to the provision of these services and I am happy to undertake to look at that matter later this year, once I have had the results from an in-house working party which is considering the question.

Strathclyde (Finance)

3. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will next meet Strathclyde region to discuss its financial situation; and if he will make a statement.

11. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to meet representatives of Strathclyde regional council to discuss the council's financial position.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): The leader of Strathclyde regional council was among representatives of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities whom I met on 8 July to discuss local government finance issues.

Mr. Martin: The Minister will know that at that meeting Strathclyde conveyed that it used to cost £8 million to collect the rates and that it collected 90 per cent. of them, whereas it is costing £28 million to collect the poll tax and there is a shortfall of £70 million. Does he agree that Strathclyde is a responsible local authority? It has embarked on advertising campaigns to try to get the revenue in. How will the Minister resolve the problem and assist Strathclyde to get the £70 million?

Mr. Stewart: A slowdown in payment levels was inevitable while re-billing took place to reflect the £140 reduction in the headline community charge. Strathclyde issued its revised bills for 1991-92 *[Interruption.]* [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I am grateful to hon. Members for cheering this important information about Strathclyde regional council. I shall repeat it. Strathclyde issued its revised 1991-92 bills only in mid-June. I assure the hon. Gentleman that we have taken full account of the cash flow position and that Strathclyde regional council and the district councils in Strathclyde have received front-loaded grant payments of £125 million—that is extra grant that they would not otherwise have received until the end of June.

Mr. McAvoy: Strathclyde is facing a financial crisis due to the administrative nightmare of collecting the poll tax. I remind the Under-Secretary of State that the Prime Minister himself said that the poll tax was uncollectable. Does the Under-Secretary accept that he and his Government are responsible for the crisis facing local authorities and will he at least try to ease the burden on councils and people by abolishing the 20 per cent. contribution?

Mr. Stewart: The House has taken a view on this matter and the legislation stands. The authorities have a statutory duty to collect outstanding charges and they have a wide range of powers available to them to do so. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the report of the Public Accounts Commission confirmed the view that authorities have not made full and effective use of their powers.

The House must ask why it is that some authorities, for example Grampian, Fife and Central—all Labour controlled—have collected more than 90 per cent. of their budgeted income for 1989 and more than 85 per cent. for 1991. Unfortunately, those figures have not been repeated by other councils.

Mr. McKelvey: Nevertheless, will the Minister believe me when I tell him that I have just had a panic phone call from my secretary in Kilmarnock to tell me that she is inundated with people telephoning and sending letters because they are desperately worried about the poll tax and the new figures that have just been produced? That anxiety is particularly felt by the elderly. Can the Minister advise the House and me, so that I can advise those people, about precisely what the formula means for the reduction scheme? For a single person household the formula is:

$$B-(S+£52)$$

For multiple persons it is:

$$(B\times C-(S+[(C-1)\times £52])$$

All that followed by the poll tax.

Mr. Stewart: I am very sorry to learn that the hon. Gentleman is receiving panic phone calls, particularly over such a simple, straightforward formula. These are matters for the community charge registration officer, but if the hon. Gentleman is in any doubt about some of the details of the formula I shall be happy, of course, to arrange a meeting with him when I can explain it to him further.

Mr. Maxton: When will the Minister accept that it was he and his Government who created the shambles of the poll tax and that it is he and his Government who have the responsibility to clear up the mess that they created? They should stop trying to pass the buck on to everyone else but themselves.

Will the Minister take two immediate courses of action? First, will he now explain to the House why, if it is right to abolish the 20 per cent. payment for the new tax, it is wrong to abolish that payment now? Secondly, will he accept his own liabilities in terms of the tax by paying to Strathclyde region and other regional authorities £140 for every person eligible to pay the poll tax and not just £140 for those who have paid it?

Mr. Stewart: On the hon. Gentleman's first point, the 20 per cent. rule will not apply to the new tax. I have told the House repeatedly that that is a new tax and that the existing legislation stands for the present tax. The hon. Gentleman should start asking why the collection levels vary so much throughout Scotland.

On the hon. Gentleman's final point, I recognise that COSLA desires that the community charge grant should be based on an authority's original payment assumptions rather than on the actual collection rate. I assure the hon. Gentleman that we shall take that into account when we are considering the arrangements for finalising grant payments.

Lanarkshire Economy

4. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what specific objectives the Government have in mind for the regeneration of Lanarkshire's economy.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): Our objective for the regeneration of Lanarkshire's economy is the creation of new jobs in Lanarkshire. That will best be done by increasing private sector investment in the area.

Mr. Clarke: Since not a word of that answer was new, will the Secretary of State tell us precisely what Scottish Enterprise is doing to encourage the establishment of the paper recycling plant at Gartcosh? What action is the Scottish Office taking on the great problem of derelict land in Monklands district? What is the Scottish Office doing about the need to reinvigorate land for industry and about training and transport links? In view of the devastation that we are witnessing in Monklands, Strathkelvin and Lanarkshire generally, will the right hon. Gentleman encourage the Prime Minister to respond to the request from my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for

Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) and agree to a meeting with my Lanarkshire colleagues, if necessary before the recess, so that we can establish urgently that Lanarkshire will see the difference between action and mere rhetoric?

Mr. Lang: Action is precisely what Lanarkshire development agency is embarked on with the full support of, and resources provided by, the Government. Some 16 sites that have been identified for immediate action can now be proceeded with as a result of the working group report and the funds made available by central Government. This year, we have made available to district councils £4 million of capital consents for factory building, and £3·9 million, including allowances, for training—about which the hon. Gentleman also asked—has been added to Lanarkshire Development Agency's baseline budget. The hon. Gentleman will know that we are looking closely at the transport problems and have asked Strathclyde to carry out an urgent study of the A8-M8 arrangements with a view to improving the infrastructure in Lanarkshire.

Mr. Speaker: I call Sir Nicholas Fairbairn.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: I hope that I can ask as many questions as I have had cheers. I am grateful for those cheers.

Before we get into the "fantasie" that Lanarkshire has suffered under this Government. I remind the House of the great advances that have been made at Hamilton with the great country park and at Chatelherault; the regeneration of the entire city centre of Glasgow; and the enormous investment that has been made in Lanarkshire by new as opposed to out-of-date industries.

Mr. Lang: My hon. and learned Friend is absolutely right to draw attention to those important environmental improvements and he could have drawn attention to many more. The House might also like to know that one in five of the substantial number of inward investments brought to Scotland in the past decade has gone to Lanarkshire. More than 100 new manufacturing enterprises have started in Lanarkshire since the Government came to office.

Mr. Worthington: When will the Government act to solve the growing crisis in youth training and employment in Lanarkshire and rest of Scotland? This year in Strathclyde, there has been a 62 per cent. fall in the number of job offers, and youth training places have been cut by 4,000. In almost all of Scotland there has been a similar fall. In Lanarkshire it is particularly severe. It is estimated that there will be between 1,300 and 1,500 fewer youth training places this year. There has been a massive fall in the number of youth training places. The Government cut the youth training budget by nearly 20 per cent. this year. When will they restore those cuts in youth training in Lanarkshire and elsewhere?

Mr. Lang: I have already given the hon. Gentleman the figures for the Lanarkshire development agency's resources, which have been added to its baseline budget for training. As for youth training and employment training generally, the hon. Gentleman knows that we have created vast new resources and schemes for training which were unheard of under the last Labour Government. He also knows that there was a 20 per cent. underspend on the employment training budget last year. We are spending about five times more than the last Labour Government on training.

Dental Anaesthetics

5. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will now take steps to ensure adequate safety standards for children who receive a general anaesthetic for dental surgery.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I share the hon. Gentleman's concern about the risks associated with general anaesthesia, especially in children's dentistry. I hope that we will be in a position to issue further guidance shortly.

Mr. Canavan: In view of recent incidents, including the tragic case of four-year-old Jenna Smith, who died after receiving a general anaesthetic in a dental surgery in Falkirk, and the evidence at the fatal accident inquiry that the anaesthetic equipment and the drugs available were out of date, will the Minister bear in mind the reported comments of Dr. Donald Braid—Scotland's top specialist in anaesthesia—that too many dentists are trying to administer anaesthetics on the cheap? Will the Minister intervene to stop the practice of administering general anaesthetics without adequate equipment and training and provide facilities in general hospitals for the administration of general anaesthetics for dental patients who require it, especially young children?

Mr. Forsyth: I understand that at the fatal accident inquiry the sheriff determined that Jenna's death was the result of a rare blood disorder and that no blame attached to either the dentist or the consultant anaesthetist. On the provision of facilities in hospital, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be delighted to know that it is proposed to have facilities in Falkirk by the turn of the year.

Mr. Dickens: Does my hon. Friend agree that many children in Scotland, and indeed throughout the world, are nervous when they go to the dentist—welcome to the club, because I think that we all are? Does he agree that the days of gas, when parents sat in an anteroom listening to their children screaming next door, have gone and that anaesthetics are much more sophisticated these days? However, in the light of the sad tragedies that have happened throughout the United Kingdom—I am not referring to the one mentioned earlier—will my hon. Friend ensure that urgency is attached to issuing the new guidelines and ensuring that they are strictly adhered to?

Mr. Forsyth: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health has taken the lead on that matter and I am sure that he will want to move as speedily as possible. My hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) is right to draw attention to the importance of the matter. In dentistry, particularly children's dental health, we are trying to put more effort and resources into prevention. As a result of the new contract for dentists, I believe that children's dental health will improve and the need for extractions and treatment of the sort requiring anaesthesia will be much reduced.

Mr. Harry Ewing: Is the Minister aware that the dental surgery in question was in my constituency? Will the Minister condemn the practice of using drugs and other materials which, in that case, were not just marginally out

of date, but years out of date? Will the Minister issue a circular to dentists to ensure that when a drug becomes out of date it is returned either to the health board or the manufacturer and in no circumstances is used on patients? If he did so, he would be doing a favour to everyone who uses dentists.

Mr. Forsyth: It would not be right for me to comment on that case. There was a fatal accident inquiry, which concluded that the death was the result of a rare blood disorder; it would be wrong for me to go beyond that. I shall certainly draw the hon. Gentleman's general point about the use of time-expired drugs to the attention of officials in the Department and write to him.

Sunday Trading

6. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has received in the last six months about the law in respect of Sunday trading in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In the past six months, letters from two people have been received advocating the imposition of restrictions on Sunday trading in Scotland.

Mr. Marshall: Does my hon. Friend accept that the fact that so few people have written in suggests that the vast majority of Scottish people are satisfied with the present law, under which there are no restrictions on Sunday trading? Does he agree that it is high time that the people of England enjoyed similar benefits? Is he aware that in 1986, 43 Scottish Labour, SNP and Liberal Members voted against the people of England enjoying benefits similar to those in Scotland? Does not it illustrate the humbug talked by those hon. Members?

They object to English Members coming to Scottish Question Time, but are willing to vote on legislation that affects the people of England and Wales.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My hon. Friend is correct that the current arrangements in Scotland are operating satisfactorily. The hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) introduced the original Bill on licensing, the terms of which were warmly welcomed. It was supplemented with recent measures in the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland)—Act 1990. There is one minor exception to the Sunday trading laws in Scotland which relates to hairdressers and barbers. The point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) is, in the first instance, a matter for the Home Secretary and, ultimately, as far as it relates to England and Wales, for the House of Commons. The House will have noted what my hon. Friend said.

Mr. Foulkes: I was one of the Members who voted against the wholesale extension of Sunday trading to England because at present Sunday trading in Scotland is fairly limited. If it were extended to England it is believed that all the multiples throughout the United Kingdom would open. If the retail trade presented a compromise proposal for limited opening—and such a proposal is being discussed—some Opposition Members and some Conservative Members might be willing to reconsider the issue.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Sunday trading in Scotland is limited to areas in which the communities have made it clear that Sunday opening is welcome. There has been considerable sensitivity to the wishes of the communities concerned. I think that the majority of people take the view that collecting a bottle of milk or a newspaper on Sunday from the local shop does not impair the sanctity of the Sabbath.

Miss Emma Nicholson: I am delighted to hear the Minister say that there are some sensitivities in Scotland on Sunday trading. As I have significant Scottish blood stretching back over 980 years, I am glad to have the opportunity to express the views of people in western Scotland. Does the Minister agree that the success of Sunday trading in areas of Scotland where people want it is due to the exceptional economic boom in Scotland under a Conservative Government?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I agree with my hon. Friend that we have brought substantial economic advantages to Scotland. I welcome her view, especially as a few days ago in Glasgow city chambers she made a good speech on behalf of ADAPT, access for disabled people to arts premises. These issues should be borne in mind, and I have no doubt that in due course the House will wish to consider them.

Convention of Scottish Local Authorities

7. **Mr. Harry Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to meet with COSLA to discuss the financial position of Scottish local authorities.

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for industry and local government in Scotland met the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on 8 July, and I hope to meet the president later this month.

Mr. Ewing: In a constructive vein, may I suggest to the Secretary of State a way in which he could help some Scottish local authorities to develop their spending programmes? He could ensure that funds from the European regional development fund for coal mining communities, which have suffered as a result of the demise of the coal industry, are released to areas such as Central region. Will he use his powers under the Local Government Acts to set aside the spending limits imposed on such authorities so that they may accept money from the ERDF and get on with their planned programmes?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman was a member of a Government—a comparatively rare event nowadays for members of the Labour party—and therefore knows the importance of managing public expenditure in a way that ensures that there is no overspend giving rise to the danger of increasing inflation. The Government have been extremely successful in securing grants for Scotland from the various European funds. About £1·25 billion has been secured for Scotland over the years, and we shall continue to be as effective and successful as we can in taking advantage of all the funds that are available for Scotland.

Sir David Steel: Has the Secretary of State yet made a total assessment of the cost to Scottish local authorities and, therefore, to the Scottish people of the poll tax fiasco —the introduction of the tax, the score or so of amendments and its abolition and replacement? If he has

made that assessment, will he produce the figure so that everybody will know the total cost of the Government's incompetence?

Mr. Lang: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, the poll tax exists to raise resources for spending by local authorities. The fact that those authorities now have to raise more than they did a few years ago shows that local authorities have continued substantially to increase their spending, despite substantially increased grants from the Government. Let us hope that the council tax is more effective in controlling high spending.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. Friend find it astonishing that Scottish local authorities should claim that they are strapped for cash and are having to cut programmes while at the same time they are able to invest large sums? Does he agree that highly paid officials are responsible for investments, especially when they are bad investments?

Mr. Lang: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend that local authorities should control their public expenditure programmes in accordance with the resources available to them. To some extent, that depends on their efficiency in using the powers that are available to them to collect local taxation.

Mr. Macdonald: I understand that Scottish Office officials will be meeting the Western Isles council later this week to discuss the financial crisis in which that council finds itself. Notwithstanding the Government's general policy on the collapse of BCCI, will the Secretary of State instruct his officials to take as constructive and as positive approach as possible in discussions with the Western Isles council so that we can find some way of resolving the crisis without the full burden falling on ordinary people in the Western Isles who had no part in the decision which led to the crisis—the schoolchildren, the old folk and others who still have to rely on council services?

Mr. Lang: Of course I understand the hon. Gentleman's great concern about the circumstances of the Western Isles council. My officials have been in touch with the council and they have also had meetings with the three other district councils affected by the closure of BCCI. We shall examine carefully any proposition put to us by the Western Isles council, but I must emphasise that the responsibility for what has happened lies with the council, not with the Government, and there can be no question of the Government stepping in to bail it out.

Mr. Burns: Will my right hon. Friend reiterate, and make plain his views to English Ministers, that there can be no question of the Government's bailing out the foolish local authorities that invested their money in BCCI in order to make what they hoped would be a quick buck?

Mr. Lang: I understand my hon. Friend's concern about the matter. He will have heard what I have said and what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said last week on the subject.

Mr. Wilson: In spite of the rather unsubtle blandishments that the Secretary of State will receive from his hon. Friends, such as those from the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns), will he act in this matter with some social compassion and concern for the people who will ultimately be the victims of what has happened? Does he accept that it is unreasonable to expect that if highly paid officials—as the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) referred to them—of the Bank of England and the Department of the Environment cannot spot any rottenness in a financial institution when they are sitting in the heart of London, it is just a little more difficult for local authority officials in far-flung parts of Scotland to do so? Will he particularly bear in mind that single-tier authorities, by their nature, although covering small populations, have heavy financial burdens because they are responsible for social work, education and so on which would usually be the preserve of regions? In other contexts, that may be a good thing, but in this case it has exposed the council, and, more importantly the people of the Western Isles, to a disproportionate budget. In short, will the Minister not close any doors and deal with the matter as humanely, sympathetically and understandingly as is possible?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the Bank of England's powers are based on statute. It acted at the appropriate time and at the earliest possible time that it could have acted. With regard to the Western Isles council, I have nothing to add to what I have already said in answer to the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald).

Employment Initiatives

8. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what initiatives he intends taking to reduce unemployment in Scotland.

14. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he plans any new measures to reduce unemployment.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State recently announced a package of measures amounting to some £40 million to help unemployed people in Scotland back to work. That is on top of the substantial funding for Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the local enterprise companies, which is already more than £½ billion in the current year. In the final analysis, it is a productive economy which provides new jobs and we are vigorously removing barriers to economic growth.

Mr. Ross: As the Minister has identified the need for industry to be healthy and given the drubbing that he and the Secretary of State for Scotland took yesterday in the Scottish Grand Committee, I am sure that the House will think that they should have read the proceedings of that Committee and come forward with a better response. Will we have to wait until the Prime Minister comes to the House on Friday to report on the G7 meeting to see some stimulus for investment given Scotland's heavy reliance on capital goods?

Mr. Stewart: I was not able to respond to all the points made by the hon. Gentleman in that debate because he did not sit down until about nine minutes to one. I am disappointed in his supplementary question. I thought that he would say how pleased he was that General Accident has invested £3·75 million in an office complex in the Dundee technology park in his constituency which will result in 350 locally recruited jobs. That is just one example of the health and dynamism of the Scottish economy.

Mr. Strang: Is the Minister aware that the Secretary of State's recitation in the Scottish Grand Committee yesterday of selective, spurious statistics about the Scottish economy demeans the debate about Scotland? Everyone who lives in Scotland knows that unemployment there is serious and getting worse. The Secretary of State partially excuses the run down in the steel industry on the ground that heavy engineering, shipbuilding, car manufacturing at Linwood, and vehicle production at Bathgate have all been closed—but that was done by the present Government. It is now wholly unacceptable for them to shut down the steel industry itself, because that will make it impossible to attract steel-using industries back to Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: The Government do not propose to shut down the steel industry in Scotland and, as Labour does not propose to nationalise it, a Labour Government would have no power to intervene either. I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the fact that the number employed in business and financial services—which are of great importance to Edinburgh, where the hon. Gentleman himself represents a constituency—increased by 50 per cent. since 1979. Between 1986 and 1989 the Scottish economy grew by about 12 per cent., which contrasts markedly with the miserable average growth rate achieved under the last Labour Government of less than 1 per cent.

Mr. Andy Stewart: Does my hon. Friend the Minister agree that if Labour's plans for a minimum wage were implemented, it would have a catastrophic effect on employment in Scotland?

Mr. Allan Stewart: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, and a whole list of independent commentators agrees with him.

Mr. Wilson *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Stewart: Does the hon. Gentleman want me to read out the list, because it is quite long? Gavin Laird, who I understand is greatly respected by Labour Members, described Labour's proposals for a national minimum wage as "a nonsense". He said:

"It has never worked in the past. There is no logic for it. It does not work in any other country, and it will certainly not work in Great Britain."

Labour could do the unemployed a great service by heeding Gavin Laird's wise words.

Mr. Dewar: How can the Minister ignore the fact that when the Conservatives came to power, unemployment in Scotland—comparing like with like—was 140,000, but is now 220,000 and rising? How can the Minister be so criminally complacent, when already this year another 20,000 Scots have joined the dole queue? In the last six months, bankruptcies in Scotland have risen by 80 per cent., and liquidations by more than 50 per cent. Has the hon. Gentleman forgotten the hammer blows dealt to the Scottish steel industry, and yesterday's grim news that 900 jobs are to go at Rosyth and that 1,000 naval personnel there are to be withdrawn? When will the Government learn that problems cannot be solved by pretending that they do not exist?

Mr. Stewart: Over the past 10 years, the number of companies in Scotland has increased by 25,000, or by 68 per cent.—*[Interruption.]* Just listen. Every independent commentator has pointed out that Scotland is coming through the present economic downturn—and yes, there is an economic downturn—relatively well.

Mr. Dewar *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Stewart: I refer the hon. Gentleman to Cambridge Econometrics and to the Fraser of Allander Institute, which have conveyed the same message. I am not suggesting that there are no problems—of course there are. However, they would be a great deal worse if there were a Labour Government, who would allow local authorities to spend as much as they liked at the expense of business ratepayers. They would also be a great deal worse off if the hon. Gentleman's plans for a Scottish Assembly with tax-raising powers were imposed on the Scottish people, and if Labour imposed a statutory national minimum wage. That could cost Scotland as many as 174,000 jobs.

Greater Glasgow Health Board

9. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to meet the Greater Glasgow health board to discuss the board's underspend on salaries for the year ending 31 March.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Greater Glasgow health board is the best-funded health board in Scotland. Its record on patient care and financial management is excellent.

Mr. Watson: According to the board's own figures, there was an underspend of more than £5 million in the salaries bill for the year ending 31 March 1991. How can the Minister reconcile that with the board's record of driving down staff costs by a variety of means—including delaying regrading exercises for technicians and nurses, and, when it gets round to regrading them, placing them on lower grades than other health boards would? The board has also delayed the filling of vacant posts, sometimes not filling them at all. As a result, the Richmond Park special needs school, which is in my constituency, does not have enough speech and occupational therapists to teach children with problems.

Will the Minister remind the Greater Glasgow health board of its duty to deliver services efficiently to the people of Glasgow, and to ensure that it fully utilises its already inadequate resources to that end?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman will recall that he was told in May about the background to the position that has arisen in the school. It has nothing to do with financial circumstances, and everything to do with circumstances resulting from—if I remember rightly—maternity leave. *[Interruption.]* I was talking about the school. As for the hon. Gentleman's point about speech therapists, he will know of the initiative that we have taken. That initiative—which affects all health boards, not just the Greater Glasgow health board—will provide for a system of contracts between health boards and education authorities.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned a 5 per cent. underspend on salaries. He might also have mentioned the additional money committed by the board for services and supplies. Boards are allowed to carry over up to 1 per cent. of their total spending from one financial year into the next. That is what Greater Glasgow health board has

done, no doubt in order to fund some of the splendid improvements in service from which the Glasgow people will benefit in the coming year.

Mr. David Marshall: Is it not an absolute scandal that the board should have such an underspend on salaries when, for example, the ophthalmic surgery waiting list for patients in the east end of Glasgow is in a sorry mess? In a letter sent to me only this week, the chairman of the board told me how long the three categories of patients were having to wait. Urgent cases must wait for up to three months, "soon" cases for 12 to 18 months and routine cases for 18 months to two years.

Should not the board have used some of that underspend to employ additional ophthalmic surgeons to treat people with eyesight problems—or does the Minister feel that such problems do not deserve to be given priority by either the Government or the board?

Mr. Forsyth: If the hon. Gentleman had been listening, he would have heard me say that the underspend was part of the money that is being carried forward into this year's budget. As the Government are setting targets on waiting times which are to be agreed with all health boards, including the Greater Glasgow health board, the board will be able to deploy the money to achieve the quality of service that we are determined to see.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman: if the information that he has given is accurate, the position is unacceptable, and the board will certainly not meet the target set for it.

Mr. Galbraith: Does the Minister not realise that the reason why the Greater Glasgow health board is having to carry over £5 million from last year's budget is the need partly to offset the £13 million cuts required in this year's budget? Is he aware that the board itself predicts that it will require cuts of £40 million in the next two years? That can lead only to a significant deterioration in patient care.

The Minister's chief executive has already met the board, and dismissed its request for additional funds. Will the Minister himself now meet the board to discuss the crisis and avert further damage to the health service in Glasgow and the surrounding area?

Mr. Forsyth: I am sure that everyone who lives in Paisley, Ayr and the surrounding areas of Glasgow will be interested to learn that Labour policy apparently does not support the idea that money should follow patients out to the new hospitals that we have built in those areas to reflect the movement of population. The hon. Gentleman knows full well that resources are being transferred to boards that have been population-gainers and that those boards have benefited from the brand-new hospitals that the Government have built. The Government believe that care should be available where people are and that money should follow the patient. The hon. Gentleman is making a debating point which is unworthy of anyone who seeks to sit on the Government Benches.

British Steel

10. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent meetings he has had with the chairman of British Steel to discuss investment in Scottish plants.

Mr. Lang: I last met the chairman of British Steel on 4 June this year.

Mr. Salmond: Now that the Secretary of State for Scotland has finally come out to play on this question after dodging his responsibilities for the last two weeks, will he confirm the contents of the Scottish Office briefing note, which I have in my hand, which says that he was briefed to go to a meeting on 4 June, knowing of the anticipated closure of the Dalzell plate mill, and to say, in response to the chairman of British Steel, that it was entirely a matter for him, subject to competition law? All that was simultaneous with the Prime Minister's letter of support to the Dalzell shop stewards. How does the Secretary of State for Scotland reconcile that public posture of support with the private reality of sell out?

Mr. Lang: Over the last two weeks the hon. Gentleman has repeatedly and authoritatively attributed to me words that I did not use and has based upon them a number of deeply offensive remarks. I have now ascertained that the words that the hon. Gentleman has attributed to me derive from a briefing for another Minister. The other Minister is a Minister in another Department. The words in question were not said by that Minister. The briefing in question was not submitted to that Minister. The meeting for which that briefing was prepared did not take place. I believe that the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) must have known that that was so. Therefore, he now stands exposed, caught out in a cheap and contemptible ruse. He was wrong about the briefing; he was wrong about the meeting; he was wrong about the Minister; he was wrong about the Department. I invite him to withdraw all the contemptible and unfounded allegations that he has made and to apologise.

Dr. Bray: Is the Secretary of State aware that British Steel's plate mill strategy was to reject the cheaper option of developing the Dalzell works? Nevertheless, there are a few months during which British Steel will try to find the additional £300 million that is required for a new plate mill on Teesside before any contracts are placed. Will he therefore keep up the maximum pressure on British Steel, during the few months in which he will remain a member of the Government, to make sure that the cheaper and more effective option of developing the Dalzell works is fully considered? Will he extend his representations beyond the obviously lame duck chairman of British Steel, who only has a few months to go? Will he approach immediately the management of British Steel and discuss the issue?

Mr. Lang: I do not know how right the hon. Gentleman is about the longevity of the chairman of British Steel's tenure of office, but he does not sound very confident about the likelihood of his own party's coming to office. He knows that British Steel will continue to need the products of Dalzell, subject to market conditions, for several years. It is likely that British Steel will continue to need the products of Dalzell beyond the present guarantee period—to the end of 1994. The hon. Gentleman also knows how hard my predecessor and I, and other Ministers in my Department, have sought to persuade British Steel of the desirability of locating their single plate mill at Dalzell. Furthermore, he knows that if any additional opportunities arise for us to put that case in an effective, successful and positive way, we shall take them.

Mr. Dewar: Will the Secretary of State note that we are not interested in the endless pursuit of the unimportant, where the only aim appears to be to secure party political points at the expense of the industry? The Opposition expect him to continue to put every pressure that he can upon British Steel to reconsider its decision that the Scottish industry is not worthy of investment. We believe —and I understand that the Secretary of State for Scotland believes—that there is a very strong case for investment in Dalzell and Ravenscraig. In those circumstances, the Government should not throw in the towel and withdraw from the fight.

May I also ask the Secretary of State to exert constant pressure regarding the offering for sale of redundant plant —redundant from the point of view of British Steel? He told the Select Committee on Trade and Industry that there had been expressions of interest in that plant. It would be a complete tragedy if people who might be interested in buying it were unable to pursue that interest.

Finally, does the Secretary of State accept that we are particularly interested that there should be a decent, realistic and practical package to help the Lanarkshire economy to recover from its present troubles? The existing offer, totalling £29 million, does not meet that description.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman will have heard my answer to the question asked by the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) which also answers his first point. As for the future of Lanarkshire, the hon. Gentleman will also be aware that the Lanarkshire working group produced a series of proposals to be developed over a period of years. We have already made substantial resources available sufficient to cover the immediate needs for the development of the working group's proposals. We have given an undertaking that Lanarkshire will feature highly in our priorities in the public expenditure round for the next financial year. I share the hon. Gentleman's wish for Lanarkshire's economy to be regenerated. It has already made considerable strides in the past few years towards diversification and a strengthening of its economic base. I should like that to continue and I have no doubt that the best chance for it to do so will be the return of a Conservative Government.

Teachers

12. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what specific allocation of funding has been made to regional councils to increase the number and training of learning support teachers in the next academic session; and what was the position in the previous five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have invited the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to let me have its views on how we can improve learning support for the three Rs.

Mrs. Ewing: Does the Minister recall that on at least three occasions in late February and in early March he made public statements to the effect that there would be an increase in learning support funding in the near future? Against the background of a rise in general reading standards does not the Minister think that it would now be appropriate before the start of the next academic year to state clearly what additional funding will be available in a much-needed and much-appreciated service?

Mr. Forsyth: As I said to the hon. Lady, I have asked the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to let me have its views on how we can best target resources for learning support. The hon. Lady said that she believed that there has been an improvement in reading standards. We are especially concerned about children who have difficulties with reading, writing and arithmetic, and I am ready to consider the proposals that the convention will make in the context of the proposals for primary testing on which we expect to make an announcement shortly.

Government of Scotland

13. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from the Campaign for a Scottish Assembly on the future government of Scotland.

Mr. Lang: Representations on the future Government of Scotland from the Campaign for a Scottish Assembly are now reduced to a pre-printed postcard campaign.

Mrs. Michie: As the majority of people in Scotland have made clear their demand for a Scottish Parliament, does not the Secretary of state demean his office by his reactionary attitude and does not he denigrate and insult the Scottish nation by implying that it is too poor and too stupid to look after its own affairs?

Mr. Lang: I should never dream of making such a suggestion. The last time that the Scottish people were asked to pass judgment on whether they wanted an Assembly, they did not support the idea—only about one third voted in favour. As for the present opinion of the Scottish people, an authoritative Mori poll has shown that since June 1989 there has been a steady fall in support for a Scottish Assembly from 49 per cent. two years ago to 33 per cent. now. I hardly think that that is a ringing endorsement for a policy which happens to find favour with the hon. Lady.

Local Government Finance

15. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what projections he has done of the estimated loss of revenue local authorities will suffer by uncollected poll tax; and if he will list his estimates for each regional council in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend has made no estimates of the income which local authorities will lose through non-collection of the community charge. Charge collection is the responsibility of local authorities who have a wide range of recovery measures at their disposal.

Mr. Eadie: The Government should make estimates of what is happening. The Minister must be aware that the Scottish Office is responsible for the absolute shambles of the poll tax in Scotland. More than 40 per cent. of the people who should pay it are not paying it and, despite what the Minister said, that will not change. Is not he aware that Scottish local government is reaching a crisis and that very soon councils might not be able to discharge their statutory obligations?

Mr. Stewart: That is simply not the case. Local authorities have a statutory duty to collect outstanding charges. A wide range of powers are available to them. Again, I ask the hon. Gentleman and the House why some

authorities, such as Grampian, Fife and Central, have collected well over 90 per cent. of budget income for 1989-90 and more than 85 per cent. for 1990-91. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Scottish Office will jointly monitor the collection position in coming months.

Aberdeen Royal Infirmary

16. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the annual budget and total number of staff of the Aberdeen Royal infirmary.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Aberdeen Royal infirmary costs about £68 million a year to run and employs 2,346 staff.

Mr. Doran: The Minister will be aware that the consultation period is under way. There is great apprehension because the consultation period is taking place during the local holidays and while Parliament is in recess. There are already signs of fundamental changes in the application that has been submitted to the Scottish Office on the privatisation of the hyperbaric centre. Will the Minister consider an extension of the period of consultation to allow us to gather the facts on that change of plan? Failing that, will he give me an assurance today that factual questions will be answered by his Department and by the applicants?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman is wrong to associate the decision in respect of the hyperbaric centre with the application for NHS trust status from Foresterhill. The decision on the hyperbaric centre was taken by the health board because it believed that it would result in more research and a better quality of care being available to divers in the North sea and to others.

The consultation period has been set out clearly and the criteria by which the application will be judged are set out clearly. I am sure that Grampian health board will be happy to respond to requests for information from the hon. Gentleman. I have noticed that the hon. Gentleman's invitations to attend Labour party meetings have been circulating in the internal mail of the health board—a matter which I very much deprecate.

Naval Support (Changes)

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Tom King): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the Government's intentions for rationalisation of the Royal Navy support arrangements. The Government——

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Apologise for yesterday.

Mr. King: If anybody has to apologise—[HON. MEMBERS: "It is you."] Many hon. Members know that I have asked to make a statement. I was told that it was not for the convenience of the Opposition. I was ready to answer a private notice question. If anyone has to apologise, it is not me. I have to make the announcements, and if I cannot make them in the House, I will make them in the most convenient way. I make that clear. If the Opposition cannot sort out their act on whether they want a statement, I would be grateful if they would tell the truth in the House—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I can understand what the hon. Gentleman wants to say. He should make his submissions when he asks his question.

Hon. Members: No!

Mr. O'Neill: The House has been challenged. The Secretary of State has had 24 hours in which to get his facts correct, yet he is still carrying on the questioning that he raised yesterday. It was not substantial yesterday and it is not substantial now.

Mr. Speaker: I am not part of any discussions that go on through the usual channels. I am concerned with the way in which we proceed in the House. Let us proceed.

Mr. King: The Government have been examining all aspects of the armed forces' support to achieve the most efficient support infrastructure and to make savings in line with the front-line force level reductions confirmed in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1991", "Britain's Defence for the 90s".

The closure of the Royal Navy leadership school, HMS Royal Arthur, the Royal Navy diesel repair depot at Blackbrook Farm, and the accommodation and administrative headquarters, HMS St. Vincent, at Furse House, London, have already been announced in *Hansard*, 16 January 1991, at column 500.

Following a thorough review of basing arrangements, I have decided that when the new force structure is in place, ships of the Royal Navy will continue to be based at each of the naval bases at Portsmouth, Devonport, Rosyth and Faslane. Although Portland is not a base port but an operating base, I see a continuing need for a naval presence there also. We will now proceed to rationalise the support activities in each of those naval base areas and changes will also be made to the current arrangements for basing ships at Rosyth.

The Rosyth-based squadron of four type 42 destroyers, HMS York, Glasgow, Liverpool and Edinburgh, will be redeployed to Portsmouth, which will become their base port. That will allow the support activity for type 42s to be concentrated in Portsmouth, with consequent economies. The move to Portsmouth will take place progressively from mid 1993 to late 1994. In addition, the four ships of the Northern Ireland squadron will move to Faslane in 1993.

Rosyth remains the base port for the 1st, 3rd and 4th mine counter-measures squadrons together with the fishery protection squadron.

As a result of the changes, about 1,100 service personnel will relocate to Portsmouth and 100 to Faslane. Some 900 civilian posts will also be affected, with a number moving to other establishments, but also with some inevitable redundancies. Employment at Rosyth will then number around 8,500 including employees at the dockyard.

Current plans to conduct major refits of submarines —including Vanguard class SSBNs—and surface vessels at Rosyth remain unchanged. The £500 million investment currently being made in the dockyard for new refit facilities for Trident submarines will itself provide a further significant number of construction industry jobs.

A range of other measures designed to rationalise support facilities elsewhere in the naval shore infrastructure have also been decided. They include the closure of the royal naval air station HMS Daedalus at Lee-on-Solent and the relocation of the air engineering school and other units to other establishments in the Portsmouth area; the closure of the royal naval stores depots at Lathalmond in Scotland and Copenacre in Wiltshire—although some offices will remain in Copenacre—the closure of the royal naval armaments depot at Trecwn in Wales, and the partial closure of the armament depot at Ernesettle, Plymouth. They will also include the closure of the oil fuel depot at Invergordon and withdrawal of Royal Navy facilities at the Finnart oil fuel depot; and the sale of the Gunwharf site at HMS Nelson, Portsmouth.

Some 1,900 civilian posts will be affected, with some inevitable redundancies, but it is hoped about a third will be relocated to other establishments. The closures will take place progressively over the next five years.

The measures carry forward the policy already announced of making reductions in the support area proportional to those in the front line. They are an essential part of ensuring the best use of defence resources and providing a structure appropriate to the needs of our Navy in the 1990s and beyond.

Mr. O'Neill: I welcome the Secretary of State to the House, whatever the reason for his non-appearance yesterday. Today we have the opportunity to examine the substance of his statement rather than the circumstances surrounding the announcement.

I welcome the decision not to close the base at Rosyth. I leave others to decide who was most responsible for that decision, but the Opposition know that such an outcome would not have been achieved without the unique campaign led by the work force, the service men's wives and the local communities and their representatives at district, regional and parliamentary level—especially my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown). Those people were all critical in alerting Scottish public opinion.

No one in Scotland was unaware of the campaign led by the Labour movement, and such was the breadth of support for it that Conservative Back Benchers, too, gave

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it their full backing. Even the Secretary of State for Scotland, when he eventually heard about the proposed closure, gave his support.

Does anyone believe that, if the campaign had not been waged, a statement such as we have just heard would have been made shortly after 28 March, when the original decision to close Rosyth was to have been approved by Ministers? Within 20 days—the minimum period allowed—the process of consulting those affected would have been completed.

Will the Secretary of State confirm that, as a result of the transfer of the four type 42 frigates, the Royal Navy, in the words of Admiral Livesay, could well be in danger of losing a large number of good people who will not be prepared to make the move, and that these craft, the type 42s, are "full of first choice preferences"? Does the right hon. Gentleman also recall that, in the words of the admiral, when he suggested a plan to save Rosyth, the number of jobs that were to have been lost was only 400, not the 900 at present suggested? Can he tell us the reason for the disparity between the Livesay figures and those that he has announced?

Can the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the decision to delay the order of a further seven Sandown class minehunters will not create a reduction in the size of the minehunting fleet in the near future, thereby undermining the cost-effectiveness of the Rosyth base by the mid-1990s? Can he further confirm that the Government have abandoned all plans to privatise the Scottish fishery protection squadron, and guarantee that there will be craft in Rosyth capable of undertaking work in the North sea oilfield in times of emergency?

As for the other naval bases, will the Secretary of State confirm that their capacity to accommodate the remaining Rosyth craft will be there in the near future in the event of Rosyth being closed? Will he also confirm the long-term plans for Rosyth within the general framework of Britain's and NATO's maritime strategy and, for the benefit of the House, can he tell us what he considers to be Britain's present part within that maritime strategy?

The whole House will recognise that the statement covers other facilities, too. I see that the Secretary of State for Wales is on the Front Bench. May I ask him what discussions have taken place about the future of Trecwn, Pembrokeshire, which is one of the few centres of industrial employment in a predominantly rural area whose economy is extremely fragile? It has been suggested that the depot could be used as a forward supply depot for United States rapid reaction capabilities into Europe.

Another idea which I believe has been canvassed—I should be interested to hear the Minister's view—is that a tri-service explosive disposal facility could perhaps be expanded at Trecwn. I understand that that is already taking place there, and when I had the opportunity, through the good offices of the Secretary of State, to visit the depot a few weeks ago, I was able to see some of that work being done.

Finally, can the Secretary of State describe what forms of assistance will be given to the areas affected, what resources will be made available and whether they will come from his budget or from the budgets of other Ministers?

Mr. King: I will deal first with the Welsh point that the hon. Gentleman raised, on the question of further steps to help to deal with what is obviously a serious matter in west Wales—I recognise that. The hon. Gentleman will know the time frame, which is helpful. I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales is already taking action, with the Welsh Development Agency and the TEC, to become involved in these matters. What is proposed at Trecwn will not start before 1994-95, and the loss of jobs will be loaded slightly later, with the main concentration occurring nearer to 1995-96.

The purpose in making the announcements is to allow us to get ahead with our plans and with the consultations. I am sure that the House will support that principle. The right way to approach such changes is to give the best possible chance for the individuals concerned to prepare and for the Ministry of Defence and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales to do all that they can to help over the change.

I do not know how Admiral Livesay worked out the earlier figures that he gave. The transfer of type 42s makes good sense, although he deprecated the approach, because it means that, at one base, Portsmouth, we have all the type 42s. There are four in Rosyth and eight in Portsmouth. That means that we can concentrate spares, and servicing and support capability, in one place. Those are the figures, and I do not know what validity the earlier figures that were worked out had. I suspect that they were not arrived at following a full examination of what was involved. The figures also involve—I would need to check whether this aspect was covered by Admiral Livesay—the transfer of the Northern Ireland squadron to Faslane, which I dealt with.

The hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) asked me several questions. As other hon. Members would not have a chance to contribute if I answered them all now, I shall write to him if I leave out the answers to any key questions. I should, however, like to deal with the central point. The hon. Gentleman has again sought to peddle at the Dispatch Box the story that has been peddled around Scotland that the decision had already been taken when, in fact, it had not. We were reviewing the options. Considerable alarm was caused in Scotland to many people—*[Interruption.]* Yes, I congratulate the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) on achieving that scale of publicity, which caused huge alarm to many people who were led to believe that decisions had been taken when they had not.

I am sure that the Leader of the Opposition will be concerned about the way in which leaked documents can be used, and about the fact that somebody at the Rosyth site can be disloyal. I stress that that is a Ministry of Defence site for the refitting of nuclear submarines. The right hon. Gentleman must realise that these are grave matters. I am sure that he is concerned about the fact that those on his Front Bench have used leaked documents from such a source as though this was not a matter of considerable gravity. Anybody who purports to lead the future Government of our country must take seriously the point that he should not appear to be condoning the fact that people who might work for that Government in the future are free to leak any document that they like, whatever its nature.

While the hon. Member for Clackmannan stood at the Opposition Dispatch Box, anxiously inquiring about jobs for people in Scotland, many of whose main hope of

employment will be to work on the refitting of our nuclear deterrent—our Trident submarines—he was surrounded by those whose lapsed CND memberships are written all over their faces. Those people in Scotland have the certain knowledge that they could have no confidence in there being a job for any single one of them if the Opposition ever came to power. Their prospects of jobs in the future are vastly better under this Government than under any of the alternatives.

Mr. Michael Mates (East Hampshire): Will my right hon. Friend accept that it is a very good thing that he has produced such a comprehensive answer to his survey of naval support before the recess, thus ending the uncertainty with which everyone has been having to cope? Is he in a position yet to tell us how much per annum will be saved once the changes are implemented and, if not, could he let us know as soon as possible? If one is a politician, it is difficult to blame the Opposition for using the publicity that they did, but is it not a fact that the man who leaked the confidential document has done the greatest disservice to his own organisation? Will my right hon. Friend issue a further reminder to all at the Ministry of Defence about where their loyalties lie?

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The answer to his first detailed point is that the re-basing of the type 42s will save £70 million over the next five years, which is the biggest saving that could be achieved from any of the available options. That was an important consideration. As I have said, I do not have the details of the others, such as those at Trecwn and Copenacre, but in any case those closures are four or five years ahead.

My hon. Friend has raised a serious point. I hope that those on the Opposition Front Bench will recognise it as such. The use of leaked documents is a serious matter—*[Interruption.]* It is known to the House that one person has already lost employment at an alternative naval base over the leaking of the document. In the past week, two people have been in court because of a fairly amateur attempt to leak nuclear secrets to the Soviet Union——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The Minister leaked the document to the press yesterday. What hypocrisy.

Mr. King: I can well understand the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) trying to shout me down on this point. It is a serious matter. If the Opposition treat leaked documents from the Ministry of Defence and naval establishments as a matter of no consequence, they do no service to the nation and send a bad signal to the people who work in such establishments.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): In the light of yesterday's events, may I express the hope that the Secretary of State will find it possible in the future to consult a little more widely than with the official Opposition in determining whether a statement is necessary or desirable?

The Secretary of State's statement rightly acknowledged the importance to the dockyard of the refitting of the new class of Trident submarines. What guarantee can he give that the refitting will go to the dockyard? Does he care to say whether a four-boat, as opposed to a three-boat, fleet is likely to give rise to more opportunities for the dockyard?

Mr. King: I am grateful to the hon. and learned Gentleman for his first comment. I have certainly learnt a lesson in that respect. I entirely understand why he made that point.

It is our plan to go ahead with the nuclear refitting at Rosyth. The hon. and learned Gentleman will be aware that I referred to the £500 million investment plan. As he knows, the base work is already under way on the foundations and excavations. Actual construction is due to start next year. Only last week, we issued an invitation to tender for the fourth Trident submarine. I should like confirmation, from any Opposition Member who might choose to give it, that the Opposition support going ahead with that construction programme when it is drawn up at Barrow. That is certainly our programme.

Mr. Keith Speed (Ashford): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the important statements that he has made this afternoon will not inhibit the capability of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines to meet any threat within or outside the NATO area?

Mr King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, whose interest in this matter I very much respect. He will be aware that, as we move from, for example, a destroyer-frigate force of about 50 to one of about 40, it is absolutely essential that we reduce support facilities proportionately. If we wasted money on support, that money would not be available for the front line. I know that my right hon. and hon. Friends attach great importance to that.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): The Secretary of State mentioned the panic that was caused. Was not it started by the Minister of State for Defence Procurement, the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Clark), when he said on Plymouth Sound radio that it was evident that it is Rosyth that "we want to close"? That is what caused the panic and prompted the political response.

Following up the question of the hon. Member for East Hampshire (Mr. Mates), the naval support budget is £2·5 billion. Under "Options for Change", the Secretary of State said that he wanted to achieve a 20 per cent. saving—about £500 million. What savings will he have achieved as a result of the statement?

Mr. King: I have just given the answer to that question. I said that £70 million would be saved over the next five years. The hon. Gentleman's remarks were an interesting rewriting of history. He appeared to write his hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) out of any responsibility for causing the alarm and confusion that he did among many people in his constituency.

Dame Janet Fookes (Plymouth, Drake): Will my right hon. Friend confirm, absolutely clearly and without leaving any doubt, that both the Devonport naval base and the Devonport royal dockyard have a continued and firm existence and future? Will he bear in mind the number of jobs that have been lost and will continue to be lost after today's announcement? What plans do the Government have to assist in that regard?

Mr. King: In respect of the naval base, my statement made it clear that, while we shall certainly wish to keep Plymouth, Devonport as a naval base—I give that clear statement to my hon. Friend—obviously in all defence establishments we shall seek to ensure that they do not

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carry excess on the support side or have unused facilities. The cost of them is money which is therefore not available for our front-line capability.

I certainly hope that I can say that the dockyard will have a continued role. My hon. Friend will be well aware that there can be no blank cheque for the dockyards or guarantee that, irrespective of how competitive and efficient they are, they will have work in perpetuity. However, provided that they remain efficient and competitive, my hon. Friend will obtain the reassurance that she needs.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): In view of the loss of 5,000 jobs already from Devonport dockyard, the further 380 jobs lost from the armaments depot is serious. Can the Secretary of State give an assurance that HMS Illustrious's refit will go ahead within the next few weeks or months? Will he give some extra flexibility to encourage skilled workpeople to move, given the high cost of housing, particularly outside the areas? There needs to be more flexibility between redundancy payments and encouragement to move.

Mr. King: I well understand the right hon. Gentleman's last point, and particularly his point about the Ernesettle jobs. There is a little time to come on that. It will not start before 1993-94, so we shall have some time to see whether we can make adjustments there. If the terms can be agreed, the refit of HMS Illustrious can go ahead without loss of time. She is in Plymouth, and commercial negotiations are continuing. We hope that they will be satisfactorily resolved, in which case the refit will go ahead.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): I am glad that my right hon. Friend has had the opportunity to come to the House and give this statement. I understand the confusion caused on the Opposition Benches by certain people not talking to those on their Front Bench.

Could my right hon. Friend expand on the one sentence about Portland? I assume that it means that there will be no job losses or worries for any of my constituents. Because the written answer yesterday had so little detail, there is a great deal of speculation. Can he confirm that the Lynx helicopter base, HMS Osprey, will stay open, that the Flag Officer Sea Training Board will continue to do its excellent work there, and that the royal naval dockyard will stay open? Can he say anything about moving other jobs into the area to use the excellent facilities which are somewhat underutilised in Portland harbour?

Mr. King: I understand my hon. Friend's concerns about Portland, but I cannot add to what I have said. I have given my response. We are looking at every base and I cannot give a guarantee that every job will stay at every base. That is why I cannot give my hon. Friend the assurance that he seeks. We are looking to see whether the bases operate efficiently. We have to make savings proportionate to the reductions in the front line.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): After the Secretary of State's little outburst on loyalty, does he accept that the loyalty of service men should be to the Crown and Parliament rather than to any petty party politician such as he has shown himself to be during the past couple of days? Does he agree that the point made by his hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces to the Select Committee on Defence on 12 June, when he said that all the naval bases had been subjected to a similar review about their future, is less than convincing? Will he admit that only Rosyth was lined up for closure and that it was only the campaign led by my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) that ensured Rosyth's future?

Mr. King: Rosyth was not lined up for closure. It was precisely the repetition of that sort of statement in the early months that caused so much alarm. That sort of statement has been quoted, as though it was proved, on the back of leaked documents which did not prove it in any sense. The truth is that we have reviewed all the naval bases. Rosyth was the only one that was studied in detail—*[Laughter.]* They are not simply three equal naval bases. In reality, both Portsmouth and Plymouth are three times the size of Rosyth. In addition, Portland is not a base port; it is an operating base, and bears no comparison to the other three. That is what happened. A great deal of mischief has been stirred up by people wishing to cause trouble who themselves, through their party policy, would be able to give the least guarantee to anybody of any jobs in any base in Britain.

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): May I welcome the increased commitment to Portsmouth that the changes represent? Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is better to press one's case with reason and common sense than to resort constantly to counter-productive carping, criticism and scaremongering, which appeal to Opposition Members? Their policies would not bear scrutiny should they ever have responsibility for the defence of the country.

Mr. King: If I were living in Scotland and were concerned about my job, I would far rather that that concern was in the sensible and intelligent hands of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, who has worked tirelessly on this matter with his colleagues. I would not want my concerns to be subject to the alarmist and deeply worrying approach that has been adopted by certain Opposition Members. That attitude has caused real problems in the handling of this difficult problem.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): We note the relocation of the Northern Ireland squadron, which has now moved approximately 60 miles closer to Northern Ireland—some day it might get there. Is it not the case that the net effect of the changes has been to accentuate the geographical distortion in defence spending? Is it not the case that the bulk of the defence budget operates as a massive subsidy for the south-east of England?

Mr. King: I do not quite know how the hon. Gentleman works that out. However, I can see the point about the transfer of the destroyers. One can only make a comment about distortions in defence spending if one is prepared to ignore the massive investment that has been made in the facilities at Faslane and Rosyth, which represents a substantial transfer of resources to Scotland.

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): Can my right hon. Friend confirm that the net result of the announcements that he has made so far will be an increase in the number of uniformed posts in the Gosport-Portsmouth area and an increase in civilian posts? That will be welcomed by the

service personnel, many of whom have made their homes in south Hampshire, and by the civilian population, who greatly value their strong links with the Royal Navy.

My right hon. Friend will understand my keen sense of loss at the proposed closure of the royal naval air station, HMS Daedalus. If that base is closed, will my right hon. Friend confirm that there will be the closest consultation with local authorities so that some amenity value will accrue to the local population?

Mr. King: I certainly give my hon. Friend assurance on his latter point. He will know that the closure does not mean a loss of jobs so much as the transfer of activities, particularly those of the air engineering school.

On my hon. Friend's first point, the net effect of the announcements will be an increase in the number of uniformed and civilian posts in the Gosport-Portsmouth area. I should make it clear to my hon. Friend, as I have to other hon. Members, that it is important to ensure that the support side is organised on the most efficient, cost-effective basis. I know that my hon. Friend appreciates that. There will be some job losses in the support side to ensure that we have a lean and cost-effective support base suitable to the somewhat reduced level of our front line.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Is the Secretary of State solemnly telling the House that there was no Rosyth closure study? Is he solemnly telling the House that there was no timetable for closure? If the right hon. Gentleman is so worried about people peddling rumours, why yesterday did the Secretary of State for Scotland allow his lackeys to say that it was he who had saved Rosyth? If there was no fight, why was it necessary for the Secretary of State for Scotland to make that intervention?

The Secretary of State for Defence referred to the Admiral Livesay plan. Why did he not accept the recommendation about 400 jobs? Does he not accept that the loss of 900 jobs in central Scotland, with all its repercussions, is a great blow? Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that, but for the efforts of the work force and of my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), matters would be a great deal worse? If he does not believe that, why does he not make a firm commitment today about the long-term future of the base?

Mr. King: I tried to make it clear to the hon. Gentleman exactly what the position was, and I am sorry that he does not appreciate or accept it. I made it clear that studies were done and that a number of options were considered. However, I also made it absolutely clear that decisions had not been taken and that we were considering a number of options. Nevertheless, stories continued to be peddled that those decisions had been taken.

The hon. Gentleman is standing up and expressing his concern again. If I can give a measure of assurance about the future of jobs, it would be much nicer for all concerned if those working in defence had some confidence that the whole House shared the determination to see those people continuing in employment. As a member of the Labour party, which has no defence policy at all—the prospect of a future Labour Government has caused great alarm in the defence industries—the hon. Gentleman should pay far greater attention to that issue.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that Scottish Conservative Members, who concentrated their arguments where it mattered and achieved maximum effect by doing so, are pleased with the outcome? We believe that my right hon. Friend and his colleagues have listened carefully to the representations made by the work force, and we commend the way in which they have done so. We understand the concern that is felt in the Ministry of Defence among uniformed officers and civil servants about some of the ghastly leaks that have occurred. We took no part in those leaks and are not associated with them. Consequently, on behalf of the Scottish people, we thank my right hon. Friend and his team for responding so well.

Mr. King: I am very grateful to my hon. Friend, whose assessment is precisely right. Attempts that were made to advertise the fact that there were leaks from Rosyth damaged the prospects for that base. They were extremely damaging to the good reputation of the overwhelmingly loyal work force there, and those concerned were singularly unwise.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Secretary of State try to help us on one or two matters? If he thinks that he has won and those on the Opposition Front Bench think that they have won, why have 2,000 jobs been lost? If we add the 700 jobs that were lost at the dockyard, that makes 2,700 jobs that will be lost over a period in that area. What consultation has he had with the Secretary of State for Scotland to ensure that adequate investment is made in the area to take up the slack?

The right hon. Gentleman should not expect us to be so naive because I have visited the naval base and had discussions with Admiral Livesay. I shall not breach the confidential discussions that we had, but it was clear that Rosyth was the most vulnerable of the naval bases. The transfer of four type 42s to Portsmouth makes the naval base at Rosyth most vulnerable in the future. The Secretary of State must come clean on that. Everyone at Rosyth must know the position. To put it colloquially, their jackets are on a slack nail—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman can "haud his wheesht" over defence policy. I do not go round with a CND card in one hand and a Trident missile in the other. Will the Secretary of State make it extremely clear that those jobs are secure?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Questions should be to the Secretary of State.

Mr. Douglas *rose*——

Mr. King: I have already spoken to the hon. Gentleman about the studies and the review that have been carried out. Rosyth is the smallest of the "main" bases. The studies were examined, and the decisions that were taken have now been announced to the House.

I well understand the hon. Gentleman's outburst, because I find it pretty appalling to stand here and be challenged over the number of jobs that are being lost. We regret every job that is lost in that area, and are doing all we can to ensure that we maintain the country's defences. We then face Opposition Members who do not have a defence policy worth the name. They cannot guarantee to anyone in our armed forces—in naval or any other bases—or those supporting our nuclear deterrent, that there will be a single job for them in the future. The hypocrisy is absolutely mind-blowing.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): Is my right hon. Friend aware that we deeply appreciate the care, concern and detailed attention that he pays to making decisions of the sort announced today, which we know are in the great interests of the defence of this country? We cannot implement "Options for Change" unless savings are made in the support spheres, so that we can maintain strong front-line forces as well. Is he also aware that we were far more impressed by the care and attention that he gave to the problem at Rosyth and by the careful, reasoned, calm and cogent arguments put to us by representatives of the Rosyth management and work force than we were by the noisy clamour and misleading information put out by Opposition Members?

Mr. King: I think that my hon. Friend puts that point clearly and shares opinion on the stench of hypocrisy that reeks across the Chamber; I find it particularly nauseating.

Mr. Henry McLeish (Fife, Central): I am sure that most people in Fife agree that the statement brings to an end one of the shabbiest and most disgraceful episodes of ministerial incompetence seen in the Chamber. More importantly, will the Secretary of State give us a rational explanation of why the Livesay plan of 400 has become the King plan of 900? If there is no prospect of further reviews to reduce that number, will the Secretary of State give an assurance to the people of Fife that steps will be taken and, along with his lackadaisical right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, make serious efforts to tackle the problems of unemployment in Rosyth, and put people first? In view of the Secretary of State's performance this afternoon, will he tell the House who leaked the closure announcement to *The Sunday Times* on Christmas eve?

Mr. King: The hon. Member referred to the end of a shabby episode, and I agree with that entirely; I think that the episode has been incredibly shabby. The hon. Gentleman's intervention shows the sort of voices that exist in Fife and the surrounding districts, and the sort of abuse that the hon. Gentleman passes on to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, who has worked extremely hard on the issues. I pay tribute to the sensible and balanced way in which he did so. Faced with the difficult issues that exist in some sectors, if I had to make a choice between arguing with Opposition Members such as the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) and discussing the matter rationally with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, there would be no question as to who would be most likely to help me get the right answer for the hon. Gentleman's constituents.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Will my right hon. Friend remind those of my constituents who work in Rosyth that, had the Labour party policy proposed in the past three elections been adopted and the Labour party elected to power, more than 5,000 people who work at Rosyth would have been made redundant? Will my right hon. Friend help me with the puzzling trichotomy that we face this afternoon now that the CND lapse has occurred? How is it that CND members were against Rosyth in the past three elections because they wanted to abolish the Trident force, were against our fighting troops fighting—which is their purpose—in the Gulf war, and are now suddenly in favour of keeping all the employees at Rosyth, regardless of CND and Trident?

Mr. King: The Opposition operate a very clear defence policy in a sense. They want substantial cuts in public expenditure—they made that clear, and the proposal was overwhelmingly carried by a mandatory majority at Labour party conferences. They clearly want to question our nuclear deterrent and, also, to argue for every single job in every base, for every weapons programme and for every new piece of expenditure that they can possibly find to criticise us on.

That is a policy lacking in integrity and intellectual content. We see the Opposition spokesmen sinking further and further from view. I think that it was the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) who said on the subject of CND:

"I am still a member, but I don't think people want us to comment on this."

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): Did the Secretary of State base his decision on the fact that, although a fifth of the ratings in the Royal Navy are recruited from Scotland and the north-east of England, only 12 per cent. of the officers are recruited from those areas, or did he base it on the fact that type 42s, which are forward air defence-dedicated destroyers, should be sent more than 24 hours steaming south of the main air threat, which would come from the north?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman seems to imagine that ships should be kept in harbour all the time. Ships are deployed occasionally. Under Labour's defence policy, they would not be able to afford the fuel and would probably be permanently tied up in the south of England. We intend to deploy our ships, and in that context the hon. Gentleman's fatuous question falls.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The House knows that I have to protect subsequent business on the Order Paper, which is a Plaid Cymru Supply day. I shall allow questions to continue for another 10 minutes, and then we have a ten-minute Bill. I hope that hon. Members will ask brief questions.

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): Will my right hon. Friend take note that there will be considerable relief that he has gone through this exercise? Will he confirm that his announcement will enable the Royal Navy to remain the third most powerful navy in the world, and far and away the world's best? Will he continue to point out the gross hypocrisy of the Opposition, who demand defence cuts in general but always seem to oppose rationalisation?

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend. Our objective is precisely to ensure that we maintain the best possible Royal Navy with the best possible support. It is my duty to see that we get the most efficient use of resources. That is a balanced and responsible approach, and it is the approach of integrity. We modestly claim that it is not reflected elsewhere in the House.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): I have enjoyed watching the Secretary of State trying to make smoke, and I am sorry to have to break through his screen. Will he take the opportunity afforded by his statement to answer the question determinedly evaded by his right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces whom I asked to scotch the idea of closing in October the royal naval detention quarters at Portsmouth? Will the Secretary of

State assure us that the RNDQ at Portsmouth will not be vacated until proper provision has been made for females at the military corrective training centre at Colchester? Or does the Department intend to turn the female institutions of the services into the same sorry state as our civilian establishments?

Mr. King: I am afraid that I cannot comment on that, but I shall look into the matter.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): I welcome my right hon. Friend's robust promotion of a powerful role for the Royal Navy and the British nuclear deterrent, which contrasts with the policies of ex-CND and continuing CND Opposition Members. Will he confirm that the Royal Navy and the mercantile marines of the international community will continue to benefit from the work of the Hydrographic Department in Taunton, and will that work be effectively resourced by his Department?

Mr. King: I certainly hope so. As my hon. Friend knows, under its new agency status, the department is making an encouraging start. I had the pleasure of opening it a short time ago with my hon. Friend, and I hear encouraging reports of some of its new freedoms. It is obviously a centre of excellence, and we recognise its significance.

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): Does the right hon. Gentleman acknowledge that one of the reasons why it would have been wrong to close Rosyth is that it would mean concentrating all these bases on England's south coast? Does he accept that that argument applies particularly to Rosyth not just because of its geographical location but because of the Scottish people's proud history of participation in all Britain's armed services? That crucial argument will have as much force after the election as it has now, regardless of who is in government.

Mr. King: My decision was based on a consideration of what I thought were strategic grounds. It also made good sense, in that it achieved the savings that are necessary to maintain the most effective front line and, compared with the alternatives, it involved less disruption for the people concerned. We looked at a range of options, one of which, as the hon. Gentleman knows, was the possibility of closure. I chose the most sensible option on a range of considerations. My decision also took into account, as I made clear that it would, the overall impact and the economic impact on the area, which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland made sure that I recognised well. We also recognised the significant contribution that Scotland makes to the Royal Navy.

Dame Peggy Fenner (Medway): I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker. You might well have expected it to be too late for me to be interested in what happens to the Royal Navy dockyards, having had in my constituency one of the first to close under an earlier peace dividend. Will my right hon. Friend accept that I share his anger at the hypocrisy of Opposition Members, who for weeks have been bleating about the peace dividend, but when it happens in a little rationalisation in their dockyards they want to know why. My dockyard, Nelson's dockyard, was the most famous in the country. Will he offer Opposition Members the consolation that, before the recession, unemployment in my constituency had been reduced to 3·7 per cent.?

Mr. King: I very much agree with my hon. Friend. I entirely understand her preamble and her feelings at this moment. It is incredible that the Opposition—with respect to those on the Opposition Front Bench; I do not mean this personally—do not even think that defence justifies a seat in the shadow Cabinet.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): Will the Secretary of State confirm the allegation that yesterday, en route to the naval base at Rosyth, a major convoy carrying nuclear warheads broke down in my constituency at Castleside? I understand that this is the second incident of that nature, and my constitutents——

Mr. Speaker: Order. With great respect, the question must be related to the statement. I think that this refers to a different matter.

Ms. Armstrong: The convoy was on its way to Rosyth. *[Interruption.]* I too have loyalty to my constituents, and they are concerned that they may have been prey to a terrorist attack because the convoy was not proceeding in a proper manner.

Mr. King: That question does not arise on the statement, but I will look into the hon. Lady's point.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): Do not the vigour and concern expressed this afternoon convey a clear message to a distinguished visitor to our shores, President Gorbachev, who has come to the west seeking real resources which he would presumably describe as a peace dividend in Russia? Are the Government confident that the real resources released in the United Kingdom will not be devoted to the Soviet Union at a time when it is not releasing resources from a diminution of the Russian Navy? Is he confident that if the evidence about the strength of the Russian navy which is reaching the Government at all times disproves the allegations the policy will not be continued?

Mr. King: There seems to be some story that the Russian navy is increasing in size. That is not correct. A considerable scrapping programme is taking place. However, I accept that new vessels and new submarines that have been launched are highly capable and worthy of full respect. Having said that, I was told that about 50 per cent. of the present Soviet GNP was going into defence. Given the scale of the burden that it is carrying, it is unthinkable that we should engage in any economic support if that scale of military investment continues.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): As a fellow Scot, Mr. Speaker, I apologise for the behaviour of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) in complaining about people carrying cards.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would prefer the hon. Member to ask a question.

Mr. Ewing: Over the past year, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West has carried more cards than I have credit cards. He has never forgiven my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) for winning back the safe Labour seat that he threw away.

The Secretary of State for Defence has just announced that 1,000 people will lose their jobs at Rosyth, making 2,500 jobless altogether. Is that not cause for alarm? Has the right hon. Gentleman become so blasé and

[Mr. Ewing]

unconcerned about unemployment that the prospect of 2,500 people losing their jobs does not give him cause for alarm?

Mr. King: I said that I take any job losses very seriously, but the hon. Gentleman's question misrepresents the situation. He said that 900 people will lose their jobs, but I have made it clear that we hope that a significant number of them will be relocated in other Ministry of Defence posts. The hon. Gentleman will understand why I enter that caveat.

I hope that it will be of some reassurance to the hon. Gentleman to know that the Northern Ireland squadron will not move until 1993. The type 42s, which account for the bulk of the jobs, will not move until 1993-94, and then progressively. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is concerned to see that every assistance is given. He is active in other parts of Scotland as well, to ensure that help is given to whatever number of people may lose their jobs.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Does not my right hon. Friend consider it grotesque that he should be criticised over job losses when the Labour party conference has twice voted by an overwhelming majority to reduce defence spending by £9 billion? How many jobs would such a cut cost? For Labour to criticise possible defence costs carries about as much conviction as if the devil were to come to the House to criticise a decline in virtue.

Mr. King: I regret having come to the House to announce that the changes made under our programme will affect 900 civilian jobs. However, I hope that a number of those affected will be relocated in other Ministry of Defence posts. There are arguably 50,000 jobs in Scotland alone that are totally connected with or affected by defence. Any independent assessment of Labour's defence policy—although we know little of it—must suggest that, under it, 25,000 of those jobs would go.

Mr. O'Neill: Will the Secretary of State confirm the authenticity of the allegedly leaked documents? Is it not sheer hypocrisy, when documents come to light showing the Government's intentions, that Ministers try to distort the issue by smearing hon. Members, rather than answering the questions that such documents raise? Will the right hon. Gentleman say, yes or no, whether the document to which he referred gave the timetable, the date, and the identity of the base as Rosyth? Does he deny that?

Mr. King: I made it absolutely clear to the hon. Gentleman that studies were made, and I repeatedly said that no decision was taken. I draw to the attention of the House that another member of the Opposition Front Bench shows no embarrassment about a leaked document from a naval base.

Mr. O'Neill: Take it—here.

Mr. King: I do not touch leaked documents, thank you very much. I explained to the hon. Gentleman that studies were undertaken, and that they contained possible timetables, and so on. A range of options were considered. They came before Ministers, and Ministers took decisions.

Points of Order

4.30 pm

Mr. Robert Hayward (Kingswood): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I do not want to take up Plaid Cymru's time, and I apologise for dashing in and out of the Chamber this afternoon. However, I have received news that Avon county council has lent £6 million to Western Isles county council. Clearly, the ramifications of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International affair are more extensive than previously thought. Would it be appropriate to raise the matter during next week's Consolidated Fund debate? Is there, indeed, any means of raising it sooner than that?

Mr. Speaker: The Consolidated Fund debate is a wide one. If the hon. Gentleman submitted a subject, I would consider it carefully.

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The *Financial Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* report this morning that, in March and October last year, the Bank of England had prima facie evidence of fraudulent documentation at BCCI. On 8 and 15 July this year, the Economic Secretary to the Treasury told the House that the Treasury had known nothing until June. Should he not return to the Chamber immediately to clarify that statement?

Mr. Speaker: I cannot be expected to adjudicate on what Ministers say at the Dispatch Box. There are other methods of raising the matter—possibly during the Consolidated Fund debate.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Are you aware that the parliamentary Labour party voted this morning for the House not to sit on Fridays? Labour Members voted for a four-day week: they voted to become part-time Members of Parliament. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Riddick: I am just coming to my point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We are under great pressure today, and I am not a member of any party.

Mr. Riddick: May I just ask you to assure me, Mr. Speaker, that you will do all in your power to protect the interests of Back Benchers, so that we do not lose time and business on Fridays?

Mr. Speaker: I will give the hon. Gentleman that guarantee. It is my constant desire to protect Back Benchers' interests, and that is what I am anxious to do this afternoon—to protect the interests of Plaid Cymru Back Benchers, whose debate is to follow.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, with the widespread approval of hon. Members, you made very clear your view about ministerial statements in the House, which is reported fully in this morning's press. Can you persuade the Foreign Secretary —who made a speech yesterday about some very important matters relating to this country's participation

in military action—to come to the House, possibly on Friday, when I understand that the Prime Minister is coming?

This is especially important in the light of the frantic appeals from the United Nations Children's Fund and Robert Smith, and those of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan on behalf of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, about the position in Iraq, where people who have been bombed into the stone age in certain areas may simply be eliminated.

Mr. Speaker: I am sure that the Leader of the House, who is sitting on the Front Bench, has heard what the hon. Gentleman has said. It is not for me to require Ministers to come here; yesterday was a rather special case. There will be other opportunities for the hon. Gentleman to raise the matter next week, such as the summer Adjournment debate, the Consolidated Fund debate and the last day of the Session, next Thursday. There is plenty of scope.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I ask you to examine the rather injudicious words used by the Secretary of State for Defence at the beginning of his statement, when he was explaining why he did not make that statement yesterday? As a humble and simple Back Bencher, I have no idea what went on within the usual channels or what led to the planted question that was asked yesterday. I find it surprising, however, that the Secretary of State should say today that he was effectively prevented by the Opposition from making an oral statement. Can you confirm, Mr. Speaker, that any Minister of the Crown has the right to apply to you to make an oral statement in the House, and that that is what should have happened yesterday?

Mr. Speaker: That is true. Ministers sometimes come to me to ask whether they may make statements, but the lesson of yesterday is that I, too, was left out of this equation. I think that things might have been very different if I had been brought into it.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Well, finally.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am sorry, but I have just heard my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) say that the Prime Minister intends to make a statement on Friday on the G7 summit. Can I put it to you that you should protest on behalf of many hon. Members, who find it extremely difficult to be here on a Friday? It can take as long as six hours for us to return to our constituencies. It completely destroys Friday as a day in our constituencies. It is wrong that important business should be——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I really do not think that the House of Commons can be run for the convenience of some hon. Members. If the discussions end on Thursday, perhaps the Prime Minister should come here at the first opportunity to make a statement. I have not previously heard that he intended to do so. It has not so far been communicated to me officially.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot take it.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: But you let——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must ask about it tomorrow during business questions.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: It is not a matter for me. Ask about it, please, during business questions tomorrow.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: You have repeatedly, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I repeat that the hon. Gentleman should ask about it at business questions tomorrow. It is not a matter for me.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No, please sit down.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: You have repeatedly said to the House——

Mr. Speaker: Please sit down. The hon. Gentleman is taking time away from other hon. Members.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Sit down, please! There are plenty of other opportunties to raise this matter. It is not a matter for me.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: It is all right having a constituency in Croydon. Mine is in Workington.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Ten-minute Bill—Mr. Phillip Oppenheim.

Restraint of Trade (Trading in Motor Vehicles)

4.36 pm

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to abolish restrictive practices and cartels in the trading of motor vehicles.

Consumers in Britain are being ripped off by having to pay far more for their cars than is the case in many other European countries. A Consumers' Association report shows that a Peugeot 405 costs £2,000 more in Britain than in Belgium, while a Ford Orion 1·4 litre costs nearly £3,000 more.

I accept that some surveys have exaggerated the differences in some respects by not taking special factors such as discounts into account, but even when they are taken into account there is still a massive difference. The price variations, with the fairly free markets in America and Japan, are even more startling. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Can I just say to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), who is mouthing things from a sedentary position, that they locked suspiciously like threats aimed in my direction.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: The best thing that the hon. Gentleman could do would be for him to go to his constituency now.

Mr. Oppenheim: Car buyers in Japan and the United States consistently pay 30 per cent. less for their cars, ex-tax, than they do in the United Kingdom. The main reason for that is the trade barrier, known, somewhat ironically, as the gentleman's agreement which restricts trade in vehicles.

However, from the end of next year that is due to be superseded by a European Community-wide trade barrier which will cover not just markets like Britain, France, Spain and Italy—which already have national trade barriers on cars—but also the free-trading European nations, such as Germany, Holland, Belgium and Denmark.

The Commission has also been proposing that cars made in Japanese-owned United Kingdom plants should be classed as Japanese and therefore be subject to quota limits, even though they have well over a 60 per cent. European content. That is one of the daftest suggestions ever to come out of the European Commission. It would mean that cars made in American-owned Ford and General Motors plants in Europe would be counted as European and have free circulation within the Community, but that cars made in Japanese-owned plants in Europe would not, even though cars made in Honda's American plants would be counted as American and would, therefore, be subject to no import quotas.

The Commission sometimes says that this is not meant to be taken seriously—that it is just intended as a bargaining counter in its talks with the Japanese—but history has shown how capable the Commission is of concluding covert trade deals. I have no doubt that most of the Commissioners hope that, while on the face of it there will be import quotas only on Japanese-produced cars, surreptitiously this will include limits on the number of cars made in Japanese-owned plants in Britain. The implications for job creation in the United Kingdom are serious, unless cars produced at the Honda, Nissan and Toyota plants in Britain can be freely sold anywhere within the Community, just like the cars of any other European producer.

The problem with trade barriers is not only that they raise prices for consumers, but that they restrict choice. That is especially damaging in the case of the gentleman's agreement and other car trade quotas. In Japan there is a class of car called the microcar—small high-tech hatchbacks with engines below 550 cc. They typically cost between £2,000 and £4,000 ex-tax. British consumers do not have access to such cars because trade barriers compel Japanese producers to make up for low volume with high value by concentrating on large and more expensive cars. The microcar would be a boon in our traffic-choked cities. It is less environmentally damaging than larger cars and it would offer low-cost, high-tech motoring to people whose income now gives them the choice to buy only second hand cars or geriatric eastern bloc models, but such people are being denied the opportunity to buy the microcar.

Behind the gentleman's agreement and other such quotas lies pressure on the Commission to introduce an EC-wide quota from a cartel of large European and American car manufacturers who are afraid of what open competition would do to their profit margin.

Of course, they would not put it quite like that. They say that they need to protect jobs. I understand that argument and I have some sympathy for it, but it is not new. Indeed, when 150 years ago almost to the day Richard Cobden was elected to this place as the hon. Member for Stockport on a free trade and anti-Corn Laws platform, the *Stockport Advertiser*, which had supported the Tory candidate, who, I am ashamed to say, backed the retention of the Corn Laws, bemoaned the result as follows:

"To the working classes must the shopkeepers look for support and if they have little or no money as a result of this measure after the purchase of their cheap loaves where will you sell your cottons, your silks, your teas and your sugars?"

The idea that consumers are also producers and that they need protection to be able to afford to buy goods from other producers is superficially alluring but wholly spurious. First, those with the greatest lobbying power inevitably receive the most protection and subsidies. At best, trade barriers shelter jobs in protected industries in the short term, but they compound inefficiency and put off the evil day when the industry must sort out its fundamental problems. Meanwhile, many jobs are lost elsewhere as people pay over the odds for goods, and resources are diverted from efficient to inefficient producers.

In the case of cars, according to a survey by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, import quotas add about £4 billion to the cost for British consumers. What could all those resources have achieved and how many other jobs could have been created in other industries if that money had been freely directed by the choice of consumers?

One of the main arguments used by those who want trade barriers is that Japan itself is a closed market, and I shall deal briefly with that issue. It is interesting that as Madame Cresson was saying that Japan was an "hermetically sealed market", Peugeot—the most virulent of the lobbyists for tougher trade barriers in Europe—was on target to increase its sales in Japan by 21 per cent. despite a 13 per cent. fall in the Japanese market. Of

course, other European manufacturers have not tried even to get into the Japanese market. For example, Renault's chairman, Raymond Levy, is quoted as saying that he was not bothered about Japan because it was not an important enough market. However, the prize for hypocrisy must go to Volkswagen whose chief executive, shortly after announcing that his company had created 750 new jobs to boost production for the Japanese market where its sales were booming, warned that the Community should limit access to Europe for Japanese cars. Incidentally, German car sales to Japan exceed in value Japanese exports to Germany.

The argument is that Europe must close its market because the Japanese trade unfairly represents the worst type of self-serving special pleading by European car manufacturers. The truth is that it has been far too easy for far too long for European and American industrialists to make exaggerated claims about trade barriers in order to excuse their own failure to market competitive models domestically and in Japan. However, the insincerity of car producers can be illustrated by the fact that the American producers, who are part of the lobbying effort for trade barriers in the EC, sell literally millions of Japanese-made vehicles under their own names in Asia and in the United States.

The problem is not that the Japanese market is closed, but that Japanese producers are more efficient. Toyota's lead time for a brand new model is three-and-a-half years compared to Volkswagen's six years. While Toyota assembles a Corolla in 13 hours, it takes Volkswagen 20 hours to bolt together a Golf. We should learn from their processes instead of taking the easy option of erecting trade barriers because the cost of those barriers is huge. According to an EC Commission report, the removal of all internal EC barriers would result in a gain of £50 billion to the EC economy, and intensified competition would reduce monopoly profits, creating 5 million new jobs and cutting prices to the consumer by an overall 6 per cent. If the EC Commission can see such huge advantages to free trade within the EC, why is it so blind to the wider benefits of freer external trade?

There is a broader issue. We are now in danger of seeing the global economy break into competing trade blocs as happened in the 1930s. According to an OECD report, only four of the OECD's 24 industrialised member states ended the 1980s with freer and more liberal trade regimes than they had at the beginning. Covert trade restraints such as quotas and spurious anti-dumping duties have multiplied and bypassed the general agreement on tariffs and trade, covering everything from semiconductors to steel, and televisions to photocopiers.

The danger is not merely that of a trade war between the three trading blocs based on north America, Europe and east Asia, but of tensions with other areas. Goods from the Soviet Union and other eastern bloc countries are being restricted by the European Community. Thus, as they grope towards a free market system, we appear to be telling them that our espousal of the free market ends when it comes to the very goods that those countries are able to produce competitively, such as steel, food and textiles.

According to a recent World bank report, the trade barriers of wealthy countries against third world nations cost the poorer nations more than the total of the aid that we send them. Therefore, trade barriers impoverish not only us, but hit those that are far less well off. They do not even help protected industries; they merely ensure that they become ever less competitive. It is time that we took a long-term view and rejected the craven entreaties of the cartel of European and American car manufacturers and ended the great rip off of our consumers by abolishing all trade restraints on cars at home and in Europe. In doing so, we would help not only consumers, but the European industry by making it face the need to tackle the underlying uncompetitiveness which is at the root of its problems.

Sir Hal Miller (Bromsgrove) *rose——*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Does the hon. Gentleman wish to oppose the Bill? If so, when I put the Question at the end of his speech he must voice his opposition. Is that understood?

Sir Hal Miller: Although I agree with much of what I think that my hon. Friend is aiming for in the last part of his speech, I must point out that it was only because of the voluntary restraint agreement—negotiated under Government auspices, let us make no mistake about that—between British and Japanese manufacturers that he and my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Curry) are about to benefit from the creation of a Toyota plant in their area. There is no prospect that Japanese manufacturers would have been encouraged to set up the manufacturing centres which are providing for our indigenous manufacturers the excellence in standards of training, of employment and of quality and which are teaching us how to compete more effectively and no possibility that the Toyota, Nissan and Honda plants would have come to this country but for the voluntary restraint arrangement.

Therefore, although I agree that the arrangement has a limited usefulness, it has proved most beneficial for this country and for all hon. Members who have constituencies that contain car plants and component-making plants. The result of the introduction of new manufacturing methods and new purchasing methods such as we have seen at the Nissan plant in Sunderland and such as we are beginning to experience with Toyota—I declare an interest because I hope to be a supplier to Toyota—and the standards that they demand of our component plants are uplifting our whole industrial effort and our employment attitudes in much of our industry.

I take exception to the rather cheap jibes about the Consumers' Association report at the beginning of my hon. Friend's remarks. On the basis of a little further research, he will find that the report was based on a comparison of list prices and took no account of the discounts available, of the differences in specification, of exchange rate movements or of differences in inflation rates. Those same mistakes were perpetuated in the consultant's report by Karl Ludwigsen for the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

I draw the attention of the House and of my hon. Friend to the report in the *Financial Times* earlier this week on the research conducted by the firm A. T. Kearney on behalf of General Motors. It examined 98,000 invoices and demonstrated that in many of the areas of purchase of volume cars, the on-the-road price in this country was lower than that elsewhere on the continent. Before we jump to easy conclusions, we should bear in mind the commercial facts and the efforts being made to provide not only jobs in this country, but better jobs, better terms of

[Sir Hal Miller]

employment, better skills, better quality and more competitive products. On those grounds, I feel obliged to oppose the Bill.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 19 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business):—

The House proceeded to a Division; but no Member being willing to act as teller for the Noes, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *declared that the Ayes had it.*

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Phillip Oppenheim, Mr. Patrick Nicholls, Mr. Nigel Forman, Mr. Bowen Wells, Mr. Dudley Fishburn, Mr. Michael Brown, Mr. Anthony Coombs, Mr. Donald Thompson, Mrs. Edwina Currie, Mr. William Hague, Mr. John Watts and Mr. Nicholas Ridley.

RESTRAINT OF TRADE (TRADING IN MOTOR VEHICLES)

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim accordingly presented a Bill to abolish restrictive practices and cartels in the trading of motor vehicles; And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 18 October and to be printed. [Bill 216.]

Opposition Day

[18TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Wales (Structures of Government)

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I have to announce to the House that Mr. Speaker has selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

4.55 pm

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): I beg to move,

That this House condemns this Government's failure, in its Green Paper 'The Structure of Local Government in Wales, a Consultation Paper' to respond adequately to the wishes of the people of Wales to secure a more sensitive and efficient structure of local government, to establish, on an all-Wales level, elected democratic control over the existing tier of Government currently administered by the Welsh office and nominated bodies, and to provide direct links between Wales and the emerging institutions of the European Community; further notes the political danger that other areas comparable with Wales in the rest of Europe all have directly elected government structures, while Wales does not; asserts that, in order to create coherent and lasting structures of government, all three dimensions need to be considered together and that a prerequisite must be the determination of the appropriate level and mechanism of democratic control over each function of government, in accordance with the European Community principle of subsidiarity; that thereafter methods of funding should be established and only then can sensible propositions be made for boundaries, which should reflect communities of interest; and calls on the Secretary of State to launch the fullest consultation in Wales in order to bring before the House, at an early date, proposals for the future structures of government in Wales which reflect the aspirations of the majority of the Welsh nation.

I have to make a confession. I was a Member of the House for many years before I discovered what my problem was. Whenever I got up to speak in the Chamber, I felt distinctly uncomfortable. On reflection, I realised that I had to stand up without having anywhere to put my papers. If one is a Government or Opposition Front-Bench Member, it is possible to hide oneself behind one's papers. Speaking from these Benches, one has to jump up and down to pick up papers and to refer to them. That is especially disconcerting now that we are on television.

I have here, as I have had for many weeks, my own draft copy of the European treaty of union, to which I want to refer. I say that to give the Secretary of State early warning of what I shall talk about. As I am unlikely to speak from the Dispatch Box in this House, I shall have to make do with jumping up and down when I refer to my papers.

The title of our debate refers to the plural—"structures" of government in Wales. That is because we take a plural and, dare I say it, pluralistic approach to the government of Wales. In that, we are at one with the Secretary of State for the Environment. When opening the original debate on the reorganisation of local government and the community charge, he made the clear statement that, from the point of view of his political theory, he was a pluralist. I do not know whether his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales is a pluralist. I am not sure whether his

recent behaviour and the way in which he has treated local government reform proposals for Wales smell of pluralism or of autocracy. We shall see as the debate progresses.

We take a pluralistic view not only of the way in which politics in Wales should be conducted, but of how government in Wales should function. There can be no unitary authorities applying to government. I know that the Welsh Office uses the phrase "unitary authorities" in reference to local government, but to conceive of government as something that happens at one level alone or, to mix metaphors, in one place alone controlling one space, is a total misunderstanding of the complexity of modern government. No hon. Member who has any knowledge of the administration of the education service, of the social services, of the planning service, or of industrial or economic policy would imagine for one moment that the idea of a unitary form of decision making —a unitary form of controlling space—is acceptable.

We regard the relationship between power, government and society as inherently pluralistic and non-unitary. There are places in which one does certain things for other places and there are certain places in which one does other things.

The United Kingdom has suffered for too long from the problems caused by operating within the straitjacket of a unitary state. It is significant that, during the fateful week when federalism was the F-word and the Welsh Assembly was the A-word—or perhaps the other way round—a United Kingdom Minister was rejecting federalism in the European Community while, in the Chamber, a Welsh Office Minister rejected federalism, too.

Accountability, answerability and the problem of the democratic deficit were not addressed at either level. At European Community level, United Kingdom Ministers said that there could not be an ever closer union, which must mean federalism—although they could not speak the word "federalism". Similarly, Ministers said that we could not have an elected Welsh Assembly, making that level of government accountable, because it would undermine the operation of the unitary state.

The Secretary of State made the startling announcement that scores of Minister Presidents throughout the European regions wanted to be members of the United Kingdom Cabinet. Perhaps I have got that wrong; perhaps he meant that they wanted to be members of their federal state Cabinets, or of their state Cabinets. I ask the right hon. Gentleman to confirm—I am sure that he will tell me this again, as he has told me before, both privately and publicly—that he really meant that the Minister Presidents wanted access to his own level of decision making. But I do not think that any of them would trade in the level of representation enjoyed by a Secretary of State in the Cabinet of a member state if it meant losing the elected regional authorities that they all have—I know that they would not do so, because some of them have told me so. That is why our motion deliberately refers not only to the reorganisation of what is called local government in Wales but to the European dimension, too. As I have already said, we see all those levels of government as interrelated.

The Secretary of State's arguments are set out in a nicely designed document—it is more pleasantly designed than the Scottish document——

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): It is empty of content.

Dr. Thomas: I was talking about the design features, not the content. This is a post-modern political document; it is all up-front, in the design.

I must correct an error in the document. I was deeply agitated when I saw that the first map—I do not know whether it was drawn by the officials or by the Under-Secretary of State himself—portrays the old and dearly beloved Meirionnydd county in 1974 with at least a third of its electorate missing. I speak with affection, because for many years I represented that extra bit. My area stretched closer to the English border than appears on the map. That small error of cartography is only one of the up-front errors in the document.

In paragraph 1.6 of the Green Paper, the Secretary of State sets out the arguments on the fundamental principles for local authorities. Those arguments apply equally on an all-Wales level. I am deeply interested in semantics and the meaning of words, because that is how I was trained, but for the purpose of the debate, we accept, as we do in our motion, that Wales is an historic nation but also a European region. Its political function and structure has to approach that of a European region. I shall therefore use the word "regional" with reference to Wales, although some of my colleagues outside the House might not be happy to hear me do so.

I shall apply the term "regional" to the fundamental principles of local government set out in paragraph 1.6 of the Green Paper, where the Secretary of State says that local authorities should be

"democratically accountable to their electorates".

We say that regional authorities, too, should be accountable. The Secretary of State argues:

"local public services should be responsible to the wishes, needs and circumstances of local communities".

The same principles should also apply to regional public services—by which I mean primarily the £5 billion spent by the Welsh Office and its 4,000 civil servants.

The Green Paper goes on to refer to the need for local authorities' responsibilities for service delivery to be

"clearly understood by local people".

Clearly, the same argument on fundamental principles applies to the all-Wales regional level. The document also speaks of "community loyalties" and the

"high quality and efficiency of public services".

That, too, applies more widely.

The Secretary of State may intend to deploy the argument that a regional assembly for Wales would cost too much, as he apparently said this morning elsewhere in the House. I should reply that the Welsh Office already has expenditure of £5 billion and that the right hon. Gentleman's estimate of £50 million—that was the old estimate of the Leader of the Opposition, updated by the Welsh Office—represents 1 per cent. of that expenditure. One per cent. of the total would be spent on scrutinising that expenditure, and we must consider that cost in terms of value for money and democratic accountability.

There is an argument within Wales for democratic scrutiny and accountability of the non-elected tier of regional government. There is also an argument that the Welsh Office should review local government, or sub-regional government, in Wales. My hon. Friends will pursue that idea in greater detail later if they catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There is a clear argument that the sub-regional level of government should be

[Dr. Thomas]

comprehensively reviewed. The problem that faces us as we consider the Green Paper is that there is no fundamental review.

I shall mention three or four areas of concern. First, there is the question of sub-regional, or indeed all-Wales, strategic planning. If there are to be unitary planning authorities, even within the present overall Welsh Office guidelines that are only now being developed, will they be able to deliver effective strategic planning and land use functions? Secondly, now that we are to have unitary small authorities, are we to have national park boards? I should welcome that, and if that is the Government's view it should be made known.

The third area is the delivery of education and social services. Is the implication of the Welsh Office's taking on further education and of organising higher education through another new funding body that local authorities will care for education policy only for the under-16s? If that is Government policy, we should be told.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I agree with everything that the hon. Gentleman has said so far. Does he share my hope that the Secretary of State will tell us today that local government in Wales, when reorganised, will retain almost all its present functions? Perhaps the Secretary of State should have saved his comments for the House rather than making them elsewhere before his speech in the debate. If all the functions of local government in Wales were retained, we should not have to face the prospect of yet more nominated boards, which have become something of a disease in Wales.

Dr. Thomas: I am grateful to my hon. neighbour. The Secretary of State has heard what he said and no doubt will answer him, either inside or outside the House.

Social services functions need to be integrated in terms of all-Wales priorities. As a result of the creation of so-called unitary authorities at approximately the level of the present districts, will policies on all the aspects that I have mentioned be concentrated in the Welsh Office? Will there be a proliferation of the quangos referred to by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile)? If so, how will the Secretary of State's fundamental principles on accountability in local government apply at the all-Wales regional level?

That is the democratic deficit that stares us full in the face, including hon. Members who are members of quangos, or might hope to be. Some of my hon. Friends might want to be members of quangos—[HON. MEMBERS: "Are you volunteering?"] No, I am not putting my name forward for anything. Clearly, I would be unacceptable because of my political tendencies.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. David Hunt) *indicated dissent.*

Dr. Thomas: The Secretary of State dissents, and I am grateful to him.

The democratic deficit at the all-Wales level stares us in the face, as does the democratic deficit at the European level, not least because of the relationship between the European Parliament, the Commission and the Council of Ministers, although that is not the issue on which I wish to concentrate. I propose instead to discuss the nature of the government of Wales in relation to comparable authorities or areas in the rest of Europe.

The structure of regions in the rest of Europe is defined in the constitution of the Assembly of European Regions, set up in 1985. In that context, the term "regions" refers to "the level of government immediately below the central government with political representativeness"—
it is obviously a translation from the French—
"guaranteed by the existence of an elected Regional Council, or failing this"—
this was underlined for the benefit of Wales—
"by an association or body constituted at Regional level by the local authorities at the level immediately below."

That is what we have now. The whole of Wales is represented in that regional body through the Assembly of Welsh Counties. But all the other members of the Assembly of European Regions are themselves representatives of directly elected regional authorities. It is at that level—despite the existence of the Secretary of State and the United Kingdom Cabinet, and the arguments that we have heard both inside and outside the House—that Wales is missing out in terms of its political structure.

This is not some nationalist fantasy—the pipedream of someone who imagines a Welsh nation state. I never imagined a Welsh nation state, but I certainly imagined an elected Welsh polity, and I certainly imagined a Welsh democracy related to other comparable levels of democracy throughout Europe. The danger now is that we are moving into the 21st century with that vital part of our national life as a European region not in place.—*[Interruption.]* The Under-Secretary of State is muttering. Would he like to intervene?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Bennett): No.

Dr. Thomas: He must be preparing his reply, then.

That dimension of our political life is missing. It is in that context that we need to consider the debates within the Assembly of European Regions and, indeed, the draft treaty of union, which now recognises far more scope for the role of regions.

The principle of subsidiarity is argued for strongly in European Community discussions these days. Here, it tends to be applied to the relationship between Community institutions and member states. I see that the Secretary of State is nodding. But for the overwhelming majority of other member states, the principle also applies across or down—or whatever spatial metaphor one wants to choose.

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): Hear, hear.

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): Hear, hear.

Dr. Thomas: I am grateful for the support that I have received for many years from my Clwyd colleagues on this issue.

Mr. Alex Carlile: They are all leaving.

Dr. Thomas: Yes, we are all retiring. The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery may also be retiring, for all I know.

In other member states, the principle of subsidiarity applies throughout the structure of government. It means that nothing is done in Brussels that could not better be done in Westminster—although I have some difficulty in imagining what that might be. I have no difficulty,

however, in imagining what might be done better in Cardiff than in Westminster, and certainly no difficulty in imagining what might be done better in Newtown—the great capital of mid-Wales—than in Cardiff or in the community of Llanelltyd than in Dolgellau or Caernarfon.

The principle of subsidiarity is regarded as a thorough-going, wholesale approach, involving the devolving, decentralising or federalising of political power. That is precisely what the European regions are aiming for. They are also aiming for representation within the Council of Ministers on relevant points, and they have achieved that in the draft treaty of union, article 146 of which states that representatives of each member state at ministerial level are authorised to take binding decisions. That includes representatives from the regions if they are recognised as Ministers within their regions and within the member states. I look forward to the day when the Secretary of State, his Minister of State or even his Under-Secretary can take binding decisions for the United Kingdom within the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): Or a Minister of another Government.

Dr. Thomas: Or a Minister of another Government.

The other important part of the draft treaty of union is the amendment of article 198a, which sets up the Committee of the Regions. As the Secretary of State and the House will know, that committee will be parallel to the Economic and Social Committee and will include 24 members from the United Kingdom. That body will be a much strengthened successor to the previous consultative regional body, and its establishment therefore represents a clear attempt by the EC to provide for the regional level of government throughout Europe in its draft treaty.

From our point of view, it is important that Wales is seen as an active region, not as a passive part of the United Kingdom structure. This is not just a matter of structure or theory: it has specific implications for funding. I know that the Secretary of State referred to this matter earlier in the Select Committee. The big block to the relationship between the funding mechanism of the Commission and the regions within the United Kingdom is the additionality policy as applied by the United Kingdom Government. It is high time that the Secretary of State and Welsh authorities recognised the implications of the Treasury block on public spending in Wales and on direct relationships between European Community programmes within Wales. The additionality principle operated by the Government creates a block.

Under the current capital finance rules of local authorities, additionality at the local level is denied, whatever the Secretary of State may say. If local authorities wish to proceed with European Community grant-aided schemes, they must first find credit approval cover from other sources for the full project. The position of local authorities in Wales is being undermined by the fact that the member state Government—the United Kingdom Government—is operating a system of allocating regional funds from the Community which is preventing regions from actively taking part in their own development projects and from setting their own priorities.

We see the structure of government in Wales as pluralistic. We see areas of decision making and centres of powers servicing Wales from within the country but, as a European region, we see Wales relating to a whole range of similar regions throughout Europe.

That is not to deny the validity of the United Kingdom's role in the history and politics of Wales over many years, but circumstances have changed. If we are to be a European region, we must participate directly at that level. As long as we are merely represented by nominated bodies or non-elected, non-democratic levels of government, we cannot possibly take advantage of our full potential within Europe.

5.18 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. David Hunt): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof:

'welcomes the publication of the Consultation Paper on The Structure of Local Government in Wales; considers that it provides a sound basis for further public debate on local government structure in Wales; approves of the continuing development of the partnership between Wales and regions of Europe under the present constitutional arrangements of the United Kingdom; reaffirms the position of Wales as an integral part of the United Kingdom; and therefore rejects arguments for an elected Welsh Assembly, the creation of which would undermine the present arrangements for the direct representation of Wales in the Government of the United Kingdom.'.

I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) for his most interesting speech and for giving the House the opportunity to consider the future structures of government in Wales.

Hidden from the House and the world outside is any mention in the motion of the Welsh Assembly. Although the hon. Gentleman referred to it several times in his speech, it finds no place in the motion. I wonder whether that is, indeed, the hidden agenda and whether we shall now perhaps hear of some other idea from his party. I welcome its move in that direction.

There can hardly be a subject of more importance to the people of Wales than the structure of the government of Wales, so I welcome this opportunity to outline the Government's views. I also look forward to learning, in rather greater detail than has been available so far, exactly what the official Opposition are proposing. So far, silence has reigned supreme.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon) *rose*—

Mr. Hunt: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment.

As I understand it, the motion invites the House to condemn the Government's opposition to a regional executive assembly for Wales, on the grounds that it would weaken Wales's voice in Europe and that the lack of such a tier of government offends against the principle of subsidiarity. The motion concludes that all the dimensions of local government should be considered together, and calls on us

"to launch the fullest consultation in Wales"

on proposals for the future structures of government in the Principality.

Our amendment, on the other hand, points out that I have already launched a full-scale consultation on local government structure in Wales; that Wales's links with Europe are developing apace and that the proposed assembly would weaken Wales's position within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Wigley: In case there is any misunderstanding, I rise to clarify the fact that our motion refers to the need "to establish, on an all-Wales level, elected democratic control over the existing tier of Government".
Let there be no question of the fact that we are pressing for an elected all-Wales body, although the word "Assembly" does not appear in the motion.

Mr. Hunt: I should have thought that if this is a serious debate and the hon. Gentleman's party is seriously proposing a Welsh Assembly, that word should appear in what is a lengthy motion.

I welcome the pro-Europe stance of the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy. It is not all that long since I used to stand on platforms on which members of Plaid Cymru would argue strongly against membership of the European Community. The fact that they are now so effusively in favour is a great testimony to the Conservative Government who took us into the Community and to the fact that it was a Conservative Prime Minister who signed the Single European Act.

Although the hon. Gentleman said that he was deeply interested in semantics, that did not show through in his speech, which was an interesting academic analysis of some of the arguments with which I should now like to deal. Deeply entrenched in all this is the question whether our existing structure, and especially the role of the Secretary of State, should continue. I have never been quite sure—it has not been clarified beyond all doubt—about Plaid Cymru's proposals for the role of the Secretary of State for Wales in the United Kingdom Cabinet.

On 17 June I told the House that I could not accept the proposals for a Welsh Assembly, which are being advanced with decreasing enthusiasm by the Assembly of Welsh Counties and the Council of Welsh Districts, but with increasing enthusiasm by the Labour party and by my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan). I believe that the establishment of an assembly is incompatible with the maintenance of the office of Secretary of State for Wales, who has a broad range of functions and a seat in the Cabinet. As I have said again and again, the interests of the people of Wales are best served if they are directly represented at the table at which the important decisions are made.

Mr. Raffan: Is my right hon. Friend enunciating official Conservative party policy and saying that, in the event of there being an Assembly in Wales or a Welsh senate—call it what one will—as a party we would be against having a Secretary of State for Wales? If so, that would not be in keeping with our previous devolution policy for Scotland, which the present Secretary of State for Scotland supported at the time, although he has done a volte face since. Is my right hon. Friend stating official policy? If so, where was it passed and when was it decided—democratically, I hope?

Mr. Hunt: I have not yet explained why the position of Secretary of State is so crucial in the present circumstances, but I shall do so now. The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones), who was in the Chamber a few moments ago but who is no longer in his place, has said that under his proposals there would continue to be a Secretary of State for Wales, even though the Welsh Assembly would have assumed all his executive powers. According to the Labour party's policy document, which I have read carefully, that person is to speak for Wales in the Cabinet, to arrange for modification of parliamentary legislation where appropriate, and to promote Welsh interests outside the United Kingdom. That does not sound to me like a job description for a member of the Cabinet, so let us examine it a little further and suppose that that amounted to a significant role.

Ministers with important roles to perform require advisers, civil servants and officials. However, under the hon. Gentleman's plans, Welsh Office civil servants would serve the Assembly. That leads me to wonder whether his plans would require the recruitment of a duplicate set of civil servants to assist the Secretary of State. If so, what would be the cost? If the hon. Gentleman does not envisage the recruitment of more civil servants to advise the Secretary of State, how powerful a voice would the Secretary of State have as he
"speaks for Wales in the Cabinet"?

I have another question. Under the present arrangements, the Secretary of State negotiates directly with the Treasury for resources for Wales for the policies that are being pursued. What would be the position under the hon. Gentleman's plans? Is it seriously suggested that, without any influence on the policies to be pursued by the Assembly and unable to account for the expenditure involved, the Secretary of State would still be able to negotiate a proper level of resources for Wales? If the resources obtained do not meet the Assembly's requirements, would not that create conflict between the Assembly and the Secretary of State? How could that be in the interests of the people of Wales? I very much hope that those questions will be answered during the debate.

Mr. Rowlands *rose*——

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North) *rose*——

Mr. Hunt: I shall give way in a moment, after I have analysed the question of who decides. The potential conflict arises in the following way. An Assembly of one political persuasion or of a variety of political persuasions, which is without the power to levy funds—that is intrinsic to the proposals—would be ranged against a Secretary of State of another party who would have total control of the purse strings. That is the proposal. Where does legitimacy reside in that? Where is the accountability? Labour's fudge would not work.

I am, however, deeply interested in one of the statements made by the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy. He said that there are 4,000 civil servants in Wales. In fact, there are 2,140. I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman made a Freudian slip. Even if I count all the civil servants in outlying offices, I have a total of 2,294—not 4,000. I contend that the hon. Gentleman's proposals entail doubling the number of civil servants because his figure of 4,000 is almost a doubling of the present number of civil servants in Wales. Is that his intention?

Dr. Thomas: My calculation included all the officials who service all the quangos and all the existing Departments of State, including the Department of Social Security, and all other official servants in Wales who are employed either directly or indirectly by central Government.

Mr. Hunt: I am sorry. I thought that the hon. Gentleman was referring only to the Welsh Office. Now that he has clarified the position, does he accept that it is legitimate to say that, on my analysis, his proposals would result in a substantial increase in the number of civil servants? My favourite quotation is,

"Words without thoughts never to heaven go."

The Labour party should come clean. Either it means to have a powerful Assembly or a powerful Secretary of State. I am not prepared to countenance or endorse proposals that would mean that the Secretary of State became an empty suit in a non-job. I am not prepared to subscribe to that.

Mr. Rowlands: The right hon. Gentleman is raising aunt Sallys only to knock them down, but that is up to him. Our point is that Westminster would remain the main legislative body—the main body for taxation, for determining general economic policy management and for determining benefits for the whole of the nation. The Secretary of State would have a powerful and important role in fighting for and defending the interests of Wales in a United Kingdom context. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman does not do that now, but our future Secretary of State would.

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman says that I am raising points to knock them down. But I am quoting from the Labour party document. In the previous debate I was told that I should read "The Future of Local Government in Wales" published by the Labour party and sold at a cost of £3. I have now studied it. I will quote it directly to the hon. Gentleman. In analysing the role of the Secretary of State, apart from fighting for resources for Wales—I have pointed out the potential conflict there—it says in paragraph 43:

"We would thus recommend that the Secretary of State shall continue to scrutinise Parliamentary legislation, consider its relevance to Welsh interests and arrange for its modifications where it is appropriate."

It suggests that that is a key role for the Secretary of State, but it is a third of the job. That is okay unless one reads on to paragraph 46, which says:

"Often, of course, Parliamentary legislation and statutory regulation will require no modification in their application to Wales."

I had a job for a minute and, whoops, it has gone.

Mr. Michael: What about quoting the rest of the paragraph?

Mr. Hunt: I am coming to that. I am not prepared to countenance making the position of the Secretary of State an empty suit in a non-job.

The reality of the matter is that there is a choice. Either we have a powerful Secretary of State or we have a Welsh Assembly cut off from the real centre of power. I do not believe that it is possible to have both.

Mr. Michael: May I give the Secretary of State the opportunity to admit that he is quoting partially and inaccurately from our good document on the future of Government in Wales? The paragraph to which he referred says that some

"Parliamentary legislation and statutory regulation will require no modification in their application to Wales".

It goes on to give an illustration. It says that we would assume, for example,

"that Social Security regulations and national agreements approved by Parliament for the salaries of teachers, the police and nurses should be the same as in England, and . . . regional government would be unlikely to wish to amend them."

It seems that, as usual, the Secretary of State has shot himself in the foot.

Mr. Hunt: No. It says:

"The regional government would be unlikely to wish to amend them."

One finds similar phraseology in the Labour party's proposals for regional government in England. The Labour party has said that it does not propose to introduce a Welsh Assembly as an early priority, but would introduce regional governments. It would introduce a regional government in Wales at the same time as a regional government in England. Labour party speakers have come to Merseyside and said that the Labour party would establish a regional government for Merseyside. They have been to the north-east and said that they would do it there at the same time as in Wales. I am not prepared to subscribe to a policy which places Wales in anything other than its rightful position as a Principality, proud of its heritage and tradition and in the unique position of having a Secretary of State for Wales in the Cabinet.

The job of Secretary of State for Wales is either a non-job or a job for a political contortionist. I suppose that the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) should not so much call for a Houdini as call out for who did it to him—who dropped him in it and landed him with the non-job of defending a non-policy. Perhaps the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) will put matters in more explicit terms. I hope that he will.

The hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy dealt largely with Europe. I was delighted about that. As a strong European who entered politics because I wanted to see Britain join Europe in a positive way, I recognise that the European concept is vital for Wales. It is sometimes alleged—the hon. Gentleman did so this afternoon—that Wales needs an assembly because it would enable Wales more easily to participate in Europe. I do not accept that argument for a moment.

Our present constitutional arrangements enable us to enjoy the benefits of direct involvement with the key regions of Europe, such as the four motor regions of Baden-Wurttemberg, Catalonia, Lombardy and Rhone-Alpes, and yet retain all the advantages of direct participation in the central Government of the United Kingdom. That is a particularly privileged position for Wales and one which we should do nothing to imperil.

Mr. Geraint Howells: Let us forget detail for a moment and the policies advocated by the Labour party. Let us go back to principle. As a good Welshman, will the Secretary of State give his personal view? Is he in favour of the principle of giving home rule to the people of Wales—the nation to which he belongs? That is what the people of Wales want to know. Does he agree that Welshmen who believe that a Tory Government and Unionist party will ever give Wales its own government are living in cuckoo land?

Mr. Hunt: As the hon. Gentleman has posed the specific question, I will tell him that I am against home rule for Wales. I make that absolutely clear. I have four proposals which strengthen the Principality. *[Interruption.]* It is no use Opposition Members shouting against me. I suppose that it is a fault on my part that I agree so fundamentally

[Mr. Hunt]

with the approach of the Leader of the Opposition who, when he was on the Back Benches, wrote an article which said:

"What a time to tear our nation apart!"

I have no need to read on. The arguments were similar to the arguments that I am making here. They came from the hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock)—now the right hon. Member. He said on many occasions that devolution and a Welsh assembly would tear Wales apart.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): I am grateful to the Secretary of State for Wales for giving way. I noticed that he said that he personally felt that the United Kingdom should remain as one unit. I was struck by the words "and therefore" in line 7 of the Prime Minister's amendment to the motion. One must read that in the context of the previous sentence which moves that the House

"reaffirms the position of Wales as an integral part of the United Kingdom; and therefore rejects arguments for an elected Welsh Assembly".

My reason for seeking clarification of the attitude of the entire Government to the matter, leaving aside the desirability of an assembly for Wales, is to find out whether the Government feel that an elected assembly is inconsistent with membership of the United Kingdom. I ask that because it seems to me that the Government's policy has changed since last month when, with Cabinet approval, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland said that Northern Ireland was an integral part of the United Kingdom and needed an elected assembly.

Mr. Hunt: I do not intend to trespass into the politics of Northern Ireland. The right hon. Gentleman has made his point. I shall ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to respond to the hon. Gentleman's point.

To return to the point made by the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy, Wales has an active programme of intra-regional and inter-regional links based on the four motors group. Of the four, relations with Baden-Wurttemberg are ahead of the rest since the signing of the agreement in March last year. Although the work is largely long term, there have already been several practical results, including the university of Wales mission, which is leading to joint research projects in fields as diverse as micro-electronics, agriculture and health management. Staff and students will attend a four motors language course. Seminars have also been attended on social services, the environment and the motor industry. Several deals have been signed which involve some of the most innovative Welsh companies.

All those results were achieved before a top-level recent bilateral which drew up an impressive list of joint activities in areas to which we are now committed. As for the other motors, letters of intent have been signed with Lombardy, talks are under way with Catalonia, and we are working with Rhone-Alpes in several other specific areas. I wish to see those relations develop very much along the lines of those with Baden-Wurttemberg. I know that the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy strongly supports that.

Wales is playing a leading role on the European stage. Our success to date proves that there is no lack of focus in the Principality for those who seek to work with us.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): No matter what the Secretary of State says about the European dimension or what attempt he makes to demolish the problem of a Secretary of State in a devolved assembly, does he or does he not accept the proposition of the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) that there is a democratic deficit at the all-Wales level and a void which should be filled by either a corporate structure involving the Confederation of British Industry and the Trades Union Congress, an indirectly elected council of Welsh local authorities or an assembly? However the void is filled, there is a void at the all-Wales level at present.

Mr. Hunt: I do not accept many of those arguments. They are misconceived. Why should it be suggested that the Secretary of State for Wales is peculiarly unaccountable? My presence in the Chamber today is proof that, like all my right hon. Friends, I am accountable to the House and the elected representatives of the people of Wales. Furthermore, the House has entirely adequate machinery to investigate the activities of agencies, such as the Welsh Development Agency and the Development Board for Rural Wales. This morning, I had the privilege of giving evidence to the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs on those agencies and of being interrogated on the affairs of Wales for two and a half hours.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): Interrogated?

Mr. Hunt: Interrogated means being asked questions. I was asked questions and I hope that I gave responses. The agencies are making an important contribution to the economic regeneration of Wales. I am accountable here, in the mother of Parliaments, for all that happens in Wales under my responsibility.

Dr. Thomas: Just for the record, does the Secretary of State agree that he happens to be here this afternoon because there is an autonomous political party representing Wales in the House that had a Supply day?

Mr. Hunt: I would not wish to interfere in that commercial break.

I now come to the structure of local government in Wales. The consultation paper has been widely distributed and is being actively discussed. It is too soon to predict the outcome of the consultations, but the positive response from much of local government to my proposals reinforces my view that we are on the right lines.

All parties in this House agree that the way forward lies with the creation of unitary authorities. I hope that I have been able to stimulate debate about the appropriate size and number of such authorities. The context of that debate is that the future of local government as an institution is secure. I fully intend that the present level of functions should continue. It is not a question of whether we should have local government; it is how that local government is to be organised.

That is not to say that the service responsibilities and the techniques of service delivery should not be subject to reappraisal. We have made it clear that we are committed to the concept of the enabling authority, in which a clear distinction is to be drawn between those who plan, guide and stimulate local services and those who directly manage the delivery of services. That perspective will enable and increasingly require members to develop new skills of strategic planning of services for their areas, of award of contracts and of monitoring performance. That new way

of proceeding may require changes to the internal management of authorities. I shall shortly publish a further consultation paper for Wales on that topic.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): Many of us agree that the unitary authority idea is a good one. That means that county councils as well as district and borough councils will go. Where do the community councils fit into all that? If we are merely to have unitary authorities, they cannot and should not deal with everything. Yet the Secretary of State's document says little about community councils. Does he propose strengthening their powers and putting them on a better basis?

Mr. Hunt: I do not know whether the right hon. Gentleman has read my document. Paragraph 6.6 is headed "Community and Town Councils" and sets out exactly that point. I say:

"The Government believe that community and town councils can play an important role in the maintenance of a healthy local democracy."

Proposals for a reorganisation must take into account the role of community and town councils. I go on to say:

"It may well be that they could play an even greater role under the new structures."

I hope that all those involved in community and town councils will consider the extent to which they would like to see progress in this area. Of course, I am willing to meet the Association of Community and Town Councils in Wales. I have already met the association and shall do so again to discuss how we can move forward.

Mr. Denzil Davies: I accept that the Secretary of State says that in the document, but does he have any ideas on how power and responsibility will be divided between the new unitary authorities and the community councils? Is he putting forward proposals to that effect?

Mr. Hunt: In my document on internal management I have to consider how matters are managed and organised within the unitary authorities. It may be, as a result of consultation, that I shall receive representations from the community and town councils on how they would like to proceed. I did not have detailed proposals before I issued the consultation paper, but I had received detailed proposals from the Assembly of Welsh Councils and the Council of Welsh Districts. I am perfectly willing to consider the matter. I have an open mind on how we should proceed. At the end of the day I should like to produce a local government structure or structures in Wales which better reflect the needs and aspirations of local communities.

Mr. Carlile: I am grateful to the Secretary of State for reinforcing what I understand he said this morning in the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs. I am not a member of it, so I was not aware of his remarks. I am interested in what he said about requiring local authorities to change their management structures and attitudes. Can he go a little further? Is he expecting local authorities in the new structure to be required to combine with neighbouring local authorities to provide some of the functions which are now provided by local government? Is there not a danger that local authorities will be forced by economic considerations, particularly short funding by central Government, to take decisions to form what effectively would be management boards, rather than the Government taking those decisions?

Mr. Hunt: I am a little nervous of going too far down that road because I want others to participate in the debate. By way of clarification, I said that the new way of proceeding may require such and such; I did not say that the Government would require it. I shall lay that out in the internal management consultation paper. I have decided that we should have a special paper in Wales which I shall publish as soon as possible. Obviously, I want to explore ways in which we can improve service delivery. The hon. and learned Gentleman is asking what funding may or may not produce. The local authorities never mince their words with me. I have an effective Wales consultative council on local government finance and we discuss the issues there. That is the appropriate forum.

This is an important debate. Those who argue for a Welsh Assembly must now make it absolutely clear what role they envisage for the Secretary of State. Is he to be a member of the Cabinet with a broad range of functions, able to influence central Government and to secure resources for Wales? Or are we to have an Assembly cut off from the real centre of power and depending for resources on a broken-backed Secretary of State without any role? That is the choice.

It is not so long ago that we had a publication, appropriately against a green background, called, "Keep Wales unified with Britain: Vote No to the Welsh Assembly". I am talking about the campaign in which the Leader of the Opposition played such a leading role. That document makes absolutely clear and contains many of the arguments why I am so wholly opposed to a Welsh Assembly.

I recognise that in the 1960s public opinion polls in Wales showed a majority in favour of an Assembly. As late as May 1978 there were 40·8 per cent. in favour and 40·8 per cent. against an Assembly in a poll published on the BBC. Then, when we had the referendum, 243,000 voted for and 956,000 voted against a Welsh Assembly. They voted against it because of the arguments rehearsed in great detail in this pamphlet, "Vote No to the Welsh Assembly", and because they were worried about the costs which the Leader of the Opposition had estimated. He put the cumulative costs for an Assembly over 21 years at £1,000 million—that is the updated figure. I am not prepared to countenance such an expensive white elephant for Wales. I want Wales to endorse, enhance and strengthen its position within the United Kingdom and within the European Community.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The Secretary of State is right in saying that there is a lot of pressure from hon. Members who want to speak in the debate. Short speeches from now on would be appreciated.

5.49 pm

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): It is a pleasure to take part in a debate in which we learnt that the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) has discovered his problem. I hope that *Hansard* records that correctly because in the recent report of the Welsh Grand Committee it quoted me as congratulating the hon. Gentleman on his knighthood. Today the hon. Gentleman showed more moderation in his normal habit

[Mr. Alun Michael]

of praising the Conservative party, which is what might have led the editor of *Hansard* to believe it likely that he would have been so honoured. I welcome that moderation.

The hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy was right to say that government does not happen in just one place. We could well echo the words of Aneurin Bevan who described his search for the levers of power and the location of power within the United Kingdom.

I wonder whether I can be partisan in respect of the party that has initiated the debate. In view of some of the remarks made, perhaps that party will rename itself the Welsh regional party. That does not have quite the same ring about it. I must chide that party gently for not recognising in its motion the leadership given by the Wales Labour party on this issue. *[Laughter.]* In view of that response, I shall show no further restraint. After Screaming Lord Sutch obtained more votes than the Welsh Nationalists combined with the Green party could achieve in Monmouth, it becomes clearer than ever that only the Labour party has any claim to be described as the party of Wales.

The motion is right to criticise the Government and to say that the starting point for deciding the structure of local government should be communities of interest in each part of Wales. People recognise the communities in which they live and they know best what suits them whether they live in Port Talbot or Cardiff, Llanrhaeadr ym Mochnant or Penarth. We should recognise the sense of identity that suits local people when designing the local government that will represent them.

It would be logical for the motion to go one stage further and to support the Labour party proposals. The amendment tabled by the Government is rather crass to suggest that the Government's consultation document, as it stands now, is the sound basis for further public debate, except that it is merely a debating document. The amendment suggests that the House

"reaffirms the position of Wales as an integral part of the United Kingdom".

It does not follow, however, that the Government should then reject the need for a regional Assembly.

The Secretary of State was sunk by the honourable exocet, the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan). The right hon. Gentleman had the cheek to refer to what he described as the silence of the Opposition, but he then read from our published document, which sets out the Labour party position. That was another example of the right hon. Gentleman shooting himself in the foot. The Labour party document is widely recognised as far more significant and substantial than the document published by the Secretary of State.

Our document was published after real discussion and consultation throughout Wales. It is now in the hands of the public and is being treated to more serious consideration than that produced by the Secretary of State. The right hon. Gentleman would do well to re-read and study our document and he should accept the policies contained in it. In doing so the right hon. Gentleman would reflect the lemming-like speed with which the Prime Minister has accepted Labour party policy after Labour party policy in a desperate search for electoral popularity, without demonstrating any real commitment. We have that commitment to the document on which we have consulted and have now published.

The right hon. Gentleman also had the cheek to talk about the role of the Secretary of State for Wales. I suggest that he is not carrying out some of his functions in relation to some of his responsibilities when, on important policies such as education and health, his policies simply trail in the wake of those set by his English colleagues. His policies do not reflect the aspirations of the people throughout Wales. Perhaps to question our policies is the means by which he can cover the emptiness of his own proposals.

The right hon. Gentleman has also indulged in scare-mongering on numbers and cost. He has misrepresented the case for a Welsh Assembly. The right hon. Gentleman referred to a hidden agenda, but his hidden agenda is dictated by the fact that the Tory party would never be able to control an elected Assembly in Wales—even at the time of its greatest popularity. He would not be able to control that Assembly in the way in which he now has powers to dictate policies for Wales. His criticisms of an elected Assembly and Labour party policy is an argument based on his own self-interest.

We look for an effective Assembly—one that is accountable to the people of Wales for many functions. At the moment the Secretary of State is technically responsible for those functions, but neither he nor his nominated quangos act in an accountable manner. That is the failure of the present system.

References to regional government in England are appropriate. We do not believe that those regions should be deprived of the opportunity for accountability through regional government. However, it appears that that view is not shared by the Secretary of State. In Wales we have many of the mechanisms in place and ready for the work of an elected, regional Assembly. That gives us an advantage, so too does our sense of national identity in Wales. Those advantages make it appropriate for Wales to have such an elected Assembly.

The Secretary of State read out the bits from the Labour party document that he wanted to criticise. I suggest that the right hon. Gentleman should pay attention to paragraph 42, which illustrates the shortcomings of the present position of the Secretary of State and the need for a Secretary of State to be free from administrative detail and responsibilities. He should

"be able to apply himself more specifically to representing the general Welsh interest in Cabinet and Parliament, in the European Community, and through economic and other contacts worldwide."

Mr. David Hunt: I am intrigued at that argument. The hon. Gentleman said that paragraph 42 of the Labour party document reveals some of the deficiencies of the Secretary of State's position, but that paragraph states:

"At present the Secretary of State has a very difficult role, in that he has responsibility for a multiplicity of functions."

Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that I should give up some of those functions? I have spent most of my time securing more responsibilities because I believe that that is in the interest of Wales.

Mr. Michael: No, of course not. The Secretary of State is simply seeking to misrepresent what I said. At the moment the Secretary of State not only has a multiplicity of functions, but he has responsibility for all the detail, from the top to the bottom. He has responsibility for matters on which he cannot and does not properly account to Parliament. The right hon. Gentleman may answer

questions, but that does not represent full accountability. At present, Wales does not enjoy such proper accountability.

Is it the Secretary of State's intention to legislate in the coming Session? Is the Government's document meant to be his considered view on what should replace the present pattern of local government in Wales? His proposals for local government boundaries are a mockery and they show the depth of thought of a Jeffrey Archer novel. It appears that those proposals are intended more to divert attention and to create argument between the existing local authorities than to offer a real way forward for local government in Wales. The proposals are a recipe for competition of the worst sort—conflict between existing local authorities.

In the case of Cardiff and South Glamorgan, there is an invitation to those local authorities to argue. We need a single tier authority that is appropriate to that area. It should not necessarily be formed according to the existing Cardiff boundaries or the existing South Glamorgan boundaries. That single authority should not be established as a result of a fight between two local authorities that now do their best to serve the interests of their people. The Secretary of State's proposals are a recipe for conflict as people seek survival in the present institutions.

The second part of the right hon. Gentleman's hidden agenda is based on the fact that he wants the people of Wales and the local government bodies to tear each other apart rather than to have a constructive debate. He wants that because his document does not contain a vision of the role and function of future local government, but that is what we need. There is no real vision of accountability at local or Welsh level. After he has given his excuses for the Conservative party getting it wrong in the last reorganisation, paragraph 22 of the Secretary of State's document says:

"the decrease in direct service provision has diminished the relevance of these arguments"—

that is the arguments for the present structure—

"and there has been considerable criticism of the present county and district structure."

The Secretary of State also spoke of creating enabling authorities. The Labour party wants active, effective authorities rather than limited, enabling authorities, to represent the Welsh people. His hidden agenda includes stripping away local government activity. It is closer to the agenda of the No Turning Back group, which wants to strip away—*[Interruption.]* An exponent of that group is present and will take part in the debate later. It will be interesting to see whether the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State will admit that his personal hidden agenda is to try to destroy the functions of local authorities in Wales.

The Government want functions such as health to fall into the hands of their friends. They want to give unelected and unaccountable bodies responsibility for such important elements and services as education, housing and social services. That was implied by the Secretary of State's remarks, which were reported earlier today, that he will consider secure accommodation for young people in Wales being provided by private companies. He has not answered the real question whether he will provide local authorities in Wales with the resources to do a proper job in meeting the needs of young people and the communities. It costs £78,000 a year to place someone in a leading secure accommodation establishment. Just think of the good use that a local authority could make of that money. It could be used in the public interest rather than put in one place, because local authorities can look at the whole picture in their areas.

The problem for the Secretary of State for Wales and the Conservative party in general is that they do not believe in local government or local democracy any more than they believe in regional democracy or accountability.

Mr. Rowlands: I apologise for interrupting my hon. Friend's flow. He is right to say that the Government do not believe in local democracy. The classic case, in terms of restriction, is local education and sixth form colleges. That essential provision for local students will now be governed by appointed governing bodies and funded by a quango appointed by the Secretary of State. If that is local or democratic——

Mr. Michael: I commend my hon. Friend for pointing to an excellent example of the Government's policies. In my area we greatly resent the theft of Coleg Glan Hafren, which has successfully increased the participation of local youngsters in further education and training from 34 per cent. to 49 per cent. The college also resents the Secretary of State's attempt to thieve an institution that valuably serves the community in my constituency. He cannot claim that his attempt of theft is supported by the college, because it simply is not true.

For the past 15 years, the Labour party has advocated the creation of a single tier of multi-purpose local authorities in Wales. We believe that the creation of multi-purpose authorities would yield enormous benefits in terms of integrated functions. They would be more identifiable and accountable to local people and would provide a more cost-effective method of delivering local services. The fear remains that, given the Government's past record and their current proposals to further weaken local government through such measures as the centralisation of education for 16 to 19 year-olds and, the extension of the CCT to white collar services, their attitude on the future structure of local government will be determined only by short-term electoral considerations. Little consideration is given in the Government's document to the function of those authorities or their relationship with other Welsh institutions. The consultation document is seriously flawed because it gives no clear description of the purposes and functions of the new authorities. It is impossible to discuss the structure of an organisation without prior agreement on its functions. The Labour party has addressed those issues in its document.

In January 1991, the Secretary of State announced that he was inviting comments from Welsh local authority associations and others about the future finance, structure and functions of Welsh local government. He has now published a consultation paper on both finance and structure, but the question of functions appears to have been passed over. The consultation paper on structure makes only a veiled reference to other matters, such as the scope for improving the internal structure of local authorities, as being the subject of future consultation.

The Labour party has made positive recommendations, such as our recommendation to introduce a quality commission to widen the scope of facilities to help all local government organisations to aspire to the highest

[Mr. Michael]

standards. The Government, especially the Under-Secretary of State, offer local government only insult, criticism and complaint. The Under-Secretary specialises in doing that, as exemplified by the irresponsible and outrageous way in which he dealt with secure accommodation reports recently.

The Labour party wants a meaningful reform of local authority structures that does not extend to the sanctioning of a quick-fix solution or back-of-an-envelope redrawing of local authority boundaries, as indicated by the Government's thinly argued proposals.

Like the Council of Welsh Districts and the Assembly of Welsh Counties, the Labour party is in favour of establishing democratic control over Government institutions at an all-Wales level. Consequently, we wish to establish an elected body for Wales to deal with certain Welsh Office functions and those functions that are presently carried out on an all-Wales basis by nominated bodies. The principle of such a reform would take power from Whitehall rather than from local government and would give a Welsh focus to the planning of housing, transport infrastructure and the economy. The transfer of many Welsh Office functions to a regional government and the multi-purpose authorities would free the Secretary of State for Wales to concentrate on representing Welsh interests in the Cabinet, Parliament and the wider world.

The Secretary of State's refusal even to consider the establishment of some form of elected all-Wales authority as part of the present consultation process flies in the face of prevailing trends in Europe, as many of my hon. Friends have said. Every other EC nation has some form of regional government structure, as do the four motor regions of Europe to which the Secretary of State referred in his remarks. Those are Baden-Wurttemberg, Catalonia, Lombardy and the Rhone-Alpes regions, which the Secretary of State says he is keen for Wales to imitate in other respects.

As my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition said recently:

"there can be little doubt that in the decade ahead we are going to see the national boundaries of Europe diminish in importance while regional and local identities and decisions grow in significance."

That recognises the reality of the present position. The Labour party has made its constructive and positive proposals about the government of Wales and local government within Wales.

The Welsh Office's consultation document contains at least four major flaws. First, it makes no analysis of the future role of local government or of the functions of the proposed unitary authorities. Secondly, the proposed number and size of the unitary authorities do not take full account of local identity, tradition, population density or topography. Thirdly, it makes no analysis of the cost of reorganisation or—this is extremely important—consideration of the need to maintain the morale and protect the interests of local authorities and their staff during the transition period. Fourthly, the Secretary of State rejects the concept of an elected all-Wales body out of hand, disregarding all the representations that have been made on that topic.

We should not allow interest in local government reorganisation to deflect attention away from other Government policies that are harming local democracy, such as the encouragement of primary and secondary schools to opt out of local education authority control, the transfer of 16 to 19 education to central Government, the extension of compulsory tendering, the extension of capping to all Welsh councils and the nationalisation of the business rate. More starkly than ever before, those policies demonstrate that the future of local government is no more safe in the hands of the Tories than is the future of the national health service. Real progress will have to await the election of a Labour Government, to which the Welsh people look forward with an ever-increasing sense of enthusiasm and urgency.

6.9 pm

Mr. Ian Grist (Cardiff, Central): I welcome my right hon. Friend's consultation paper on local government. He will know that I believe that, in South Glamorgan, it is futile to try to divide the city from the rest of the county in the vale, and that there should be a single, unitary authority, perhaps called "Cardiff and County".

This debate causes a remarkable feeling of deja vu as we traverse the barren land of devolution and constitutional crackpottery. The reason is simple—the Opposition are not fired by any seething public unrest about our constitution; Labour and Liberal policies on the issue are met with ill-disguised boredom. Denied office for so many years, and fearful that they could continue to be denied power, the Opposition parties have idly turned their hand to tinkering with the constitutional machine for want of anything better to do.

The Opposition should have learnt their lesson in 1979, and listened to their constituents. It is a mark of how little they have learnt in opposition that they have returned to this issue, which brought them down last time, like a dog to its mess. Plaid Cymru, which initiated the debate, is of account only because the present system allows local disaffections or loyalties to be represented in this place, unlike a number of proportional representation methods, such as those involving the list, which would deny such representation. However, the rest of us are proud and pleased to represent our constituents in the Parliament of the United Kingdom.

The two Opposition parties stand for policies that would weaken the House and, in the case of Labour, weaken the Welsh link to Westminster, as that would surely be the effect of the proposed Welsh Assembly. It is the awareness of that fact that is responsible for the less than enthusiastic endorsement of that policy by the Leader of the Opposition. In response to the then Mr. Cledwyn Hughes, who said that the devolution policy had been well ventilated, the Leader of the Opposition said that that policy had been shot as full of holes as a colander—one of his better quips. The Leader of the Opposition will know how impossible it will be to maintain a Secretary of State for Wales in the Cabinet if he is to be the lapdog of the Assembly, as proposed by the Welsh Labour party.

Paragraph 44 of Labour's document on the future of local government in Wales states:

"It will be important however for the regional government itself to have an opportunity to scrutinise any Parliamentary legislation and regulation with relevance to Wales so that it may make appropriate representations on them to the Secretary of State and the Government of the day. Equally, it shall be a duty of the Secretary of State to consult the regional government".

The document states that the consultations

"must take place on a regular basis and that the Secretary of State"
must give
"particular attention to the view of the regional government."

Of Welsh language the document states:

"It will be the duty of the Secretary of State, after consultation with the regional government, to initiate any Parliamentary legislation or statutory regulation which it"—
the regional government—
"may consider necessary".

If that is not the description of a lapdog, I do not know what is.

Mr. Michael: Does the hon. Gentleman really think it so wrong that the Secretary of State for Wales should be required to consult those elected by the people of Wales? Does he think it wrong that an organisation elected by the people of Wales should expect to have its views considered by Parliament?

Mr. Grist: The hon. Gentleman muddles legitimacy of election and accountability for a policy. We are talking about the legitimacy of an elected assembly, but the carrying out of the legislation would lie in another's hands. That person would not be responsible for the legislation that he introduced—a most extraordinary proposal.

What sort of person would want to be placed in such a humiliating position? How would they be viewed by their Cabinet colleagues, and how would they be viewed in Wales? They might be seen as an outpost of the Treasury, because it is certain that they would have to deny some of the wilder demands of the Welsh Assembly. How could they be responsible for the central Government funds allocated to the Assembly? If the Secretary of State is not responsible for the allocation of those funds, who is to be responsible? Is the Welsh Assembly simply to be one among many in the United Kingdom? Is the United Kingdom to be split up into so many free-wheeling irresponsible, or only semi-responsible, organisations?

We are told that the Assembly would organise itself on a council basis—by committee—rather than on a parliamentary method. But we are then told that those committees would take over the responsibility and functions of the Welsh Arts Council, the Welsh Sports Council and the Welsh Tourist Board. We are told that, on the basis of a committee of elected representatives, the Welsh Development Agency and the Development Board for Rural Wales will be accountable to the Assembly. Will they be funded by the Assembly, as they are responsible to it? I am sure that hon. Members agree that that is extraordinary.

There will be 76 people in the regional government, but the document allocates 26 spheres of responsibility to that government. Therefore, there will be 26 chairmen out of 76 members; they will have a busy time spending the money raised by central Government. We will continue to have 38 Members of Parliament at Westminster. Are the English likely to put up with that any more than those north of the Scottish border will put up with the same representation for Scotland if they are given their own regional government? People north of the border should recognise that. What would we do when we were here? Who would we question about the expenditure of money in Wales? Who would be accountable—the Secretary of State? No, it would be the regional government—the poor son of a bitch.

It can scarcely be thought that such an Opposition policy has been given any consideration by those with a basic level of understanding of Parliament or representative government. The same applies to the Labour party's proposals for the Upper House and the so-called proportional representation row. We hear a lot of talk, but we are afraid that it will all end in tears at the end of the day.

Were Labour Members to be sitting on the existing Government Benches following the next general election, between breaking the vast majority of their spending pledges and running to the International Monetary Fund to rescue the country from the inflationary explosion that they would have set in train, they would plunge this place and the country into a dog's dinner of constitutional argument, late nights, and wasted energy and time, as they did in the 1970s.

If they do not junk that barrowload of rubbish smartish, they will find themselves spending even longer in opposition than they have already spent since they lost office on St. David's day in 1979. One mistake that they do not seem to want to repeat is to hold a democratic referendum, on which the Leader of the Opposition was so insistent from 1975 until 1979. It seems that, today, the Leader of the Opposition is not so minded to trust the judgment of the people of Wales.

6.18 pm

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): This is an historic opportunity for the House to consider constitutional reform for Wales. We are in danger of losing this opportunity, and shall not get another chance for a while. It is logical—each part of Government needs executive powers at a European, United Kingdom, Welsh, single-tier authority and community and town council level. That is entirely logical within a federal structure and should be welcomed. The position in which we find ourselves today, with two hours to discuss the entire reorganisation of local government in Wales, is an absolute disgrace.

Mr. Raffan: Does the hon. Gentleman share my surprise that, in view of the comments of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on the importance of accountability to the House, this debate was not held in Government time over a full day? Is it not surprising that the Government did not do that in view of my right hon. Friend's great belief in the accountability of the Secretary of State to the House? That is particularly true as the document states that all consultation should be finished by 31 October. Should not Ministers tell us whether there will be a debate in the House after we return from the summer recess and before the end of October? There should be such a debate.

Mr. Livsey: I entirely agree with the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan), who is correct in his analysis. This is a totally inadequate way to debate the subject; we have not been given enough time.

The 1974 reorganisation of local government was, at the time, thought to be a great strategic reform. It was thought to be more effective in terms of planning and that districts, and especially the counties, would be more viable as they would contain more people. At that time, natural geography was largely ignored. In the case of new counties it seemed that bigger would be better. The county of Powys runs from Llanfyllin to Ystradgynlais in the Swansea valley. That is 130 miles, which is equivalent to the distance from the Severn bridge to the Hammersmith

[Mr. Livsey]

flyover. It does not make sense. Dyfed fared little better, with councillors in Llanelli trying to take decisions based on what was happening in Aberystwyth, and vice versa, and that did not make sense.

It is necessary to return to single-tier authorities. The present structure leads to artificial splits between functions. Planning takes place at county and then again at district level. Education went to the counties and housing to the districts, thus splitting the means of integrated planning for communities. One result has been the closure of village schools. That happened because the lack of a proper structure for decision-making in local councils led to inadequate house building. That has resulted in the artificial aging of populations, especially in rural areas where populations are out of balance. For more than 20 years no houses have been built in many areas.

Fortunately, this mid-20th century experiment in local government engineering is coming to a halt, and not before time. All parties agree that a single tier of local government in Wales is the best way to deliver services in rural and urban areas. All functions must reside under one roof and there must be much more co-ordination. I do not think that such a statement is controversial. The only questions remaining are what functions will the single-tier authorities perform, how many authorities will there be and what areas will they cover. We heard the expected answer from the Secretary of State for Wales concerning an Assembly because, of course, no Conservative Secretary of State would ever give us a Welsh Assembly.

Mr. Grist: The hon. Gentleman speaks about rural unitary authorities. It has always worried me that in thinly populated areas it might be difficult to recruit enough local authority officers of the requisite quality. Does the hon. Gentleman share my concern about that?

Mr. Livsey: I do not. Many small local authorities have high-quality officers who perform efficiently and effectively.

The Secretary of State's document fails to spell out the functions of the unitary authorities. I am glad that he has confirmed that education will remain with local government. That is essential, and the Welsh Office should not attempt to centralise it. I take it from what the Secretary of State said that all the functions currently carried out by local authorities will remain with the new single-tier authorities. Elected representatives must have democratic control of all those functions.

We certainly favour the proposals in map 4 for 24 local authorities rather than 20, which is the Secretary of State's option in his reorganisation proposals. That adheres more to natural local communities rather than to communities that are put together artificially. I am campaigning for separate local unitary authorities in Radnor and Brecon because two separate authorities there would be the best way to proceed.

The Secretary of State, who has just returned to the Chamber, is wearing the tie of the Welsh Cricket Federation, presented to him by the president of that august body at the West Indies v. Wales match in Brecon on Monday. We both enjoyed that match. Is he prepared to visit Radnorshire to discuss with that authority the possibility of its becoming a separate unitary authority? I should also like him to return to Brecon to discuss the possibility of a separate unitary authority, because support for that in the area is unanimous.

A Welsh Assembly would be the true test of Welsh Office accountability. Without it, local government and the Secretary of State are diminished. It is rubbish for the Secretary of State to say that a Cabinet post would be lost. A Secretary of State for Wales will remain and could take and develop further powers from central Government. He could take powers from the Department of Employment and from the Home Office and could have other economic powers. His relationship with the Welsh Assembly would give him a more effective role. There would not necessarily be a clash of interests, even if the ruling party in a Welsh senate had a different political complexion from that of the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State works perfectly well with Welsh local authorities, which are certainly not of his political persuasion, and he is able to represent the interests of Wales in Cabinet without impediment.

Mr. David Hunt: Welsh local authorities have revenue-raising powers. Therefore, they have the right to ask people to contribute to the cost of local services. The proposed Assembly would not have such powers and the Secretary of State would totally control the purse strings.

Mr. Livsey: That may be the Labour party's proposal, but we certainly believe that there should be revenue-raising powers not only for local government but for a Welsh Assembly. It is a question of responsibility—no taxation without representation.

There are more than 70 quangos in Wales and they must be made more accountable. The number of civil servants in the Welsh Office has been the subject of debate. I always thought that there were 3,000. However, there are many thousands of civil servants there and they must be made democratically accountable. There should be closer examination of the £5 billion that is spent by the Welsh Office. The setting up of a constitutional commission to consider these issues is a matter for legitimate debate.

The principle of subsidiarity in the context of the European Community should also be subjected to wide-ranging debate. By keeping to himself the decision on local government reform, the Secretary of State has not indicated what objective tests he is applying before deciding on the preferred option. No costing is involved and we have not heard about a cost-benefit analysis of the alternative plans. That makes it difficult to judge which of his plans will be best from all points of view.

The Secretary of State is currently removing powers from local government. He is taking away the careers service and considering the removal from local government of waste disposal functions. We have already had references to higher education being removed. Community and town councils must be strengthened by being given more powers, especially for looking after their local environments and for assuming responsibility for their areas.

The ideal solution for Wales from grass roots level upwards is, first, strengthened community councils. Secondly, there must be 24 to 26 single-tier authorities which are largely based on the old councils. Thirdly, we need a Welsh senate with elections by proportional representation to give true accountability to the Welsh Office and to decide its priorities. Fourthly, we would still need a Secretary of State within the Cabinet; and, lastly,

there is the European dimension which is becoming increasingly important. Only in that way will Wales be properly and logically governed within the context of a democratic Europe.

I congratulate Plaid Cymru on bringing this necessary subject forward for debate. We are in danger of having decisions thrust upon us by a party which is in the brake van of constitutional reform. It should throw that shackle off and get us into the 21st century as soon as possible.

6.30 pm

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): I have listened carefully to the debate and, at the expense of embarrassing my hon. Friend the Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas), I would like to thank him for his outstanding contribution to the debate. His speech raised it to the appropriate level, looking at the structures of Government from the top to the bottom. That was in stark contrast to some of the later contributions, which returned to the old, sterile, futile debates of the 1970s which surely we must now put behind us.

We are now talking about a new Wales; a new relationship that Wales has to have with the EC and with the House. The debate shows that at least one party in the House has moved on from 1979 and has recognised that we are now in a completely different ball game. That is another reason why parts of the debate about the government of Wales should not be taking place here but should have a Welsh dimension in Cardiff.

Some of the arguments are completely outmoded in today's context—arguments such as the one about what a Secretary of State would do if there were a Welsh Parliament of a different political complexion. What does the Secretary of State now do if he has to deal with Cardiff city council or South Glamorgan council, which are Labour-controlled? What does he now do when he has to deal with so many other local authorities which are not Conservative-controlled? It is hard to find a local authority in Wales which is Conservative-controlled. Yet he says that Wales needs to have local authorities. He accepts that he has a relationship with local authorities which he now seeks to deny at an all-Wales level.

That old sterile debate needs to be put way behind us. We must now look at the new relationship which is developing between Wales and the EC. The Secretary of State was gracious enough to say that he now welcomes Plaid Cymru's great contribution to the European debate, and he welcomes the new relationship that Wales has with the kind of regions that he mentions, such as Baden-Wurttemberg and Catalonia, which have their own regional governments. They are within the new framework of European regions about which we have been talking.

Why would there be particular problems in Wales if the right hon. Gentleman sees none in Catalonia or Baden-Wurttemberg? Why does he think that the Government of Wales would be weaker, when some of the strongest economies in Europe are so decentralised? All the strong economies of Europe are based on the concept that all decisions that should be taken at the lowest level are taken at the lowest level. In all those regions, there is a regional level of government which is responsible for the region.

Mr. David Hunt: In all those regions, whose leaders I have spoken to, there was general surprise that I, as Secretary of State for Wales, sat in the United Kingdom Cabinet. The Prime Ministers of those regions said that they would give anything to have a similar position in their national Cabinets.

Mr. Jones: They would not give up their Governments in order to have that facility.

We in Plaid Cymru have recognised that Wales has a major contribution to make to the Europe of tomorrow, and we want that contribution to be made on an all-Wales basis. The whole European debate has given our policy such an outward-looking dimension that we want to build that new relationship with Europe to enable our business communities, situated as they are on the very edge of the EC, to be at the heart of the decision-making process. That can be accomplished only if we have the structures of government which allow a Welsh democracy on an all-Wales basis.

6.35 pm

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): After the massive discharge of fire by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Grist), the Welsh Assembly is about as full of holes as the proverbial colander. None the less, I still believe that it would be a mistake for the Conservative party to paint itself into a corner by refusing that proposal. In the first place, if we are to have 20 or more single-tier authorities in Wales, which I think is the right solution, there has to be some body which can debate their activities and the activities of the quangos at an all-Wales level. I do not believe that that body can be, as at present seems to be suggested, a partly or wholly nominated one.

The second argument is the federalist one. I make no apology for using the F-word from the Conservative Benches. The fact is that, for the overwhelming majority of people on the continent of Europe and for a growing minority in Britain, federalism is seen not just as the most effective structure for combining close co-operation with the retention of local autonomy and national character, but also as the structure most favourable to the development of democratic and parliamentary control. Whatever the House may choose to believe, the EC will be a federal structure and Britain will be a part of it. The only alternative to that is that it will be a centralised bureaucracy. The logic of events dictates that, in due course, that federal structure will extend downwards within each individual country.

There is one further argument. It is just possible, though I am sure unlikely, that the Welsh people at the next election will show themselves as ungrateful as the people of Monmouth were for the colossal efforts that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made on their behalf. If that were so, and if the Conservative party in Wales, like the Conservative party in Scotland, were to fail to increase its representation in the House, it would be difficult for a British Government, dependent almost entirely on an overwhelming majority in England, to provide acceptable government for the United Kingdom. In those circumstances, they would find it hard to resist demands for devolution going as far as full federation. "Never" is a word better not used in politics. I hope that my right hon. Friend will be careful not to use it.

6.38 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): I do not agree with the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) on Europe, but he has summed up the matter admirably. I could not agree more with his analysis both in respect of the effect of Europe on the constitution of the United Kingdom and of the need to have some democratic control over nominated bodies in Wales.

I am sorry that the Secretary of State did not make a serious speech. He usually does. Whatever the differences between us, he is a sincere Minister. However, he did not address the problem. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) is to reply, but if he is, that really is a sign that those on the Government Front Bench do not take the subject seriously.

It is clear from history that the Conservative party has never instituted any institutional or constitutional changes in Wales. It opposed the creation of the Cabinet post of Secretary of State for Wales, in the form of my famous predecessor Jim Griffiths, but today the right hon. Gentleman defends that office down to the last trench, bayonet, and piece of barbed wire. The Conservatives opposed also the establishment of the Welsh Development Agency by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris). However, today that is an oasis of Keynesianism in a desert of monetarism.

The Conservatives also opposed the establishment of the Land Authority for Wales, which was part of the betterment levy and the development land tax that, unfortunately, I had to take through the House. The Conservatives retained that as well, as another outpost of interventionism in the Welsh economy. When there is a Welsh Assembly—and there will be, one day—the Conservative party will eventually defend it to the last trench, bayonet, and piece of barbed wire. That is why one cannot take the Government seriously.

The Secretary of State is concerned about the prospect of a Welsh Assembly that was not under Conservative control. The President of the United States does not seem too concerned that Congress is controlled by the Democrats. If he can cope with that situation, I fail to understand why the Secretary of State cannot entertain a comparable state of affairs.

The views of the hon. Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Grist) on Europe are similar to those of the Secretary of State and of the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West, who spoke about devolution. I voted against the original attempt to take the United Kingdom into the Common Market, and I will oppose also the union that is to follow. I will not use the word "devolution" but "subsidiarity". It is all right to use that word, because it was invented by a German theologian, so everyone is happy with it. Let us no longer use that terrible word "devolution", but speak of "subsidiarity" instead, with each tier deciding which level of government is best suited to perform certain functions.

If the Secretary of State, who is in the vanguard of the Conservative European movement—or he was—is really concerned about the effect on the United Kingdom constitution of a little Assembly in Cardiff controlling the Arts Council of Wales, he ought to read the draft treaty on European economic and monetary union that the present Government, or perhaps even the next Labour Government, will have to sign soon, albeit with a few amendments. The Government are prepared to hand over the control of this country's monetary policy, interest rates, and money supply to unelected bankers in Frankfurt, but that is not seen as threatening the British constitution.

The right hon. Gentleman said that he did not want to be a Secretary of State without a suit—or perhaps he said he did not want to be just a suit without a Secretary of State inside it. If he reads the draft treaty, he will find that not only he but the Chancellor of the Exchequer and all the other members of the Cabinet will be without a suit. It is absurd to argue that the minor measure of setting up a Welsh Assembly in Cardiff to control funds will suborn the United Kingdom's constitution, especially when the Government are about to sign a draft treaty that will transfer chunks of power from the House to the Commission and a central bank. That really will affect this country's constitution.

The time will come, because of what is happening in Europe now, when there will be Welsh evolution and subsidiarity, and I am sorry that the Secretary of State did not address himself to that aspect. Such a Welsh Assembly will fit into a proper system of governance for the United Kingdom.

6.43 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): We have been enlightened by the views expressed by right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the Chamber, including the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer). If the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) had been called, I am sure that his contribution also would have been worth while.

We must structure for the 21st century a form of government that is appropriate to all our needs, by deciding which decisions are best taken at what level. Some decisions may have to be taken at a European level—particularly those affecting the economy. The Secretary of State says that his primary role is to ensure that Wales has a voice when critical decisions are taken. If so, why does he not sit in European institutions on behalf of Wales, rather than concentrate entirely on his role in the British Cabinet?

It is ironic that in the same week as the Green Paper on the future of local government was published, Mr. Bruce Millan in Brussels was presenting his ideas for a European regional council. That concept might develop into a second chamber of the European Parliament, to counterbalance the centralised forces of the European Parliament's directly elected first chamber.

The Green Paper totally fails to address the functions appropriate to different levels of government, in respect of the bodies that the Government propose and others. How can anyone reach a judgment on boundaries if we do not know what are the functions within those boundaries? Are we to assume that everything now done by district and county councils will be undertaken without change by the new multipurpose authorities? The Secretary of State did not say that that would be the case.

The Secretary of State introduced those proposals because there is something approaching a consensus between Welsh councils and districts on a change to all-purpose authorities. However, the apex of their proposals is a directly elected all-Wales democracy. Plaid Cymru supports in principle one main tier of local authorities—above a community council, which would have more powers, and below an all-Wales elected Government.

The Secretary of State made a weak contribution to today's debate. He should realise that the people of Wales are looking for a new form of democracy. He argued that an all-Wales body would cost £50 million a year. I do not know whether the right hon. Gentleman usually gets his figures from the Leader of the Opposition. It is interesting if he does so in other contexts. Is he unaware that the cost of running the Houses of Parliament in the vote that we approved a few months ago is put at £44 million? The Secretary of State claims that it will cost £6 million more than that to run a Welsh Assembly. We can do without that kind of nonsense.

Government thinking is far from clear. A report in *The Guardian* on 29 March said:

"The Government is actively considering setting up some form of national assemblies for Scotland and Wales as part of its reorganisation of local government . . . Sir Wyn Roberts, Minister of State for Wales, said plans to reorganise local government, including the possible establishment of unitary authorities, opened up the prospect of executive assemblies for both nations, but he refused to be drawn on details."

It would be interesting to know why the Minister of State is not present for this debate.

Mr. David Hunt: Unfortunately, my right hon. Friend the Minister of State was taken ill this afternoon, but I hope that he will recover quickly. He asked me, if his absence was mentioned, to apologise for his non-attendance.

Mr. Wigley: If illness is the reason for the right hon. Gentleman's absence, we all hope that he will be much better soon.

The report in *The Guardian* continues:

"At the weekend, the Prime Minister spoke of the need for the party"—

that is, the Conservative party—

"to recover lost ground in Wales and Scotland, and said the promise of some form of national assembly, albeit without tax-raising powers, might lure back the voters."

The Government have turned their backs on a Welsh Assembly because of the fear of their supporters in Wales that they could never win a majority in a directly elected all-Wales body. That is an indictment of a system of Government that allows a party to maintain undemocratic control because of its fear that it might lose power.

The Secretary of State emphasised the possibility of seats being lost in the Cabinet. May I quote what was said some time ago by a Northern Ireland Minister of State?

"Will a Secretary of State for Northern Ireland be retained after devolution? The answer is 'Yes'. The Secretary of State's responsibilities would be retained under both partial and complete devolution because he would continue to be responsible for excepted and reserved matters. The matters that are devolved will become the responsibility of the devolved Administration and Assembly."—[*Official Report*, 28 April 1982; Vol. 22, c. 933.]

It was no surprise to read the comments of Mr. Roy Bradford in a Belfast newspaper on Monday. Mr. Bradford referred to

"a brutal demolition job by one Cabinet Minister"—

the Secretary of State for Wales—

"on the stated policy of his colleague."

The Government have got themselves into a complete tangle.

We need to address the functions of local government. We must look beyond its current functions, many of which, in Wales, have been taken away: the old relationship between the medical officer of health and the county councils has gone; housing, to a large extent, has gone to Tai Cymru; further education has been centralised and there is a possibility that refuse disposal services will be taken over by quangos. What is lacking is democratic answerability.

We should also be considering broader issues. Many people in Wales believe that the health authorities should be more accountable. The same applies to the water companies; at present, there is taxation without representation. The police services, too, need to be more open and answerable, and the tourist industry should work more closely with local government, as well as with the quangos. All those services cry out not simply for a relationship with local government, but for a strategic, all-Wales approach. That also applies to economic planning and the development of a transport infrastructure.

The Green Paper does not address the work load that will be imposed on individual councillors in the new all-purpose authorities. For a couple of years, I was a member of Merthyr Tydfil borough council, one of the old all-purpose authorities. I was on 22 committees: the only two committees of which I was not a member were the finance committee and the industry committee—the two subjects that I knew something about. The work load was enormous. We must bear in mind the ward sizes that will be appropriate if councillors who are not retired people are to undertake a reasonable work load.

It is worth considering whether different councillors should be elected to perform different functions, such as education and social services, with a common secretariat serving the two, as happens in other countries. We must take a radical approach. Our ideas must be much clearer before we decide on the boundaries. We need democratic answerability on an all-Wales level, and we need a direct link with the European Community.

The Tories have never had a parliamentary majority in Wales. That, I believe, is the basis for their fear of Welsh democracy. We are talking not about the creation of a new tier of government, but about the most appropriate division of functions between existing tiers. We want democratic answerability for the tier of government which, patently, already exists.

6.53 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Bennett): This has been an interesting and worth while debate and some important issues have been raised. It is worth noting how much agreement there has been about the move to unitary authorities in Wales. The great advantage of such authorities is that people know who is responsible for services. The confusion between county and district councils can be avoided. I strongly agree with the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey), who talks of the importance of bringing local government down to levels at which people can relate to what is happening.

It is strange that, having supported the idea of unitary authorities, the Liberals, Labour and Plaid Cymru have asked for another tier of government. My hon. Friends and I want less government and real devolution. That is why, when we present our paper on the internal management of local authorities—as we shall do very shortly—we shall take into account some of the points made by the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) about the importance of streamlining local authority

[Mr. Nicholas Bennett]

work. There should not be 22 different committees; local authorities must become enabling authorities, tackling the important issues but not necessarily carrying out all the work themselves.

Real devolution is very important, and the Government are committed to it. We have already seen it in education; schools have been given local management, and we have introduced grant-maintained status. We have given parents more information about exam results and about what schools offer. As for housing, we have sold some 80,000 council houses in Wales to the people who live in them, thus giving them direct financial control over their lives. The Government will soon present the citizens charter, which will give people still more direct control over their lives. Ownership of property and wealth is what gives people real control over not only their own lives, but those of their families.

Labour Members have talked of quality commissions and other quangos. We know that the Labour party does not believe in giving people real control over their own lives. It has opposed every piece of legislation that the Government have presented in the past few years to give more power to the individual. It has been against every attempt at decentralisation—the sale of council houses, increased freedom for parents and schools and devolution of the health service through NHS trusts. Now, Labour wants another tier of government—costing some £50 million—which would mean more bureaucracy, more civil servants and more control over people's lives. We shall not hesitate to reject that proposal.

It is interesting to note that, in the days when he opposed the idea of a Welsh Assembly, the Leader of the Opposition said:

"For the price of an Assembly, we could have a new hospital or six miles of motorway or 10 comprehensive schools every year."

When it comes to spending money, we should ask the people of Wales whether they want to spend £50 million on a useless added tier of bureaucracy, or whether they would rather spend it on improving their lives directly.

We should also be concerned about the bias that the assembly might have. Let me quote the Leader of the Opposition again. He said:

"I will tell the hon. Member what will happen in a Welsh Assembly which, even on a rough proportional basis, will be dominated by people representing the English-speaking industrial proletariat of South Wales."—[*Official Report*, 15 November 1977; Vol. 939, c. 472.]

I would not use that phrase myself, but I see his point. We should not have a Welsh Assembly that would inevitably be dominated by south-east Wales, telling the people of rural Wales—the people of Pembrokeshire, Gwynedd and the like—what to do.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Grist) spoke about the Secretary of State and the Cabinet. It cannot be right for the Secretary of State to lose all his powers, yet continue to sit in the Cabinet, forced to argue for more money for Wales but with no accountability for how that money is spent. That is not the job description of a Cabinet Minister; it is a job description for a shadow Secretary of State, such as the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones). He would like such powers; he would like to be simply an empty voice, unable to do anything for Wales—merely going through the platitudes, pretending to have some power.

It is a recipe for conflict. According to paragraph 45 of Labour's document,

"the Secretary of State will have the duty, after consultation, with regional government, to initiate any parliamentary legislation or statutory regulation which it may consider necessary for the execution of such responsibilities and for which it is prepared to provide the necessary funding."

Are we to have a Conservative Secretary of State who is told, possibly by a Labour-dominated assembly, what he must do and how much money he must raise? The document has not been thought through; it is nonsense.

What about the role of Members of Parliament in the House? I was elected by my constituents in Pembrokeshire to represent them in a national Parliament. I was not sent here as a mere delegate, unable to speak on important issues affecting my constituents because power had gone to Cardiff. Does anyone really believe that English Members would be prepared to allow Welsh and Scottish Members to decide legislation in England, without having the same power for their own countries? That was the West Lothian question that the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) asked in 1978. We have had no reply, but that is the fundamental contradiction in Labour's proposals.

We should heed the words of the Leader of the Opposition, who said in 1978 that we should——

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 32, Noes 200.

Division No. 216] **[6.59 pm**

AYES

Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Leighton, Ron
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Loyden, Eddie
Maclennan, Robert
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Salmond, Alex
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Wallace, James
Wigley, Dafydd

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Margaret Ewing and
Mr. Andrew Welsh

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'ts)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*

Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Sir Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meale, Alan
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Sir Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Tim Boswell.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments)*:—

The House divided: Ayes 197, Noes 102.

Division No. 217] **[7.12 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Killedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Sir Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal

Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Sir Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Tim Boswell.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Dixon, Don
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Huw
Flynn, Paul
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Lambie, David
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Maclennan, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morley, Elliot
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redmond, Martin
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soley, Clive
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mrs. Margaret Ewing and
Mr. Andrew Welsh.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House welcomes the publication of the Consultation Paper on The Structure of Local Government in Wales; considers that it provides a sound basis for further public debate on local government structure in Wales; approves of the continuing development of the partnership between Wales and regions of Europe under the present constitutional arrangements of the United Kingdom; reaffirms the position of Wales as an integral part of the United Kingdom; and therefore rejects arguments for an elected Welsh Assembly, the creation of which would undermine the present arrangements for the direct representation of Wales in the Government of the United Kingdom.

Foreign Corporation Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

7.22 pm

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

This is a short but important Bill. Its object is to ensure that corporations incorporated under the laws of territories that the United Kingdom does not recognise as states can be treated here as having legal personality. A decision by the Court of Appeal last year on the legal personality of an international organisation, since reversed by the House of Lords, led to consideration being given to other questions of legal personality. It was agreed that the law relating to the status of corporations from non-states should be clarified by legislation.

If the Government do not recognise the territory of another part of the world as a state, it has been argued that our courts should not recognise its laws either, including those on the incorporation of companies. The result is that a company, although perhaps doing business here and well accepted as doing so, might not be able to sue or be sued in our courts. On the other hand, there are signs that the court will seek to avoid such a strict approach and will look at the commercial realities of such a case rather than at the political relations between the territory and this country from time to time. That is, of course, the view that the Government prefer.

In the Government's view, such basic legal questions as, "Is this body a corporation?" and, "What does its constitution permit?" should not depend on questions of foreign policy. All that the Bill seeks to do is to say that companies are not to be denied legal personality here simply because the territories in which they are incorporated are not recognised as states.

I should make it clear that the Bill does not change our policy or practice on the recognition of states in any way. The internationally accepted criteria according to which the Government do or do not recognise territories as states remain the same. The Bill will reassure not only foreign corporations that already operate in this country or which may wish to do so, but companies and individuals who do business with them. It will not be possible for either party to try to avoid its obligations, as happened in a recent case, by claiming that the corporation has no legal personality here because it comes from a non-state.

Clause 1(1) provides that, if the laws of the territory are applied by a settled court system at the time when the question arises, the question whether a corporation has been incorporated or dissolved is to be determined as if the territory were a recognised state. Courts and legal advisers here will be able to look at and take account of the territory's laws in the same way that they would do if the corporation came from a recognised state.

I should draw attention to clause 1(3), as it validates Acts, including Acts relating to registration which would have been valid when done if the Bill had then been in force. That retrospective element is justified and does not go further than is necessary. The provision relates in particular to obligations that have been entered into in good faith by a foreign corporation and another party on the basis that the corporation has legal personality under our law. Clause 1(3) means that it will not be possible for either party to dishonour its obligations on the ground that the corporation had no legal personality when it entered into them.

As those who have followed its legal history will understand, the Bill is needed. It is needed to remove doubts and uncertainties in the commercial and financial world. Without it, there would be a possibility that bona fide companies that operate here would be held not to have legal personality in the eyes of our law, leaving their clients, customers and creditors at risk. Those doubts may also dissuade foreign corporations from setting up business here. Such doubts, once raised, must be resolved rapidly.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman confirm that the concept of legal personality has equal validity for the Scottish legal system as well? It is an important question with regard to the number of foreign corporations setting up satellite subsidiaries in Scotland.

The Solicitor-General: Yes. The concept is important wherever commercial activity is carried out: I can so confirm.

Legislation in this area has been called for by City firms of solicitors, and the content of the Bill has been discussed with them. Similar legislation has recently been introduced in Australia. The Bill does not accord any recognition of any territory as a state, and should not be interpreted as doing so. It clarifies, in accordance with commercial reality, the law on the legal personality of corporations from non-states which come to this country. I commend it to the House.

7.28 pm

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): As the Solicitor-General has pointed out, the Bill has retrospective effect. It is relatively rare that Parliament passes retrospective legislation. I must not be critical, because I did the same when I was a Minister. When City solicitors and City of London bankers tell the Government that something is wrong, that they have found a legal technicality that might deprive them of the right to recover their money, legislation goes through the House in double quick time. Today the Bill will have its Second Reading, Committee stage, Report stage and Third Reading, all within a few minutes. That is all right for City bankers, but if there is a technicality affecting a tenant, or somebody's pension or social security claim, legislation does not go through quite so quickly—certainly not retrospective legislation such as the Bill before us.

It is right, however, that the Bill should be retrospective, because it does no more than put the parties in the position in which they thought they were when they concluded their bargains. Both parties would have thought that they had the legal capacity to enter into a contract or other legal relationship, so we are doing no more than the parties intended should happen. I draw attention to the retrospective nature of the Bill but in this case it is right.

The Bill is concerned with companies incorporated under the laws of states that we do not recognise. For example, we do not recognise Palestine or Taiwan as separate states. Another example is the Turkish Independent Republic of Northern Cyprus, with which my constituents in south London often deal. In the near

[Mr. John Fraser]

future, Eritrea, or part of Kurdistan, for instance, may assume the qualities of states that are not recognised by Her Majesty's Government.

There is a list of territories which, although not recognised by the Government, may have settled systems of law and court systems that work on proper civilised lines. The Bill provides that a company incorporated in such a territory not recognised by the United Kingdom Government will nevertheless be accorded legal corporate personality when it comes to trade in the United Kingdom.

Provided that the foreign territory has a settled legal and judicial system, and laws by which a corporation can be created, it would be wrong to deny customers and contracting parties the right to sue simply because the state under which incorporation took place is not recognised by the United Kingdom Government. Commercial laws should recognise the realities of trade, and should be as free as possible from technical traps.

A company incorporated in northern Cyprus may supply fruit. There has been some discussion about Azil Nadir operating in Cyprus; this is not a theoretical matter. It is right that those who contract with a company incorporated in northern Cyprus should have rights against it, and the fruit traders of northern Cyprus should have rights against their customers here. The same is true of companies supplying clothes, materials or toys from Taiwan.

The Bill is right to deal with those issues, but it leaves many unanswered questions and creates huge anomalies, which I shall talk about in a moment. I suggest that, as a condition of the Bill being given a rapid passage today, the Solicitor-General, on behalf of the Lord Chancellor, should give an undertaking to the House that the Lord Chancellor will ask the Law Commission to examine and report on the recognition of foreign and domestic independent legal personalities, including the question of corporate personality.

I shall ask some of the questions that the Bill leaves unanswered. How is a customer to know how to determine the vires of an overseas corporation? Will it be treated as having the same general powers as a United Kingdom company, or the sort of limited freedom of contract possessed by Hammersmith and Fulham council? As the Solicitor-General knows, that council was found to have a corporate personality but not the ability to enter into certain contracts with banks. We are not sure whether the vires law will apply to the overseas corporations.

How can a creditor wind up an overseas corporation, or extract a contribution or payment from the contributors? Will the concept of wrongful trading introduced in the most recent Companies Act apply to officers and directors of overseas corporations as it applies to officers and directors of United Kingdom companies? That is a question of some importance when an overseas company continues to trade knowing that it is insolvent, and there ought to be a personal liability on those who know that the company is conducting its affairs in that way. Those are several questions which should be answered.

The Bill creates huge anomalies. That is not an argument against the Bill, but it is as well to recognise the anomalies. For instance, by virtue of the Bill, a partnership under the civil law system of a non-recognised foreign state will have a legal corporate personality in the United Kingdom. For instance, in France—I know that the Bill does not apply to France, as we already recognise French domestic corporations—an organisation such as a partnership has a separate corporate individual personality.

If a non-recognised state has a civil law system like that of France, whereby a partnership has a separate legal personality, by virtue of the Bill such an organisation will have a separate legal personality in this country, too. But a partnership set up inside this country—for instance, a large firm of solicitors employing, say, 2,500 people, with several hundred partners—is not recognised as having a separate, independent legal personality. It is ridiculous that, technically, one has to sue hundreds of people.

It is not possible to sue a club; one has to sue the trustees because the club has no separate legal personality. Sometimes, difficulties have arisen concerning trade unions, and I have come across problems concerning Members of Parliament who say that they have been libelled by the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children. SPUC does not have a separate legal personality under British law. If SPUC libels somebody at the next general election—it is alleged to have done so in past elections—no proceedings can be taken against the organisation because it does not possess a separate, independent legal personality in Britain.

By virtue of the Bill, however, if a similar organisation had been incorporated under the laws of Taiwan, and had a recognised, separate, independent legal personality there, it would have an advantage—or possibly a disadvantage—in this country compared with British clubs, trusts and other non-company organisations. That seems ridiculous.

I shall illustrate what I regard as one of the most dangerous anomalies. I believe that the Solicitor-General referred to the case of the Arab Monetary Fund, which was decided earlier this year by the Judicial Committee of the House of Lords. The AMF was formed in 1976 by 20 rich, powerful, recognised Arab states together with Palestine, which is not recognised as a separate state by the United Kingdom. The AMF established an international banking organisation for those Arab states. It was formed by international treaty and recognised by public international law. But the AMF had not been accorded the status of a corporation by Order in Council under the International Organisations Act, 1968.

It then alleged that a Dr. Hashim had stolen $50 million from it. It decided to sue in the British courts for the recovery of that money from Dr. Hashim. The Court of Appeal under Lord Donaldson—a man who does not always commend himself to some of my hon. Friends—decided that the AMF had no legal personality at all.

If we had been left with the Court of Appeal decision, a two-person balloon manufacturing operation from Taiwan or a melon grower from northern Cyprus would be recognised in the United Kingdom as a corporate institution, notwithstanding the fact that the states concerned were not recognised by the British Government, but a joint organisation, set up under international treaty by 20 rich, powerful, prestigious Arab states enjoying friendly commercial relations with Britain, would not be recognised, even if it was alleged that $50 million has been stolen from it. If it had been left to Lord Donaldson and the Court of Appeal, that would have been the position.

Luckily, as a result of a good deal of ingenuity on the part of the House of Lords, it was decided that, because

the AMF had been recognised by a decree of the United Arab Emirates, it should be recognised as having a separate independent personality in the United Kingdom. It was a pretty close shave, however, and the original decision represented a failure to recognise the reality of international commercial operations. Such decisions by the courts do Britain no good as a commercial and banking centre, just as the Hammersmith and Fulham decision will be bad, in the long run, for the reputation of this country.

I do not expect the Solicitor-General to reply at any length to these matters. I merely wanted to draw attention to what I now regard as enormous anomalies in the treatment of one organisation as against another, and to ask the right hon. and learned Gentleman to undertake that these matters will now be referred to the Law Commission. They are not theoretical matters; they often go to the heart of Britain's commercial reputation. We have acted in this case to save some people's commercial bacon, but I hope that we can have a much better system of law for foreign corporations. The Bill will not deal with the question in full, and we could well do with recommendations from the Law Commission.

7.42 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): It looks as though the Government are rushing the Bill through because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) said, what is at stake is a trading relationship. The Bill contains retrospective provisions. I can recall how the then Conservative Opposition treated a retrospective provision introduced to deal with the case of Clay Cross councillors who had been surcharged and faced disqualification. The Housing Finance (Special Provisions) Act 1975 simply restored those councillors' civic rights—civic rights that had already been restored to councillors in Scotland and in Wales—but because the Bill contained retrospective provisions, the Conservative Opposition said that it was an absolute and complete outrage.

Sir Michael Havers, as he then was, led the assault on a handful of brave working-class councillors who had had the temerity to provide decent housing at low rents. The previous jackboot Conservative Government had tried to force them to raise rents, but they had decided that the people they represented should be entitled to low rents. Because of the Clay Cross councillors' principled stand, they were surcharged and disqualified. When we attempted to introduce a Bill to deal with the matter, we had an enormous row about retrospective legislation.

I take the view that retrospective legislation is sometimes necessary. But the Government should recognise that, on their own previous criteria, a Bill containing retrospective provisions should be dealt with very charily by the House. I remember Dick Crawshaw, who was ostensibly a Labour Member, but who shortly afterwards joined the newly formed SDP, saying of the Bill that retrospective legislation was the top of the slippery slope to fascism—such was the tumult——

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): Where is he now?

Mr. Cryer: He is dead, as a matter of fact.

I caution the Government about rushing the Bill through. I assume that all its stages are to be dealt with in a matter of minutes. If we are to maintain the standards set in 1975 by the man who became Attorney-General in a Conservative Government and who said that retrospective legislation should not be applied, we should consider the Bill carefully and take some time over it.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Norwood so cogently argued, if there is pressure from the City or from a commercial trading organisation, the Government whip through Bills which contain loopholes, just to satisfy those people. But when it comes to the ordinary workers and a decent little urban district council trying to establish standards and provide good quality, low-rent housing, it is a different story.

The Clay Cross councillors did not actually disobey the legislation introduced by the previous Conservative Government. They asked for a commissioner to be sent in, and that Government refused. As a consequence of the Government's refusal, they faced penalties. I repeat that the Conservative party opposed that legislation because of its retrospective elements. There seems to be a strong sniff of double standards weaving its way around the House tonight.

7.46 pm

The Solicitor-General: With the leave of the House, Madam Deputy Speaker. We have had useful contributions to this short debate. First, the matter of retrospection has been raised. As the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) rightly said, this is a case in which the retrospective elements are wholly acceptable. It is a matter for the Law Officers, in that independent capacity, to look at retrospection, and one of the criteria on the basis of which one accepts retrospection—Law Officers appointed by Governments of all complexions on behalf of the Crown have always accepted it—is where what is involved is the restoration of the law to the state in which everyone believed it to have been and on the basis of which everyone had acted in commercial dealings. That is a wholly acceptable form of retrospective legislation.

The hon. Member for Norwood raised other aspects of the Bill, and mentioned what he described as unanswered questions and anomalies. He then linked those to the Arab Monetary Fund case. Some fairly remarkable arguments were advanced on behalf of those who sought to avoid financial liability in that case. It is an arcane area of the law, and those arguments found favour in the Court of Appeal. They did not, however, find favour in the House of Lords, and the House of Lords, adopting principles that are wholly consistent with the Bill, which states the matter clearly for the world in general, put the matter right. In so far as it is right for me to express an opinion on these difficult matters, I believe that the arguments that found favour in the House of Lords had a great deal of common sense to recommend them, as well as being the law of the land as held by our highest court.

I do not think that the hon. Member for Norwood would expect me to give an undertaking in quite the form in which he asked for it. He asked for an undertaking that the Lord Chancellor will ask the Law Commission to look at the matters that he described as anomalies. Nevertheless, I shall refer his careful remarks to my noble and learned Friend, so that he may consider them. Obviously, I cannot give an undertaking on behalf of my noble and learned Friend, and perhaps, on reflection, it will anyway become clearer that what are thought to be anomalies are not so anomalous and that questions that are thought to have been unanswered in fact have sensible

[The Solicitor-General]

answers. We will reflect on the points that the hon. Gentleman made when we have the opportunity to study them in print. I hope that that will satisfy him. I shall either write to him or ask my noble and learned Friend to write to him, so that these matters are not merely left in the air.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 178, Noes 26.

Division No. 218] **[7.48 pm**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boswell, Tim
Bowis, John
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dicks, Terry
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Livsey, Richard
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rhodes James, Sir Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wigley, Dafydd
Winterton, Nicholas
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Canavan, Dennis
Duffy, Sir A. E. P.
Flynn, Paul
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Home Robertson, John
Illsley, Eric
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Nellist, Dave
Patchett, Terry
Redmond, Martin
Salmond, Alex
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Andrew F. Bennett.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Motion made—[Mr. Chapman]—and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills), That the Bill be committed to a Committee of the whole House:—

The House divided: Ayes 163, Noes 28.

Division No. 219] **[8 pm**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boswell, Tim
Bowis, John
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dicks, Terry
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel

Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Heyward, Robert
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Killedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Livsey, Richard
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rhodes James, Sir Robert
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wigley, Dafydd
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Greg Knight and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Canavan, Dennis
Corbyn, Jeremy
Duffy, Sir A. E. P.
Flynn, Paul
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Home Robertson, John
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Morley, Elliot
Nellist, Dave
Primarolo, Dawn
Salmond, Alex
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Strang, Gavin
Turner, Dennis
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Andrew F. Bennett.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill immediately considered in Committee.

Clause 1

RECOGNITION OF CORPORATE STATUS OF CERTAIN FOREIGN CORPORATIONS

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

8.10 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Clause 1(1)(a) deals with states that are not recognised. In our discussions of the Bill the Government should provide a clear explanation of the scope of the clause. How many states are unrecognised by the British Government and how many states would be affected by this legislation? That could be important in determining our attitude to the clause.

My main concern is with clause 1(3) which makes the legislation retrospective. Why is retrospective legislation appropriate? I am not producing an argument against it, but we should take the greatest care when it is suggested. We should consider its implications carefully. We should not propose retrospective legislation in a cavalier fashion.

On Second Reading we heard of a case of some significance when retrospective legislation was introduced to try to cover the problems faced by councillors in Clay Cross. I know those councillors and former councillors well because I represent the constituency in which Clay Cross is situated. Why is the argument for retrospective legislation stronger in this instance than it was in their case?

The Clay Cross councillors found the operation of the Housing Finance Act 1972 objectionable and against the interests of the people whom they represented. They stood out courageously against it, believing that their actions were entirely legal. The Act provided for a housing commissioner to be sent in to take over the council's affairs if it was not increasing its rents as it was required to do under the Act. That was the initial position, although it may have changed later. At least initially they believed that their actions were entirely consistent with the law.

To that extent, the corporations covered by this legislation may be in a similar position. Presumably the corporations thought that their activities were legal, but now have discovered that they were not. Their ignorance of the law will be covered by this legislation. Likewise, in the case of Clay Cross, the councillors' misunderstanding of what became the interpretation of the law by the courts was at the front of their minds.

8.15 pm

The Clay Cross councillors were dealt with under the 1936 legislation on local government finance. The district auditor brought evidence against them, showing their failure to balance the accounts. They were surcharged by the district auditor for the shortfall under the Housing Finance Act. The legislation was reinterpreted, admittedly, because of the existence of the Housing Finance Act. Legally that is legitimate. It was argued in court that they believed that they were not doing anything that was constitutionally odd, therefore action should not have been taken against them. There is a similarity between that case and the corporations covered by this Bill.

Will the Solicitor-General explain why the principles behind this measure are held to be more important and significant than those in the case of the Clay Cross councillors? My constituents in particular and, certainly, the Clay Cross councillors and former councillors will be interested to know why one case is dealt with in one way and why arguments were used in this House to stop full and serious consideration of their particular concerns and interests. In 1975 effective legislation could have covered them and their problems. Many other councillors in the British Isles were covered by the measure, but the particular problem of the Clay Cross councillors was that they were caught earlier by that measure, so a retrospective element was needed to put them in line with others. Likewise, it seems that a retrospective measure is now required to put certain corporations in line with others.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I do not want to detain the House long. When the Solicitor-General replies, can he give me some information about the principles on which the Government are proposing retrospective legislation in this case?

I see no objection to retrospective legislation provided that everyone gains as a result. It is particularly worrying if some people lose and if an action is regarded as a crime retrospectively. It is an important principle that people should know the law when they carry out actions. When we introduce the idea of retrospective legislation and make an action a crime when it was not a crime when the person performed it, we are on dangerous ground.

So long as the Minister can assure me that there are only winners, no losers, I can see few problems with the Bill. It would be helpful if the Solicitor-General, on behalf of the Government and the Conservative party, spelt out the principles on which the Government operate. It appears that they consider that it is reasonable to have retrospective legislation in some areas, but totally unreasonable in others. Many of us heard that argument on Clay Cross.

I hope that the Minister can set down the clear principles behind the Bill. I hope that he can tell us when retrospective legislation is reasonable and when it is not. I hope that he will not tell us that it is a question of temporary expedience; that is not a good principle to work on. If retrospective legislation is introduced to produce winners when people have been deemed to have done something wrong, which they and everyone else did not believe to be a crime, but which is found to be a crime technically, that is all to the good. I cannot possibly contemplate the circumstances in which we introduce retrospective legislation and someone who does something in good faith is penalised because that act has become a crime as a result of that legislation.

Mr. Fraser: I do not know whether my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) was here on Second Reading.

Mr. Bennett: Yes, I was.

Mr. Fraser: Perhaps I can make our position on retrospection clear.

I support the retrospective provisions of the Bill because they put the parties to a commercial relationship in exactly the same position that they thought they were in when they entered into their arrangements. In that way they are not deceived. My hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish should appreciate that there can be winners and losers. A case may proceed where parties think they have entered into a contract. However, if the foreign corporation realises that it is being sued and pleads that it has no legal personality and so cannot be sued, that foreign corporation would be the winner. It would have avoided its liabilities, but the person who had contracted with it in good faith would be the loser. I do not believe that is right and that is why I support the retrospective provisions.

Mr. Bennett: Does my hon. Friend accept that foreign companies would not originally assume that they could use that loophole to get out of a contract? That loophole was discovered for them by the courts. It was not something that those companies originally took into account when they entered into agreements.

Mr. Fraser: That is exactly what I am saying. There have always been cases where the law was believed to be in a particular state and where Parliament corrected a misapprehension that was discovered only later on. Such cases may be rare, but they are a proper reason for retrospection.

Retrospection is never justified under any circumstances when one passes a law that makes criminal something done in the past which was not criminal at the time the act was committed. Such retrospective legislation would be a breach of international conventions on human rights. Such retrospective legislation is insupportable and I would not support it under any circumstances—I do not believe any party would do such a thing.

My hon. Friends will be aware that I represented, without any charge, the Clay Cross councillors in the surcharge case. The Bill does not stand on all fours with that case. In that case it was argued that we should not have retrospective legislation that forgave those Clay Cross councillors. People argued that they knew what they were doing at the time.

One can always justify that type of retrospective legislation because the state has the power to forgive. In the Clay Cross case individual rights had not been interfered with, rather it was the rights of the state versus the rights of individuals. If the state wants to be generous and to forgive, as it does with reprieves and pardons, the state is free to do so. That is the proper action. That has often been done for Members of Parliament because many retrospective acts of indemnity have been passed in the House. Dr. Winstanley was the beneficiary of retrospective legislation. He was elected as a Member of Parliament, but was disqualified in the same way as the Clay Cross councillors. However, the state, the House of Commons, forgave him for his minor infraction and he was able to take up his Crown appointment.

It is always proper for the state to be forgiving and that is how I justify the Clay Cross case. I hope that I have drawn the distinction between the different types of retrospective legislation. I hope that I have made my view clear as to why the Bill should be supported.

I want to ask the Solicitor-General about the operation of another part of clause 1, which relates to the recognition of companies incorporated under the laws of a state that is not recognised as a separate state by the United Kingdom. Will that apply to the Soviet Republics? There is no problem with a corporation incorporated under

Californian or New York law because all the incorporations in the American federal system are recognised by the Federal Government. What happens if, during a course of radicalism or privatisation, Soviet republics pass laws for which they do not have the vires to pass under the Soviet federal law? What happens if those laws establish private enterprise companies in the Baltic states or in Georgia? Will the United Kingdom courts recognise those Soviet incorporated entities if those republics have a settled legal system and a proper court system? Will the United Kingdom recognise those entities notwithstanding that the Government of the Soviet Union do not?

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I am a bit worried about this Bill being rushed through. I know that Parliament wants to get finished for the hols on 25 July and when I looked at the agenda for today I spotted about 10 different items. That is unusual because normally we might discuss one or two items, sometimes three. Here we are with five different Bills. I thought that this one was not that contentious until I heard my hon. Friends the Members for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) and for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes). I now realise that the Bill involves the words—dreaded by some—retrospective legislation.

I have heard many arguments about such legislation, especially when a Labour Government were in power. In those days the Tories sat on the Opposition Benches and they used to play merry hell about a Labour Government even daring to introduce retrospective legislation. Now we have the Solicitor-General creeping in here in the middle of the evening when all of his friends have gone to dinner. He is trying to slide the Bill through in the hope that Opposition Members have gone to dinner as well. Some of us have not because some of us have to keep an eye on things so that this parliamentary democracy is sustained, or brought down, as the case may be.

They call this place the mother of Parliaments, but I do not know why, because, frankly, there are only 42 women in it. It should be called the father of Parliaments. We have been told that we should spread this wonderful system of democracy all around the world, to eastern Europe and all over the place. Yet this Bill has come from the other place, the House of Lords, where no one is elected. So we are going to spread this around eastern Europe saying, "Follow us down this wonderful road to democratic nirvana. You can have 1,100 peers for life." Christ almighty! So here we are with a Bill being rushed through when Mr. Speaker is having his dinner. I do not mean any disrespect, Miss Boothroyd, as you have——

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman realises that Mr. Speaker is never in the Chair when we are in Committee. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is warming up to what he has to say on clause 1 as his comments are totally irrelevant at the moment.

Mr. Skinner: I am trying to raise my voice sufficiently loud enough for Mr. Speaker to hear me. You are absolutely right, Miss Boothroyd, that we are in Committee, which means that it is a different kind of debate. For the people out there it is difficult to understand this mumbo-jumbo world, this quaint little gentleman's club. The people might think that this debate represents the House of Commons in action, but this is a Committee rushing through a Bill to introduce retrospective legislation. The Government have introduced retrospective legislation before. The former Secretary of State for the Environment, the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley), introduced retrospective legislation four times because he had got the original Bill wrong.

My hon. Friend the Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) said, quite properly, that retrospective legislation was all right provided that the guilty parties knew what they were doing at the time. Let us face it, we know that the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury did not quite understand what he was doing when he introduced those four Bills that had to be changed by retrospective legislation. Some Tory Members wish that that legislation had gone down then.

8.30 pm

My hon. Friend the Member for Norwood also referred to Lord Winstanley, who used to be a Member of Parliament. He came here in 1974 having been elected as the hon. Member for Hazel Grove. One day, I noticed that the annunciator was showing that a further little item of business was being taken. The Government had added it at the last minute, just like today, because they were trying to rush it through. I asked some of my hon. Friends what was going on and they told me that it was to rescue the hon. Member who is now called Lord Winstanley. A Labour Government were in office at the time and they wanted to ensure that that Liberal Member of Parliament, who had broken the rules, was saved. If someone stands for Parliament he should have an idea about whether he is fit for office. Lord Winstanley had an office of profit under the Crown and served on medical tribunals, so he must have known that he was breaking the rules. Another example is the Prime Minister, who was elected as a councillor in Lambeth and put down the wrong address. He would have been done for that in an election court. Just fancy, he is running an economic summit down the road and he does not even know where he lives. He has several different hyphenated names, which he keeps changing.

Lord Winstanley was told to keep out of the road so that he would not be noticed. In this great democracy of ours he was told not to come here because he might spur someone on to talk about the issue, so I decided to talk about it. Here was a Member of Parliament who should not have been elected, and the Labour Government wanted to give him a chance to stay. I wondered what they were fighting for. The net result was that my former right hon. Friend, now Lord Glenamara in another place, moved the appropriate resolution and up jumped a Tory Opposition Member—oh yes, wonderful, let us get it through sharp before anyone notices—straight after Question Time. The Government could not get away with that now. I then moved in and said that I wanted to know a little more about it. Just imagine the hue and cry if Lord Winstanley had been a left-wing Labour Member. That would have been a different ball game altogether. However, the then Government slipped the matter through and I made my protest.

I do not know where my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) was at that time. I am intrigued to know, because I have only just thought about it.

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. May I remind the hon. Gentleman where he is at the moment. He should be

[The Second Deputy Chairman]

dealing with clause 1, which is very narrow and technical. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is ingenious enough to come back to order.

Mr. Cryer: Will my hon. Friend give way?

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. The point may be amusing, but we should be discussing clause 1.

Mr. Cryer: Will my hon. Friend give way on the question of retrospection contained in clause 1?

Mr. Skinner: Yes, this is a retrospective argument about something that happened in 1974.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend will recall that I was one of the Labour Members who turned up to ensure that we voted the civic rights of the Clay Cross 11 back into operation, against the wishes of the Tories who said that retrospective legislation was a slippery slope that we should not go down. They are willing to go down it in clause 1. My hon. Friend will recall that we did not manage to get that legislation through in spite of my clear adherence to being here and voting for it because some of our hon. Friends, most of whom joined the Sociai Democratic party later, abstained in that vote to protect decent working class councillors at Clay Cross.

Mr. Skinner: We have already dealt with that matter in which my hon. Friend played a significant role. We are now discussing the Liberal Member of Parliament who was here for a short period and is now called Lord Winstanley.

The important question is, as my hon. Friend the Member for Norwood said, whether Lord Winstanley knew that he was breaking the rules. He was a medical doctor serving on a tribunal and picking up money from a Government quango. He was then elected and he broke the electoral law. That must have been a dodgy affair but it slipped through.

What connection does clause 1 have with the Bank of Credit and Commerce International?

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. I can enlighten the hon. Gentleman there. It has nothing whatsoever to do with BCCI and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will now come back to order and deal with the technicalities of the clause.

Mr. Skinner: Let us face it, you, Mrs. Boothroyd—I think that that is the correct title for the position that you presently hold—

The Second Deputy Chairman: I have never been married.

Mr. Skinner: Right. You are called Madam Deputy Speaker, but when you are chairing a Committee you are called Miss Boothroyd. People should know that you have changed your name in the past 10 minutes.

We are discussing foreign countries that deal with trade and money. We know that BCCI was involved in laundering drug money—Noriega and all the rest. We also live in a world in which, by the push of a computer button, money can be transferred from one country to another. I am concerned about whether, if the Bill is enacted, there has been any laundering, because the Solicitor-General is involved in this drug laundering business. I think that he was here last year—it may have been the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry—when the Government passed a law to ensure that drug money was under control and that those involved were brought to heel. I remember that the debate took place late at night and that my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South and I took part in it. We asked whether that was possible and I want to know whether, when money is transferred to different countries, we are completely in control of the drug money that is sloshing about. It should be used to write off the debts of third world countries—I just throw that in, en passant.

Will the Bill affect immigrants? If so, my hon. Friend the Member for Norwood would probably have spotted it because he is very knowledgeable on that matter. My hon. Friend mentioned the Soviet republics—the 15 states within the Soviet Union—and asked whether there will be a problem. Six of those states are already saying to Gorbachev, "You can do business with the Prime Minister of Britain if you like but we want to opt out". We could argue about whether it is a good idea for those six states to separate from the other nine in the Soviet Union. My hon. Friend made a good point when he asked whether, when we speak of the Soviet Union, it includes the six who want to break away. Does it include the Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia? Do those foreign countries include Yugoslavia? My guess is that they do. If so, should Croatia be considered separately? Will they be regarded separately under the terms of the Bill?

Mr. Fraser: Separately.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend says that they will be catered for separately. The Government must have foreseen that. What about India? Kashmir is trying to break away. Is that catered for?

Mr. Fraser: Yes.

Mr. Skinner: It is quite remarkable. Are Iraq and Kurdistan catered for?

Mr. Fraser: Yes.

Mr. Skinner: That was mentioned earlier, and I wondered whether it was properly catered for under the Bill—on and on it goes.

There was a discussion earlier about Clay Cross and retrospective legislation. I do not think that any of my hon. Friends were pulled up over that. I shall put the record straight. When Clay Cross councillors made their decision, they did so in the knowledge that, under the Tory legislation brought in by the then hard-nosed Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath)—he is now a wet—a housing commissioner was shifting power away from local authorities to central Government. One of the ways to do so was to tell local authorities, "You put up rents because we tell you." Clay Cross councillors said that they would not do so because they were fighting for an element of local authority control which central Government were trying to seize. The legislation contained the provision that, in the event of a local authority not collecting that extra 50p a week on the rents, a commissioner would be sent in.

I well remember the case then argued, whereby a local authority could say, "If the Government have powers to collect their own money, let them get on with it." The commissioner got to Clay Cross and nobody paid him. That was not because the commissioner did not collect the

money—he tried—as my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) knows. The commissioner had an office in Clay Cross, but nobody went to see him. I suppose that it was like the poll tax in Liverpool, but on a grander scale because nobody went to see the commissioner and he had to come back empty handed.

The question arose that if the commissioner could not do the job that central Government had told him to do under the terms of the 1972 legislation, why should the councillors be penalised? In retrospect, it would not be a bad idea if they were all given a pardon for the effort they made then to prevent central Government control. Lord Hailsham was outraged and the House of Lords threw out a section of the legislation, which returned to the House on 14 August 1975. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South and other hon. Members voted to allow Clay Cross councillors to be reprieved so that they would avoid bankruptcy and the rest. But some of our colleagues did not vote that night. The *Hansard* report of those votes make interesting reading.

Retrospective legislation has had a chequered career in the House. If someone is close to the establishment, he is in with a chance. If he is very close and part of the establishment—in its higher echelons—the chances are that he will be rescued by retrospective legislation and get away with it. But if he happens to be a local Labour councillor, the chances are that he will not be given the chance of retrospective legislation. The nearer people are to the top, the more chances they get because laws are passed on their behalf. If they make a mistake and do not realise, they can be saved by retrospective legislation. If they are part of the establishment, and do something that they know is wrong, the establishment will introduce retrospective legislation to rescue them. Those are roughly the double standards that operate in this place.

Tonight, in this mini debate, which might continue—there will have to be votes on the important issues—we have been able to show that the Tory Government bring in retrospective legislation. They send Conservative Members to dinner and bring them back when the Division bells ring. There are shop stewards on the door saying, "We know that you have not listened to the debate, but go in here." They kick the Conservative Members into the Lobby to vote through the retrospective legislation. *[Interruption.]* Does my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East want to join in? He looks earnest.

Mr. Harry Barnes: I want to talk about councillors and the debarments that affected the Clay Cross case. The debarment provision, which was elaborated in the 1936 legislation, dealt with a measure that has never been discussed in the House in the 20th century. It stated that councillors can be debarred if they are surcharged and go bankrupt. That 19th century provision has been drawn on for further good measure.

Mr. Skinner: Surcharging is wide open to abuse. Some people, especially in local authorities, are surcharged if they spend too much money. A Tory, right-wing authority such as Wandsworth, which wants to cut and carve, and get rid of all the services, is not penalised for that. When Lady Porter at Westminster sold off cemeteries, she should have been surcharged but nobody got their collar felt there.

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will return to the proposition before us.

8.45 pm

Mr. Skinner: I am not suggesting for a minute that we should have retrospective legislation to rescue the Tories on Westminster council. It is high time that somebody in the Government said that selling cemeteries for 15p and buying them back for £2 million and £3 million is a matter of public concern, and those involved should pay the penalty for it.

I was talking about retrospective legislation in all its forms being used by Governments—mainly this Tory one—to rescue Ministers and people close to them in the City of London. When it comes to the ordinary man or woman in the street, and Labour councillors, there is a different set of rules. That is why we have to ask the Solicitor-General all those questions. I expect him to respond to the points raised tonight. I also want to know a bit about drug money.

Mr. Cryer: The Solicitor-General should clarify some of the sloppy wording in the clause. It states that if

"any question arises whether a body which purports to have or, as the case may be, which appears to have lost corporate status"

it will be granted a legal personality.

Corporate status is one of the prime means of crookery, fraud and milking money out of various organisations. Corporate status is granted as a convenience to allow capitalism to develop. It allows a fictional person to exist separate from the members of the organisation itself. That person has limited liability, does not become bankrupt and is not affected when the body corporate, with its separate and distinct legal personality, goes into liquidation. In that way, companies go into liquidation with their directors owing huge sums of money to them. Companies, with their separate, legal personality, lend money to the directors who form the company on extremely advantageous terms, sometimes without any repayment provisions.

Mr. Fraser: That is illegal.

Mr. Cryer: Yes, it is now, but I am talking about the history of corporate endeavour.

We are dealing with a group of people who will be given corporate status, and who are from states which may not even be recognised, with legislation that will not be as comprehensive as United Kingdom legislation. These issues may apply to other states, and even United Kingdom legislation is not foolproof, is it?

Will the legislation bring under the Banking Act 1987 all the bodies which purport to have lost corporate status or which have had that status under the laws of the territory concerned? If it does, that will ensure that the Bank of England will be able to scrutinise them. We know that under the Bank of England's powers there is no possibility of any bank in this country engaging in fraudulent practices—unless, of course, we turn to immediate history and look at the Bank of Credit and Commerce International. Despite all the legislation, the Bank of England has not been able to find out what happened in that case.

Will the granting of corporate status to a bank which is based, let us say, in northern Cyprus and which wishes to trade in this country mean that it will be assumed to come within the terms of our legislation? Would we be

[Mr. Cryer]

establishing corporate status simply for its own convenience, or for ours—it is not clear which it is—and will the bodies corporate be operating under the legislation of their parent state? The position is confused, but the matter is important because if the directors decide to put the company into liquidation, traders in this country who sued the company over a contract would find that the directors had decamped and gone to another state to which we are giving recognition.

If we are not careful, this legislation could be a bonanza for the dubious company operator. Such people operate in northern Cyprus and move to Kashmir and then to some other state, leaving behind them a trail of companies with which they have traded and built up huge debts and then put into voluntary liquidation before decamping elsewhere. That is a possibility under the legislation. I caution the House against accepting the notion that a body corporate with its separate legal identity and personality is of necessity an advantage for traders in this country.

For example, Polly Peck blossomed from northern Cyprus and built up a huge pack of cards which suddenly collapsed. As it happened, all the accounts were in northern Cyprus. The business took over some good United Kingdom companies and that was an example of the result of Government policy. Companies came here to invest and develop. Prestige, the cooking utensils firm, produced a range of well-manufactured kettles, electric toasters and so on. It got into the Polly Peck net and its future was placed in jeopardy because of all the financial machinations.

Therefore, the matter can affect the ordinary man and woman in the street, the worker who spends his or her time in the factory working diligently, increasing productivity and turning out high-quality goods. Under capitalism there is investment elsewhere in a shell company in Outer Turkestan which subsequently collapses and draws all the assets of the properly operating companies in the United Kingdom through its northern Cyprus parent company. The assets of the company are sold to rescue the company from debt in some far-flung place of the sort that I have mentioned. That means that jobs in this country can be placed in jeopardy. Granting blanket corporate status may well disguise the information which people in this country deserve and need.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does my hon. Friend agree that not just jobs but often the pension interests of the people who work for such companies are at risk? It is worrying for someone who has worked for a company for many years and who has accumulated a substantial pension to see a corporate raider coming in and clearing off with the pension funds.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. That is one of the questions that the Minister should answer. If we grant corporate status to a body, will it be covered by this legislation or will such status be granted simply for our own tidy-mindedness towards these companies? If a firm is taken over by a limited liability company calling itself, say the Kashmir Development Corporation, what happens to the pension funds? The Bill, which is short, does not seem to contain any protection for such funds. The Bill provides only "legal personality" for the purposes of the law in the United Kingdom. I am not sure what that means and clause 1 does not make it very clear. If a trading corporation takes over a United Kingdom company—buys the majority shareholding in it—will the pensions and the general trading position of the company be protected?

Ordinary workers who simply aim to do a good job are placed in jeopardy by this world of high finance in which financiers who build up cardboard companies treat the people who work in them as pawns to be discarded when it is convenient. People can also be lured into jobs. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) knows of a concern which claimed to pay wages of £160 a week. When people who flocked to the company had worked there for four weeks the wages immediately dropped to £120 a week. Shortly after that the company went into liquidation. I think that the proprietor decamped to northern Cyprus.

The matter is worrying and I hope that the Minister will be able to provide some answers before we give clause 1 the approval that the Government seeks.

The Bill demonstrates how valuable Parliament is for debating these issues. It is nearly always true that probing during a debate in Parliament reveals more information and subjects matters to proper scrutiny. Therefore, I hope that the Solicitor-General will be able to provide all the answers to the questions that I and my hon. Friends have asked in this important debate.

Although I have spoken ironically in the past, the fact is that the collapse of BCCI, with the consequent devastation of the personal lives of 200,000 people and small businesses facing the prospect of having to sack hundreds of employees, is extremely worrying. BCCI had corporate status. It is true that it did not come from one of the states mentioned in clause 1, but it could be operating from such a state. In Bradford, many of my constituents have been affected by the collapse of BCCI. I have had telephone calls from many people——

9 pm

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman is as aware as I am that the Bill does not relate to the collapse of BCCI. Until now, he has been in interesting and good order, and I am sure that he will continue to be so.

Mr. Cryer: I was simply suggesting that the collapse of BCCI has heightened our awareness of the need to scrutinise the Bill in great detail.

Mr. Skinner: Would it not be a fair point to make that, a week after the collapse of BCCI, with many of my hon. Friend's constituents in Bradford and elsewhere saying that they want compensation for the money that they have lost——

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman is completely out of order. His remarks would have been more appropriate on Second Reading.

Mr. Skinner: The point is that those people say, "Look at that lot down there at Westminster passing retrospective legislation when they can't pass it in order to bail us out." That is the point.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend makes an important point. Clause 1(3) contains the extraordinary phrase:

"Any registration or other thing done at a time before the coming into force of this section shall be regarded as valid if it would have been valid at that time".

That is quite a swingeing power of retrospection.

People who are hammering on the door—almost literally in some cases—of BCCI asking where their money is will look askance at this retrospection when the Governor of the Bank of England and Touche Ross apparently cannot release their accounts to people who are pressing hard. However, I shall not pursue that. It is simply an example given in passing. I hope that I and others will have some answers from the Chancellor of the Exchequer when we meet him tomorrow morning to press him to take action on that important matter.

I hope that the Solicitor-General will give the House some answers tonight to try to ensure the smoother passage of the Bill.

The Solicitor-General: The debate has had an air of nostalgia about it. Light has come into eyes as old battles have been fought again to illustrate, wholly within the bounds of order, points that are relevant to clause 1 of this interesting Bill. They have focused on the question of retrospection and whether the retrospection that is provided for by clause 1(3) falls fairly and squarely within the principles that are well acknowledged and accepted.

A number of hon. Members have joined the debate who, no doubt, had other pressing business earlier when we were discussing the same matters on Second Reading. We welcome the hon. Members for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) and for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett).

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: I was here.

The Solicitor-General: If the hon. Gentleman was here I have done him a grave injustice. I hope that I will not do him another injustice by wondering whether he failed to notice that we were discussing the same points on Second Reading.

Mr. Harry Barnes: Will the Solicitor-General give way?

The Solicitor-General: I shall give way in a moment.

The question of retrospection was extremely well put by the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) when he accepted that it was appropriate in this case. Whether or not it was the case in Clay Cross—some contentions were put forward by the Clay Cross councillors and some found themselves in dispute—there is no dispute here that the Bill seeks to put the law back into the state that everyone believed it to have been in until the matter was queried during recent litigation. Consequently, this is the type of retrospection which the House accepts and which Law Officers from parties of all colours which have governed the country have accepted in the past. That answers the questions asked by the hon. Members for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), for Denton and Reddish and for Derbyshire, North-East.

The hon. Member for Norwood referred to the situation that might arise if certain Soviet socialist republics found themselves no longer part of the Soviet Union. The answer to his question is to be found in clause (1), which states:

"(1) If at any time—

(a) any question arises whether a body which purports to have or, as the case may be, which appears to have lost corporate status under the laws of a territory . . . should or should not be regarded as having legal personality . . . and

(b) it appears that the laws of that territory are at that time applied by a settled court system in that territory".

That question of fact will be focused on in relation to the republic in question. Even if it were not recognised by this country, and found itself in a position similar to that of the countries to which the hon. Member for Norwood referred, such as Taiwan and northern Cyprus, the court would decide the question on fact—depending on whether, at that time, the territory had a settled court system.

The question will be asked whether the territory had a court system that was settled and understood, and in good and sensible operation—notwithstanding that it was not recognised by this country at the time. It might be said, for example, that Taiwan or northern Cyprus——

Mr. Skinner: Or Slovenia.

The Solicitor-General: —or Slovenia have settled court systems. One can think of many other examples.

Question put, That the clause stand part of the Bill:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 167, Noes 39.

Division No. 220] **[9.06 pm**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Butler, Chris
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Livsey, Richard
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector

Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Price, Sir David
Ravian, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rhodes James, Sir Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Nicholas Baker and
Mr. Tom Sackville.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Battle, John
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cryer, Bob
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Haynes, Frank
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Leighton, Ron
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Meale, Alan
Morley, Elliot
Nellist, Dave
Pike, Peter L.
Primarolo, Dawn
Redmond, Martin
Rogers, Allan
Salmond, Alex
Strang, Gavin
Vaz, Keith
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Harry Barnes and
Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2

CITATION, EXTENT AND COMMENCEMENT

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

9.15 pm

Mr. Fraser: May I ask the Solicitor-General a question about subsection (3) of clause 2, which reads:

"This Act shall come into force at the end of the period of two months beginning with the day on which it is passed."

If the Bill intends that the law should be what everyone understood it to be, why the interval of two months? For a period of two months, foreign corporations that thought that they were foreign corporations before the Bill was introduced will no longer be foreign corporations. They will have a ghostly existence. Then they will return to the existence that people thought that they had before this legislation was set in train. I cannot understand why it is necessary to have a gap of two months. Would not it be sensible to table a manuscript amendment on Report to delete subsection (3) from clause 2?

Mr. Harry Barnes: First, I should like to point out to the Solicitor-General that I have been here for the entire proceedings and that the reason why I made the comments that I did during the stand part debate was issues raised during the Second Reading debate by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). He alerted me to various issues which were wholly in order with reference to clause 1(3). I should have been brought to order if my comments had been irrelevant.

Clause 2(2) extends the Bill's provisions to Northern Ireland and I should like an explanation of that. Northern Ireland is usually dealt with in a very peculiar way in the House. It is usually dealt with by Orders in Council and Northern Ireland Ministers are brought in. Under normal circumstances, clause 2 would have said that the Bill did not extend to Northern Ireland and an Order in Council would have been made at a later stage. For example, the issue could have been dealt with by the Northern Ireland Committee in which during a recent debate on electricity privatisation the Government were defeated by 17 votes to 12. That would have given an opportunity for a fuller debate and for deeper consideration of the Bill as it affects Northern Ireland.

I realise that Northern Ireland Members have had the opportunity through the procedures of the House to table an amendment to clause 2(2) and also to raise the matter now if they are discontented. I believe that at least three Northern Ireland Members voted in support of clause 1, so I presume that they find little wrong with the measures as they affect Northern Ireland. The problem sometimes arises that hon. Members are alerted to matters by coming to the Chamber and listening to other hon. Members—as I did to my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South—and then becoming interested in the debate and aware of the possibilities. That has not occurred in this case with regard to Northern Ireland Members but that is not necessarily something for which to criticise them as there is a host of measures sweeping its way through the House.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: More often than not legislation contains a regulation-making power which extends it to Northern Ireland. Often that regulation-making power extends to the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands. Can my hon. Friend explain how the Bill will be extended to such areas within the territorial waters of the United Kingdom and whether the Bill contains a regulatory power to allow the Bill to be extended in that way?

Mr. Barnes: That is an appropriate question which I am sure the Solicitor-General will answer because we are discussing the Bill's application to tax havens. Therefore, the question whether the powers will apply to those areas is of considerable significance. Indeed, it might be one of the most important considerations in tonight's debate, although some important measures have already been discussed.

The Bill emerged from another place where there are a number of peers who previously represented Northern Irish constituencies in the House. I do not know whether at any stage there was an input in another place regarding Northern Ireland, but this is the first mention of the Bill's

extension to Northern Ireland during tonight's debate. I can see that there may be some arguments in favour of such an extension and in favour of our talking about a United Kingdom measure rather than about a Great Britain measure because some of the corporations concerned may operate within both areas.

It would also be interesting to know whether the legislation fits in with legislation in other countries. It is the general practice that the law operates in such a way that, even if states are not recognised, the corporations that operate there will be. That may have particular relevance to the position in Northern Ireland. The legislation in Ireland may have a connection with the Bill. Indeed, this might be a matter for the Anglo-Irish Agreement and may have already been discussed through such avenues. No Northern Ireland Minister is present tonight, but I am sure that the Solicitor-General will take up those points.

The Solicitor-General: The Bill is receiving diligent scrutiny and I am happy to answer the questions. I apologise to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes). I am sorry that I did not notice him in the Chamber and I am glad to have been able to have answered his questions twice.

As the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) may recall from his days as a Minister, two months is the normal period for the coming into effect of a Bill. However, the hon. Gentleman has a good point in that as the Bill is retrospective for the reasons discussed, there will be a ghost period in which we wait for it to come into force and then say that it has always been in force. It does no harm. As the hon. Gentleman will recall, the notion of the two-month period, which I sometimes think is rather unnecessary—but such settled conventions last a long time—is to allow the knowledge of the Bill to go round the United Kingdom before it comes into force.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does the Solicitor-General accept that for a long time legislation came into force on Royal Assent? The practice of it coming into force later came when so much was done by secondary legislation, with the consequent need to prepare regulations. Surely if the legislation is to come into effect without having to have secondary legislation, there is no reason why there should be a two-month delay from Royal Assent. The fact that the legislation applies would be more likely to get publicity with Royal Assent than it would two months later, when people have lost track of it.

The Solicitor-General: As so often, the hon. Gentleman makes points with which one is inclined to agree. This is a matter of convention. There are arguments both ways, and he has put the other argument. I understand it.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East asked about Northern Ireland. He asked whether the legislation could not be introduced through the other method. The answer is that we are dealing with commercial relationships which were believed to be well established and are to be put back into the position in which they are as though they had always been well established. Consequently, it is unnecessary to leave it to a further legislative process. There is no dispute in the Committee that that is a wise thing to do, so the idea that it should be done under the one trouble is sensible.

Points were made about other countries. Other countries may have to meet the problem if they have common law systems. Australia has already met the problem and has legislated in a similar way. I hope that that is illuminating.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: I had hoped that there would be a brief mention of the position of the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands. The way in which British legislation applies to those areas is complicated. As I understand it, more often than not it is applied through a regulating power, or on the face of the legislation. As we suffer somewhat from corporate bodies operating from the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands, the matter needs to be clear. Will the Solicitor-General clarify whether the legislation will apply to the Isle of Man and to the Channel Islands? If it will not apply, why is it not necessary for it to do so?

Mr. Cryer: The Solicitor-General's response on the question of allowing two months before the Act comes into force is not adequate. On that basis, just because of a convention the delay could last months and months—not just two months, but six months. The Government would not mind because the retrospective provision would fill the gap. It is extraordinary that we are legislating on the basis that, as the Solicitor-General explained in his Second Reading speech, the Bill is necessary to clarify the legal position. Indeed, we are rushing through all the stages of the Bill tonight. There will be no mature consideration. We are having Second Reading, Committee stage, Report stage and Third Reading in one evening, along with several other Bills. That is an abuse of the House.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): They want to nod it through.

9.30 pm

Mr. Cryer: As my hon. Friend says, the Government are disgruntled because my hon. Friend the Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) and our Back Benchers are giving the Bill a searching examination. The Government had cleared the decks for a June election, but now that they are sinking in the opinion polls they have put off the election and are finding bits and bats of legislation that should have been carried out on a planned basis. They are having to trample on parliamentary rights with a junior Law Officer's jackbooted heel to force that legislation through. It is not good enough.

The Solicitor-General's response is unsatisfactory. He said that the Bill was vital and urgently needed because the legal position was unclear. Given that, it is extraordinary that clause 2(3) allows two months' delay, apparently for the information to circulate. The Solicitor-General said that the two months was stipulated in order to allow people to find out about the Bill. How many companies will be involved? How many quasi-states are there which are not recognised by this country? Surely we should have some idea. Will there be 20 letters, 30 letters or 100 letters? Will the details be published in the *London Gazette*? That will not take two months. Indeed, the retrospective element shrewdly pointed out by my hon. Friend the Member for Norwood means that it will not matter whether the Government are efficient. The retrospective legislation will sweep it all through, no matter what period is specified.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: My hon. Friend is the distinguished Chairman of the Select Committee on

[Mr. Andrew F. Bennett]

Statutory Instruments, so he will be aware that one of the principles always put forward by that Committee is that, whenever possible, one should be able to find out what is happening by studying what appears on the face of legislation, whether primary or secondary. If the Bill was not to take effect from Royal Assent, would it not have been better if the Government had specified a date? Then, whoever picked up the Act could read that it would come into force on 1 September or 1 October, rather than having to check the parliamentary record to find out when it had received Royal Assent and then add two months to that date.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend is right. The timing is not clear. Often we do not know when Bills receive Royal Assent. At some stage, Mr. Speaker reads out a list of Bills that have received Royal Assent on a certain day, and that list is included in *Hansard*. That does not make the timing clear. People have to look up the date in *Hansard* and calculate two months from that date. Furthermore, the index to *Hansard* is not published for several weeks, if not several months, after the publication of the weekly edition. Almost certainly, by the time the index is published so that people will easily be able to look up the date of Royal Assent, the two months will have passed. The notion that two months' delay will give an easy opportunity for publicity is not true. People will not easily be able to find out the date of Royal Assent and calculate from that the date on which the Bill will come into operation. The procedure is curious; my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) has made a good point.

Mr. Skinner: Does my hon. Friend want to speculate on whether there is a connection between the fact that the Bill will not come into force until two months after the date on which it is passed and a possible impending general election? Has this been done deliberately? Do the Government have plans afoot? After we pack in here on 25 July, they will have two months in which to put out their propaganda in the Tory media, and there will be no opposition in Parliament because Parliament will not be sitting. Is it not just conceivable that there is a connection with an early election? Does my hon. Friend have a comment to make on that?

Mr. Cryer: The Bill may give some sort of status and legal personality to a number of dubious organisations that are about to erupt in scandal. Perhaps the Government want to be able to say, if that happens, that the Bill is not yet law because they were deliberately allowing a breathing space to that they could weed out such organisations. Of course, that is highly speculative and I would not want to go too far down that road.

If the Minister wants to allow an opportunity for publicity as opposed to simply following the convention it would have been far better to issue a one-sheet statutory instrument saying that the Act, as it will then be, comes into force on a certain date. Such a document would be obtainable from HMSO and would be listed in the index of statutory instruments. People would know where to look for it, and the position would be clear and unequivocal. Not even this Government could charge a substantial sum for one sheet of paper; indeed, I should have thought that they could issue such a document free of charge. Under the terms of general primary legislation giving that authority to Ministers, such statutory instruments do not even have to be laid before Parliament; they can simply be issued.

If the Minister is serious about informing people about the Bill—incidentally, I am all for legislation, both primary and secondary, being known of and understood, and all for the date at which it will start to operate being made clear—that is the course that he should take. I do not think that the route that he has chosen in clause 2 is satisfactory.

The Solicitor-General: It is nice to be able to give what I think will be a thoroughly helpful answer to the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). This may have escaped his attention, but there will not be too much difficulty, when he buys his copy of the Act, in knowing the date from which the two months run because the date of Royal Assent is on the front of the printed Act.

In answer to the question that the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) asked about the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands, they are not covered because they are not in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Haynes: I think that there is a bit of a fiddle going on here. That is why the Opposition need to scrutinise the Bill. It is all right for the Solicitor-General: when he stands up at the Dispatch Box, he represents the Government. Irrespective of all the arguments advanced by my hon. Friends tonight, he is the Government here tonight, and he knows exactly what is going on.

There is another point about this. Look at the Conservative Benches. That is where the decisions are made—over on that side of the House, not here. We are the Opposition and we have to scrutinise legislation such as this. If we had not had a proper Committee stage, that lot over there would have just slipped it all through and nobody would have been any the wiser. The fact that the Opposition have challenged the Bill—particularly this clause and the previous one—means that we are now getting to know what is all about. What disturbs me is that when the Division is called, Conservative Members will come out of the woodwork or from the dinner table and go into the Lobby without knowing what they are voting for. That is what we are saying.

Mr. Skinner: When I came into the House earlier, I saw gangs of Tory Members outside the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre. There were also about 20 cameras there and the Tory Members were clamouring and queuing, waiting to say what a wonderful conference the economic summit has been. They wanted to say what had been agreed previously—all those bland statements about apple pie and motherhood. That is why they are not in the Chamber. They do not care about democracy or about this place. All they are worried about is trying to get on the box to say that their grey Prime Minister has been able to chair a meeting—big deal. That is what they are up to and why they are not in here. But they will come in when there is a vote—which there will have to be—and the Tory Whips will be on the door, kicking them in, saying, "Get in here and vote for the Tory party"—and they call it democracy.

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Sir Paul Dean): I am sure that when the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) replies to that intervention he will remember that we are debating clause 2 stand part.

Mr. Haynes: I am surprised that you said that to me, Sir Paul. You know me, Sir Paul, and I know you. I have never abused the Chair yet. I would admit to it if this were the first time that I was abusing the Chair; but I am not, so I am surprised at you rising to challenge me in that way. I do not travel the road that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is travelling tonight, although I agree with most of what he said. He made a first-class speech on retrospection before you took the Chair, Sir Paul. But this is a different ball game and I am seizing my opportunity because I have seen what is happening tonight and it happens far too often.

Dr. Godman: Clause 2(2) states that the Act extends to Northern Ireland. As a Scottish Member, I think that it should read, "This Act extends to Scotland" also. I asked the Solicitor-General a question about this earlier. It is important in any Act that due consideration is given to the status of Scottish law.

Mr. Haynes: I gave way to my hon. Friend many times in the Standing Committee that considered another Bill that also involved the Solicitor-General. I would give way any time to my hon. Friend because he is always bothered about the Scottish end of things. He is right—I did not hear the Solicitor-General mention Scotland, but, having heard my hon. Friend's intervention, perhaps the right hon. and learned Gentleman will rise to put him in the picture.

Dr. Godman: The right hon. and learned Gentleman, with his characteristic courtesy, gave me the assurance earlier that the Bill, and especially its concept of legal personality, is wholly admissible in the Court of Session —in other words, in Scottish law.

Mr. Haynes: I do not understand my hon. Friend because he always talks about the Solicitor-General like that—he is always saying nice things about him. I do not understand it because some of the things that the Solicitor-General does on behalf of the Government are awful, wicked things—and this is one tonight. There is no doubt about it. People outside do not know exactly what is going on in relation to clause 2, which is why we are having this debate to scrutinise the provisions properly——

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Haynes: Here comes my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover. I had better give way to him.

Mr. Skinner: I have got an idea—[HON. MEMBERS: "No".] Perhaps it would be a good idea in June or mid-summer to transfer our debates on to the Terrace, which is where they are all boozing. Before I entered the Chamber, I did a check and there are about 200 Tory Members out there. They talk about speaking to the masses. We have about five or six Tory Back-Bench Members here in the Chamber. Quite a number of our people are here but others are engaged on different issues. Many Tory Members are down on the Terrace.

9.45 pm

We should put it to the appropriate Committee that the House of Commons Chamber should be shifted on to the Terrace. The debate there might be different. We could have semi-drunk people joining in. We could have television too. The whole thing could be a sort of elongated "Spitting Image". When I think about it, there is a whole range of possibilities. Round about June, when the weather changes, we could shift the debate to the Terrace.

Of course, the Speaker's House is on the end of the Terrace. So he would not need to bother about being in the Chair. He could poke his head out of his first-floor window and be in charge of the proceedings. It has endless possibilities. All those who want to booze could booze at the same time as they reckon to be listening to speeches. They could have a bookie's run because the Tories have a bookie's runner. They could take bets.

Then the boats would come by and every so often we could change places. Just think of it. Obviously, no one has thought about it before. When the proceedings on Bills go late into the night, we could have all-night sittings on the Terrace. It is not for me, but obviously many people prefer the Terrace to coming here.

Mr. Haynes: I shall not travel down that road, Sir Paul. One thing is for sure. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover has let me know where all the Tories are. They are out there on the Terrace when they should be in here. If Mr. Speaker poked his head out of the first-floor window, he would see them all there instead of in here. I hope that he takes that into consideration when he calls Members in the Chamber. They are swanning around out there instead of being in here.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover makes a good point. He could not stop himself laughing when he was making it, but it is important and it is true.

Dr. Godman: When I referred to the clause and its failure to mention Scotland, I paid a compliment to the Solicitor-General. I took exception to my hon. Friend's response to my remarks about the right hon. and learned Gentleman. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has a comprehensive knowledge of Scots law. When I put questions to him about Scots law, I always receive a reasonable answer. I am anxious to put the record straight with regard to my hon. Friend's response.

Mr. Haynes: Here we go, a bit more flannel for the Solicitor-General.

Dr. Godman: It is not flannel.

Mr. Haynes: It is. I want to make another point now. The right hon. and learned Gentleman is representing the Government. He is introducing a Bill in this House on behalf of the United Kingdom. He has not said that he is not doing it for Scotland. He is doing it for the United Kingdom in this place. My hon. Friend is challenging the Solicitor-General, if my hon. Friend only realises it.

Dr. Godman: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Haynes: Wait a minute. I have not finished yet. There is something else that I want to say. I remember when my hon. Friend was a real disciplinarian. I suggest that he is needed on the other side of the House to discipline that lot. He is an ex-red-cap. You know what a red-cap is, Sir Paul. He is a real disciplinarian. I have seen him in action. He appears to be nice and gentle in this place but I have seen him on the other job. He can be really vicious. We talk about the glasshouse and that kind of thing. That is where they had red-caps. But the point is that he is taking me away from my drift. I did not want to abuse the Chair.

Dr. Godman: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Haynes: He is at it again.

Dr. Godman: May I point out to the youthful hon. Gentlemen in this House who have not done national service that a red-cap is someone serving with the corps of Royal Military police?

Mr. Haynes: I think that hon. Gentlemen knew that.

Dr. Godman: I am sure that they did not. The Royal Military police is made up of a fine group of people—decent, honourable and fair-minded. My question to my hon. Friend has nothing to do with the Royal Military police and the fact that I may or may not have put people into the glasshouse once upon a time. I have to put these questions to the Solicitor-General because we do not have his equivalent legal representative from the Scottish Office on the Government Front Bench. Occasionally, I have to ask him questions, as I have done on clause 2. We do not have a Law Officer sitting on the Treasury Bench representing the Scottish Office. That is a matter for serious regret.

Mr. Haynes: My hon. Friend is correct, but the Solicitor-General is not in a great hurry to answer the point. I would give way to him willingly if he was prepared to answer the question. I remember all the questions that my hon. Friend asked him upstairs on the Children Bill, and the Solicitor-General answered them all. My hon. Friend was right to put them on behalf of Scotland. Today, it seems that the Solicitor-General is not prepared to come to the Dispatch Box to answer my hon. Friend's questions.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley) *rose*——

Mr. Haynes: Now my hon. Friend is at it. I give way.

Mr. Redmond: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I am having a little difficulty following his drift, as it varies. It may well be that Scotland is not mentioned in the Bill because we are getting used to the idea that Scotland will drift away from England. The parliamentary draftsmen could well have started introducing legislation which will not need to be altered when Scotland gets devolution. The Government may well intend to spring that surprise on us. Perhaps the Solicitor-General will provide clarification.

Will my hon. Friend comment on the issue of retrospection? I am a relatively new lad in parliamentary terms and one seeks knowledge all the time. Perhaps the Solicitor-General could comment on this, but I understand that there is great difficulty with retrospective legislation. I thought that implementation had to be from the date on which legislation became law and, obviously, got Royal Assent. I can think of many instances in the past when —*[Interruption.]* I am sorry, Sir Paul, I thought that you were calling me to order.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. I am so sorry, I did not intend to interrupt the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Redmond: I am so grateful, Sir Paul. Retrospection is important, especially when it brings benefits to the general public. When a glaring anomaly arises we are always told that retrospection cannot apply and that we must wait for legislation before it can be put right and benefit can be given, yet this is retrospective legislation. I have listened carefully to the comments made. Perhaps my hon. Friend, from his great experience of the House, can tell us why it is important to include retrospection in this case when the Government have refused to do so in the past in respect of other cases.

Mr. Haynes: I get the drift of my hon. Friend's question. My hon. Friend also witnessed how nice Sir Paul can be when he made his mistake just now. My hon. Friend must realise that the Government are at it again. They are looking after their friends—this is what it is all about. They want to introduce legislation that will enable them to go back to help their friends who pour money into the coffers of the Conservative party. It is retrospection in their interests—that is what it is all about.

Mr. Redmond *rose*——

Mr. Hayes: I am trying to answer my hon. Friend's question.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover made a first-class speech on retrospection that my hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) probably missed. He made it clear how the Government were looking after their rich Conservative friends at the expense of the ordinary working-class folk of this nation. My hon. Friend made a first-class contribution and I hung on every word he said. His speech is my response to my hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley and I am sorry that he missed it.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): My hon. Friend knows that I do not intervene often, but I believe that he has done a grave injustice to the Solicitor-General. I do not believe that my hon. Friend has taken into account that the Solicitor-General is probably grossly overworked. I do not want to do the right hon. and learned Gentleman an injustice, but there are only 10 Tory Members in the whole of Scotland. That is 10 out of 73 hon. Members. Instead of the Scots having their own Solicitor-General or equivalent advocate, the right hon. and learned Gentleman, poor man, is having to do two jobs. He must act as Solicitor-General in England and take on the equivalent post on someone's behalf in Scotland because the Tories just do not have enough Members in that country. My hon. Friend should take into account that after the next general election there probably will not even be those 10 Tories left.

Mr. Haynes: My hon. Friend is quite correct. However, he must realise that the Solicitor-General was party to what happened in Scotland in the general election when they lost those Conservative seats. He supported the policy that they fought in that election and he was party to the campaign document. It is his own fault if he is having to do two jobs at the same time. However, my hon. Friend was right to raise that point.

Mr. Skinner: The Minister for Sport has just come in.

Mr. Hayes: Well, that makes a difference, but he is outside the Chamber as far as I can judge. He is on the other side of Sir Paul.

Mr. Redmond: I asked my hon. Friend about retrospection in view of his great experience. Can he enlighten me why it is so desperately important in this legislation when the Government have argued in the past that retrospection cannot apply because it is not the sort of thing that one does? They have argued that one can legislate for the future only, not the past.

We used to have a different name for red-caps when I was in the Army and it was not as complimentary. The Government could be seeking to introduce this alteration to stop a trickle turning into a flood. After all, Lord King has announced that he is going to stop contributing to the Conservative party. This legislation may seek to rectify the balance. I hope that my hon. Friend can give me the benefit of his great experience and enlighten me as to why retrospection needs to apply in this case.

Mr. Haynes: I have two things to say to my hon. Friend. First, on clause 1 we had a full debate on retrospection, but we were never given a satisfactory answer at the Dispatch Box. Secondly, as I said at the beginning of my contribution on this clause, the Government are rushing the Bill through in the interests of their friends. Indeed, they wanted to nod it through without a debate. We have forced them to debate it because we want to scrutinise it properly so that people understand what is going on.

Mr. Redmond: I apologise for the fact that I was not here at the beginning of this debate. I can be in only one place at a time and I had previous meetings, but I am pleased that I have joined the debate. Given the tributes that have been paid to the Solicitor-General, by an hon. Member who was a red-cap, I am concerned——

It being Ten o'clock, The CHAIRMAN *left the Chair to report progress and ask leave to sit again.*

Committee report progress.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Motion made, and Question put,

That, at this day's sitting, the Foreign Corporations Bill *[Lords]*, the Water Industry Bill *[Lords]*, the Water Resources Bill *[Lords]*, the Statutory Water Companies Bill *[Lords]*, the Land Drainage Bill *[Lords]*, the Water Consolidation (Consequential Provisions) Bill *[Lords]*, the Deer Bill *[Lords]*, the Statute Law Revision (Isle of Man) Bill *[Lords]*, the Agricultural Holdings (Scotland) Bill *[Lords]* and the Lords Amendments to the Coal Mining Subsidence Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour. —*[Mr. Wood.]*

The House divided: Ayes 171, Noes 50.

Division No. 221] **[10 pm**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Butler, Chris
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Livsey, Richard
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meale, Alan
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Tim Boswell.

NOES

Armstrong, Hilary
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Battle, John
Bermingham, Gerald
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Callaghan, Jim
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Dixon, Don
Duffy, Sir A. E. P.
Eastham, Ken
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Galloway, George
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Haynes, Frank
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*

Morley, Elliot
Nellist, Dave
O'Hara, Edward
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redmond, Martin
Rogers, Allan
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Strang, Gavin
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Andrew F. Bennett and
Mr. Harry Barnes.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Foreign Corporations Bill *[Lords]*

Again considered in Committee.

Question again proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Redmond: On a point of order, Sir Paul. Prior to the Division I started to ask my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) a question. May I be allowed to complete it?

The First Deputy Chairman: The hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) has the Floor. It is a matter for him.

Mr. Haynes: I have given way to my hon. Friend. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Redmond: On a point of order, Sir Paul. Is it in order for Conservative Members and for Ministers to make threats? Is that not intimidation?

The First Deputy Chairman: No point of order arises.

Mr. Redmond: This is an important point. Glorious tributes have been paid to the Solicitor-General about his capabilities. In view of all his experience and knowledge, why has he not clarified matters? Either my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield or the Solicitor-General is correct, but they cannot both be correct. Will the Solicitor-General clarify the issue?

Mr. Haynes: Before I come to what we are talking about, I want to say something. A lot of public school yobs have come in. I was referring to them not being here, but they are here now and just hark at them. We have had a nice quiet debate until now. It is high time that they went back to the Terrace where they came from instead of causing problems in here. You and I, Sir Paul, were doing all right until we had the Division. I see that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover agrees. My hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) keeps asking me the same question, but I have already told him that the Solicitor-General has not yet spoken from the Dispatch Box to answer that question. He asked me two questions. I cannot answer for my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman). He must answer for himself about the nice things that he said about the Solicitor-General.

The Solicitor-General is putting the case for the Government. He has not done a good job tonight. I must repeat to my hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley because he keeps forgetting that we said right at the beginning that the Government were trying to slip the Bill through on the nod. But we have decided to scrutinise the Bill properly in the interests of those people outside who are being fiddled. I shall repeat what I said earlier. The Government are fiddling on this debate.

Mr. Keith Speed (Ashford): I for one, and perhaps others, would be happy for the House not to go into recess a week tomorrow but to go through until 1 August.

10.15 pm

Mr. Haynes: That is the best suggestion that I have heard from the Government Benches tonight. That would give us the opportunity to scrutinise things properly. The Government are always slipping things through on the nod. I said it earlier, and I shall say it again—even Conservative Members do not know what is going on. I said that there is a right old fiddle going on here by the Government and there bloomin' well is.

Mr. Fraser: On a point of order, Sir Paul. Within the hearing of the Chair and certainly several other Members, the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key), from a sedentary position while my hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley was speaking said——

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): The hon Gentleman was not here.

Mr. Fraser: I was sitting here.

Within the hearing of the House, the Under-Secretary of State said, "I am judging his City Challenge in the morning." He clearly implied that his judgment about the City Challenge would be influenced not by the merits of the submission but by the conduct of my hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley during this debate. Is it proper to intimidate a fellow Member of Parliament who is exercising his right to speak in an important debate?

The First Deputy Chairman: I am sure that no hon. Member is subject to intimidation. While I am on my feet I remind the Committee that we have had a good run on clause 2. I have been tolerant, allowing remarks which are not strictly in order. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman whom I am about to call will address his remarks clearly to clause 2 stand part.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Sir Paul. I share your view that it is difficult to intimidate hon. Members, but if an hon. Member was intimidated by a threat from a Minister to withhold money, depriving inner cities that are in urgent need, it would simply necessitate a letter to the Speaker to see whether a breach of privilege had taken place. That Minister would have to go before the Select Committee on Privileges to defend his attempted intimidation.

The First Deputy Chairman: Sometimes it helps if the occupant of the Chair is a little deaf, and I am experiencing a little deafness at the moment.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Further to that point of order, Sir Paul. As there is a strong feeling that some local authorities will be losers, would it not be helpful if the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment went to the Dispatch Box to make it absolutely clear that he did not intend any threat? You may not have heard his remark, Sir Paul, but it was certainly audible on these Benches. It is important that it should be made clear that what is anyway a pretty unfair allocation of money will be dealt with extremely fairly, and that no account will be taken of the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond).

The First Deputy Chairman: I think that it would be wise if the Committee continued with the debate.

Mr. Redmond: On a point of order, Sir Paul. I accept entirely that you did not hear the remark made by the Under-Secretary of State, and I am sure that he made it in jest. If that is the case, one must accept also that there will be no penalty tomorrow in respect of the initiative.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Sir Paul. As you know, there is always a precedent, and I recall that when I addressed the House some years ago in regard to grants that the Greater London council was handing out, I mentioned that if any Conservative Members voted against the general powers Bill that the GLC was promoting, county hall would have to consider carefully grants and schemes relating to the constituencies that those Conservative Members represented.

I thought that was a genuine point, but I then found myself the target of some fairly nasty comments from Conservative Members, and the matter was referred as a matter of privilege. I subsequently had to apologise to the House for suggesting that if hon. Members voted in a particular way, they might put their constituents at a disadvantage. My hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) appears to have been intimidated by the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, in the same way that I allegedly intimidated Conservative Members on that previous occasion. It would help the progress of business if the Under-Secretary of State would make it clear to my hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley that no intimidation was meant.

The First Deputy Chairman: If there is any suggestion of a breach of privilege, it is for the hon. Member concerned to write to Mr. Speaker, who will give the matter serious consideration.

Dr. Godman: I will be grateful, Sir Paul, if you will rule out of order any further references to the fact that I was a red-cap. The fact that I served with the Royal Military police—honourably, I hope—has nothing to do with the clause stand part debate. I hope that will be the end of it. The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) can be a bit of a nuisance. The corps of military police is a fine body of service men and women, and it was an honour to serve in it.

Mr. Tony Banks: Rubbish.

Dr. Godman: That remark comes from someone who does not know one end of a parade ground from another, or what RSM means.

Mr. Cryer: Will my hon. Friend allow me to intervene?

Dr. Godman: Only if my hon. Friend's intervention relates to the Bill, not to red-caps.

Mr. Cryer: Certainly not. Is my hon. Friend aware that during the last Environment questions the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment shouted across the Chamber at me that he was also examining the claim for Bradford in the City Challenge. My hon. Friend the Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) said that the City Challenge was nothing more than local authority bingo: 10 local authorities would be awarded some money, and 15 had been selected as local authorities in need. The comments of Ministers, which have caused concern in the House, have not gone unheeded elsewhere.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. I am sure that the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) will not be led astray by his hon. Friend. He is nodding in confirmation.

Dr. Godman: It is difficult to lead astray someone who has served two years in the Royal Military police.

As we have no Scottish Solicitor-General, let me say very seriously to the right hon. and learned Gentleman—who always listens attentively to my comments, and who knows that, although I am not a lawyer, I strongly support our unique Scottish law and legal institutions—that I do not understand why the clause does not mention Scotland. Subsection (2) states:

"This Act extends to Northern Ireland."

I should like to see another subsection, stating: "This Act extends to Scotland."

The Bill could have important consequences for the administration of Scottish law. English Members of Parliament seem anxious to ensure that English law has primacy over Scottish law, especially in relation to commercial affairs. I reject that view, but some Scottish lawyers have some sympathy with it, particularly when it is seen in the framework of European Community law as it impinges on commercial contracts and relationships. Let me plead with the Solicitor-General, if I can catch his ear——

Mr. Skinner: While my hon. Friend is waiting for the Solicitor-General to get rid of his Parliamentary Private Secretary, who has been sent off to try to get some information to answer my hon. Friend's question, let me give my view.

I think that one reason why Scotland is not included in clause 2 is the Government's nervousness about representations in connection with the Western Isles and its money. The Government do not want my hon. Friend, or anyone else in Scotland, to make retrospective representations—for this Bill is all about retrospection. They do not want my hon. Friend to use the clause to say, "What about some money, retrospectively, for local authorities that took the advice of the Bank of England and the Secretary of State for the Environment when the circular was issued, and, as a result, are up to their necks in debt?" They fear that my hon. Friend and others may say that what can apply to the City of London retrospectively—that is what the debate is all about—should apply to the Western Isles, and all the other local authorities that are in the same position.

Northern Ireland is included because this is a "John De Lorean" clause, which takes account of everything that might happen in Northern Ireland so that, in future—retrospectively—the Government will be able to bail out some of the spivs they invite to build here and, supposedly, create jobs there. As a result, however, they rip off the Tory Government and put the money in their pockets. That is what it is all about.

Dr. Godman: I want my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover to listen attentively to my reply. I know the Western Isles extremely well. I have a great deal of affection for the people of the Western Isles. The director of finance, however, has——

10.30 pm

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): On a point of order, Sir Paul. With all due respect to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), the Bill deals with companies that are registered in countries that are not recognised by the United Kingdom. The Bank of Credit and Commerce International is registered in Luxembourg, which is a country that we recognise. The hon. Gentleman's comments relate to matters that are outside the scope of the Bill and are, therefore, irrelevant.

Mr. Redmond: Further to that point of order, Sir Paul. The Bank of England was on the verge of allowing that bank to establish itself in this country. Therefore, the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) is correct. I hope that you will allow my hon. Friend to develop his argument.

The First Deputy Chairman: That bank is certainly not relevant to the consideration of the Bill, or this clause. However, the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) is doing his best to keep in order.

Mr. Cryer: May I ask for your guidance, Sir Paul. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) referred to Mr. John Z. De Lorean. You may recall that Mr. De Lorean was persuaded to go to Northern Ireland, unfortunately, instead of investing in Puerto Rico, which is a state that may not be recognised by this Government. Therefore, it would surely fall within the scope of the Bill.

The First Deputy Chairman: That is not in question at the moment. Let us listen to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow, who has the Floor.

Dr. Godman: Thank you, Sir Paul. During the eight and a half years that I have been a Member of Parliament, I have never encountered so many points of order during a speech. Despite the point of order raised by the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind), what I was saying is very important: the Bill does not refer to Scotland. The hon. Gentleman is an English lawyer, and he does not give a damn for Scots law. I am concerned about the lack of wisdom shown by the director of finance for the Western Isles in investing such a huge sum of money in such a disreputable outfit, but I am deeply sorry for the people he is supposed to serve.

I should be extremely grateful if the Solicitor-General extended the clause in the way I suggested. It would lead to the avoidance of doubt. Some of my constituents go to the public libraries in Greenock and Port Glasgow to examine Acts of Parliament. They may ask why this short measure, which mentions Northern Ireland, does not mention Scotland. During the proceedings on another Bill, the Solicitor-General gave me an assurance, which I was perfectly willing to accept, about the people of Scotland.

A number of my hon. Friends have criticised the Solicitor-General concerning Scots law and, in doing so, have commented on the fact that there is no Solicitor-General for Scotland. With respect to my hon. Friends, I have to say that they display a perhaps understandable ignorance of the legal administration in Scotland. We have Mr. Alan Rodger, QC, some of whose mail, incidentally, is directed to my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers). I do not think that the initials QC appear after the name of my hon. Friend. Mr. Alan Rodger is a very fine gentleman, with a superb legal mind in the best traditions of that ancient office. I have some support—if not from my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), from the Solicitor-General, who knows how serious the issue is.

Mr. Hind: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Godman: No; this is too important for facetious interventions.

I have found Mr. Alan Rodger, QC, extremely helpful in all matters.

Mr. Hind: Read the Bill.

Dr. Godman: I have read the Bill. There is no mention of Scotland, but there is mention of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Alan Rodger is extremely helpful to hon. Members from different Scottish parties, but he is not a member of the House. There are no Scottish Law Officers in the House, so we are denied the opportunity, which is given to all English Members, to cross-examine a Law Officer about administration. We do not have that privilege, and that is a matter of considerable concern.

We are denied the opportunity on the Floor of the House and in the Scottish Grand Committee to question senior legal officers who represent the Crown. That is a major failure. I would even have accepted willingly the promotion of the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir. N. Fairbairn) to the post which he once held. It is absolutely essential that the administration of Scottish justice is protected by a Scottish Law Officer from the Government Dispatch Box.

Despite sedentary interventions from—I think—a solicitor who passed his examinations perhaps 30 years or 40 years ago, I tell the Solicitor-General that Scottish Members of Parliament should have the right to ensure that laws such as this—*[Interruption.]* I am not a lawyer, but if clause 2 were extended to read, "This Act extends to Scotland", the right hon. Gentleman would be doing my constituents a service.

I welcome the numerous foreign companies who have invested in Scotland, and I only wish that more would come to Greenock and Port Glasgow instead of going elsewhere. No matter how fine and honourable Mr. Alan Rodger is—and he undoubtedly is—in the absence of a Solicitor-General for Scotland in the House we come to the Solicitor-General to ask questions.

That has happened during the proceedings on the Child Support Bill, which is not an English Bill. It has provisions that are specific to the Scottish legal system, as the right hon. Gentleman readily acknowledged in Committee. There was no Scottish Law Officer to sit alongside him, so two officials from the Scottish Office were sent from St. Andrew's house to give him assistance, although I am not sure that he needed it.

I believe that an amendment should be made to the Bill to extend it to Scotland. My constituents and people throughout Scotland deserve no less.

The Solicitor-General: We have had an interesting debate, and I have replied once to part of it. It has been extended, and the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes), who is no longer in his place, made a long and interesting contribution. Now the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) has asked a pertinent question about the extent of the Bill which raises an interesting question concerning our conventions.

As the hon. Gentleman knows, I am not a Scot, although I am half a Scot, my father having come south when he was 19. Our convention in relation to Scotland is that, if a Bill is silent on whether it mentions Scotland, it covers Scotland. If it is only to cover England and Wales, it has to state that specifically. Those who have Scottish pride in their hearts or ancestry may find that a satisfactory way in which to deal with matters. Likewise, it is our convention that, if the Bill is to extend to Northern Ireland, it expressly mentions the fact. I hope that that is of assistance to the hon. Gentleman.

This has been a wide-ranging debate and we have focused on a number of questions relating to clause 2, which I commend to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Bill reported, without amendment; not amended, considered; read the Third time, and passed.

WATER INDUSTRY BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time tomorrow.

WATER RESOURCES BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time tomorrow.

STATUTORY WATER COMPANIES BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time tomorrow.

LAND DRAINAGE BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time tomorrow.

WATER CONSOLIDATION (CONSEQUENTIAL PROVISIONS) BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time tomorrow.

DEER BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time tomorrow.

STATUTE LAW REVISION (ISLE OF MAN) BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time tomorrow.

AGRICULTURAL HOLDINGS (SCOTLAND) BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time tomorrow.

Coal Mining Subsidence Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 28

PAYMENTS FOR TENANT FARMERS

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 21, line 27, leave out ("Subject to subsection (2) below")

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this we may take Lords amendments Nos. 2, 3, 4 and 10.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 38

REIMBURSEMENT OF SUCCESSFUL CLAIMANTS' EXPENSES

Lords amendment: No. 6, in page 32, line 23, leave out ("three") and insert ("four").

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we will take Lords amendment No. 7.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): May I ask the Minister to explain the amendment to us, as I should like to develop my argument on it?

10.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): By all means.

I think that the hon. Gentleman will agree that the amendment is uncontroversial, but I shall certainly explain the thinking behind it. As the hon. Gentleman, who was on the Standing Committee, knows, the Bill that left the House provided that a claimant could recover only those costs incurred in the three years before the making of a claim. We have reflected further on that and we believe that, at least in respect of records of condition, three years may be considered inadequate.

I said during earlier stages of our proceedings on the Bill that, because the standard of repair required in the Bill is to be to the claimant's reasonable satisfaction, rather than taking the property back to pre-damage condition, an accurate record of the pre-damage condition is certainly not essential. Nevertheless, we always recognised that a prudent householder may well commission such a survey of the pre-damaged property when he receives a section 46 notice and we now realise that, because of a possible delay in the damage occurring, under the three-year rule, such a householder may be unable to recover the costs.

The amendment would therefore increase the period to four years. There has to be a time limit because, beyond a certain point, a record of condition will become too out of date to be useful in the resolution of a claim. I think that the proposal of four years strikes the right balance. Perhaps anticipating the hon. Gentleman's remarks, we have gone rather further, by enabling the Secretary of State, under Lords amendment No. 7, to extend the time

[Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory]

period if it proves necessary. That period can be extended if, in the light of experience, further time is deemed necessary.

Mr. Rowlands: The amendment deals with the reimbursement of successful claimants' costs. Since the Bill left the House, I have corresponded with the Minister about a clutch of cases, one of them very closely concerned with the issue of costs. Before we let the Bill go, I want to take the opportunity to reveal to the House the nature and character of British Coal's treatment of people in our community. This clause deals with successful claimants' costs and the preceding clause deals with the avoidance of other claims and the possibility of previous cases being wrapped up and dealt with under the Bill.

The basis of much of our agreement on the Bill was that British Coal would act in a positive spirit. On the basis of the correspondence, I have to tell the Minister that the leopard has not changed its spots. The way in which the issues that I presented to him in the correspondence between us—particularly concerning one costs application, which I hope will be successful—have been dealt with by British Coal show that that is not the case. I refer to the case of three constituents of mine living at 49, 50 and 51, High street, Trelewis, which has been the subject of a considerable amount of correspondence between us. The aim of my constituents and their solicitors was to transfer the case and to bring it within the procedures of the Bill. The spirit in which the Minister replied to so many of the debates was that British Coal would be in tune with the Bill and would be willing to anticipate its implementation.

The solicitors' letter states that any financial decision will have to wait for the final Act, and that British Coal would be likely to be sensitive to my constituents' circumstances and allow them to proceed under the Act.

We therefore wrote to British Coal, suggesting that the cases proceed under the new Act, when it comes into force, and not under common law because they involve a mixture of current and past damage to the properties.

Under clause 37, which precedes the provisions with which we are dealing, despite having brought other claims for damages against the British Coal Corporation, a person may serve a notice under the new legislation and can elect which notice of claim he will then proceed with. However, British Coal has said that it will allow our clients to discontinue their common law action and to proceed with an action under the new legislation if they pay all British Coal's costs to the incurred date.

We are considering provisions relating to the reimbursement of successful claimants' costs. I very much hope that my constituents will be successful claimants. We have conducted our debates in Committee and throughout the Bill's passage in the hope that British Coal would act in a new spirit, but everything that has happened between the Bill leaving the House and its final moments here and now has demonstrated that British Coal's mean spirit remains. No doubt it is down to the solicitors, but I have written to both the chairman of British Coal and to the Minister.

Before we agree to this Lords amendment about the reimbursement of successful claimants' costs, I must bring this appalling case to the Minister's attention. We are talking about three householders—and anybody who knows Trelewis knows that we are talking not about wealthy surburban citizens, but about the terrace communities of our areas which are suffering enormous problems with subsidence, some of which is historic while some is more recent. British Coal is saying to the Minister, to me and to my constituents that it will demand the full payment of its costs before we can even transfer the cases to the spirit and procedures of the new legislation. If nothing else, I hope that the debate will persuade the Minister to stamp on the feet of the chairman of British Coal or at least say to him, "For goodness sake, behave properly to people", such as those whom I represent in Trelewis. I hope that he does so.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): I am most disturbed by what my hon. Friend has said because I referred to him —I know that he brought this to the attention of the Committee—the case of one of my constituents who had a case against the coal board. Under the existing legislation—I am going back about 20 years—the coal board said that it would defer consideration of any submission until the subsidence had finished its geological course. As a result, my constituent waited, but when he later submitted another claim, he was told by British Coal that he was out of time. Since then, we have taken the case up again with British Coal, which has involved lengthy correspondence. My hon. Friend then drew the case to the attention of the Committee, as a result of which we took up the case with British Coal again which, as I understood it, was to act in a new spirit. As my hon. Friend said, if British Coal does not fulfil that obligation, many people in the south Wales valleys—I am not talking about Mansfield, Yorkshire or Nottingham—will continue to suffer from the extensive subsidence that has come to light since coal mining in the area finished. They will not be able to pursue claims in the courts against British Coal because it is using legislative devices to put these people outside the law. It is up to the Minister to ensure that British Coal acts not only within the law but within the spirit of the law, because that is important.

10.54 pm

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I know of the case mentioned by the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands). However, I do not have the details with me, so I cannot comment knowledgeably on it now. I will look at it again to ensure that British Coal is acting in a way that anticipates this Bill becoming an Act of Parliament. Nothing that he said makes a case against the Lords amendment, so I hope that the House will agree to it.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Assisted Places

10.55 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Michael Fallon): I beg to move,

That the draft Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) Regulations 1991, which were laid before this House on 2nd July, be approved.

The draft regulations provide for the uprating of the parental contribution tables, which set out how much parents must pay towards their child's assisted place and certain other amendments, which I will describe, to be made to the Education (Assisted Places) Regulations 1989.

As the House will know, the assisted places scheme is now in its 10th year. It was established in 1981 for the prime purpose of opening up the education opportunities of able children from less well-off families. It provides their parents with assistance towards the fees at some of the best independent schools in the country. That assistance is on a sliding scale based on parental income and the principal changes embodied in the amending regulations are concerned with the annual revision of those scales.

The other amendments are technical amendments to keep the definition of "total parental income" for the purposes of the scheme constant as tax legislation changes, and to take account of the position of any assisted place scheme parents who are eligible for relief on single gifts made by individuals to charities in pursuance of section 25 of the Finance Act 1990.

I shall single out only two or three of the regulations for comment. Regulation 3 uprates the amount of the allowance that can be deducted from parents' total relevant income for each dependant, other than the assisted place holder, in the family. That amount is raised from £1,000 to £1,065; that is, by the same percentage which applies to the uprating of the income scales—to which I shall speak in a moment. This allowance is helpful to parents with large families and uprating it will ensure that their position is not worsened.

Regulation 4 amends regulation 19 of the principal regulations, which is concerned with recruitment to assisted places. Regulation 19 requires schools to select at least 60 per cent. of their assisted pupils from publicly-maintained schools. This requirement lies at the heart of the scheme and reflects the main aim to give priority to those children from less well-off families who would otherwise have gone to maintained schools and would not have had the opportunity of an independent school education.

The amendment will allow a pupil at the school who is initially not on an assisted place to have the benefit of an assisted place later in his school career, if that becomes necessary, provided that he or she originally came from a publicly-maintained school. That will help in those few cases of hardship which arise from time to time where parents have made considerable sacrifice to move their child to an independent school for secondary education.

Regulation 6, the principal regulation of those with which we are dealing, sets out the income scale used for assessing parents' contributions towards fees. This year, the tables have been uprated to take account of the movement in the retail prices index to April this year. That figure is 6·4 per cent. In former years, in uprating these tables, we have looked to the retail prices index figure for the June of the previous year. If we had done that again this year we would have uprated the parental contribution tables by 9·8 per cent. However, at a time of rapidly falling inflation, combined with the necessity for the Government's scheme to live within its means, we have decided that this year the parental contribution tables should be uplifted by the current level of inflation rather than the higher level prevailing in June of last year.

The effect of that amendment will be to call for a slightly larger contribution from parents. It ensures that a proper balance is struck between the contributions that parents can reasonably be expected to afford and the need for taxpayers' money to be used prudently and with maximum effect. This revaluation of the income bands therefore represents an equitable measure to ensure that that balance is even. The threshold at or below which parents pay nothing towards fees is therefore raised from £8,200 to £8,714 and will mean that approximately one third of all parents will still qualify for full fee remission.

It will also mean that some parents must find extra resources, but we have ensured that this will not be too burdensome for those on smaller incomes. For example, a parent earning £11,000 per annum will be required to pay an extra £45 in the coming academic year and a parent earning £18,000 per year will be required to pay an extra £129. The threshold is set deliberately low so that the least well-off benefit most. In cases where there are more than three assisted pupils in a family, provision is made for fees in respect of the fourth and subsequent child to be wholly remitted.

We have also ensured that at a time when it is necessary to keep a close eye on public expenditure on education and to limit the resources which can be made available for this scheme, any burden occasioned by necessary economies is shared fairly between the schools and parents. We have decided for the first time that for this coming academic year the Department should not sanction fee increases exceeding 12 per cent. for assisted place pupils other than in very exceptional circumstances. Our objective is to secure an average increase for all schools not exceeding 12 per cent. in the academic year 1991-92.

After 10 years, it should hardly be necessary to explain again to the House the value and benefit of the assisted places scheme, but as the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) is with us tonight, I will have to restate our belief in its value. The reason why we have supported the scheme from the outset is that we are interested in encouraging high standards of education wherever they are to be found. We want parents to be able to choose the education that they think best for their children, regardless of their income. Our best independent schools——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. In broadening matters somewhat, I am sure that the Minister will relate his remarks to the context of the regulations, which is comparatively narrow. It is not about the whole assisted places scheme.

Mr. Fallon: Certainly, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The assisted places scheme, which we are amending tonight, helps to redress the balance for parents of humble means who would be denied the ability to choose from all the types of education that this country offers if they had to meet the full cost of their children's education at an independent school. I could give many examples of those

[Mr. Fallon]

who have benefited in the past year and will benefit from the amended regulations which the House is being asked to approve tonight.

The scheme as amended would be unreasonable to the House only if the cost involved was disproportionate to what is being achieved. I should like to say a word or two about the current cost of the scheme. Most people would find the cost rather surprising. In 1989-90, the last year for which we have figures, the average cost to the taxpayer of each assisted pupil was £2,364. The average cost of a pupil in the maintained sector for that year is estimated to be £2,135—a relatively small difference.

But in considering even that small difference, we must take into account the fact that sixth form education is about 60 per cent. more expensive than 11 to 16 education. Whereas three quarters of children at independent schools stay on after 16, the corresponding figure for the maintained sector is only one quarter.

That narrows even further the margin between the cost of an assisted place and that of a maintained place, and proves that there is no appreciable difference between the two systems. The value for money that is obtained from expenditure on the assisted places scheme is beyond question.

I need hardly say that all the schools in the scheme, including those added to it in the past academic year, have been carefully selected on the basis of their proven records of academic achievement. The breadth and quality of the curriculum that each school offers is first rate, and their records of success in public examinations are outstanding. Last year, 90 per cent. of A-level entries by assisted-place pupils resulted in A to E pass grades. Of these, nearly 29 per cent. achieved grade A, and nearly 25 per cent. grade B. In addition, 90 per cent. of GCSE entries by assisted-place pupils resulted in A to C pass grades.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): Given the small marginal cost of the scheme to the taxpayer, can my hon. Friend account for the Opposition's wish to destroy it? Can the explanation be only that they are not interested in helping children from poorer backgrounds to attain high standards and to fulfil their potential, an opportunity that the scheme has amply demonstrates it affords?

Mr. Fallon *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the House that we are discussing not the merits of the assisted places scheme but comparatively narrow regulations that deal with only certain aspects of the scheme.

Mr. Fallon: You are absolutely right, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We must wait for the hon. Member for Durham, North-West to explain the motivation behind the Opposition's decision to oppose the scheme and to phase it out, if they form a Government, for the 27,000 pupils and their parents who are currently taking advantage of it.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): The Minister knows that the scheme and the regulations involve considerable cost to the public purse. He has said that assisted-place pupils achieve good results. Would he argue that those results were achieved only by enabling the pupils to go to private schools? If so, that is surely some condemnation of the state system and the teachers within it. Does he believe that they cannot deliver the same education as that which is provided in private schools?

Mr. Fallon: There are many excellent maintained schools in the state system. The important point, however, is that parents have the right to choose to send their children to independent schools and to be supported under the assisted places scheme.

You have correctly restricted us, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the amendments to the scheme that are set out in the regulations. Despite the limited resources that are available for the scheme and the need to keep it within budget, the Government firmly believe in the principle that parents in every part of the country should have access to the opportunities that such a scheme offers. We continue to support it by amending it as part of our policy of widening choice in education. Along with many parents throughout the country, we are immensely encouraged by the successes—in music, the arts and sport, as well as in academic subjects—that assisted pupils have recorded. Over the 10 years that we have been debating the scheme and amendments to it, 48,750 children have benefited from education at some of the best independent schools in the country, of whom 19,140 have benefited by enjoying entirely free education at schools in the scheme.

Our vision has been, is and always will be to open up opportunity for as many as are able to benefit from excellence. This country has always had a long history of good independent schools, and we are committed to their continuity and to the principle that their doors should always be open to those of ability and merit if it is their wish to attend. That is a far cry from the policy of the Opposition, who would close those doors of opportunity. I commend the regulations to the House.

11.9 pm

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): As the Minister said, I have spoken on the previous regulations on this subject. This is the third year that I have opposed such regulations, but each time I have faced a different Minister. That says something about the Government's commitment, or lack of it, to continuity of excellence.

The regulations are necessary for the Government to spend any money next year on the assisted places scheme, and that is why we oppose them. We feel that that leads the Government, as the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) has said, into a blind alley, which does neither the Government nor the education system any credit. We will oppose the regulations specifically because of that.

Ministers should read the research on the assisted places scheme that is put before them, because it all reveals that the arguments have not been fulfilled. It was argued that the scheme would offer opportunities to the children of parents who did not have the means. I must remind the Minister that more than 50 per cent. of those on the assisted places scheme come from professional or managerial backgrounds. Only 7 per cent. of the children come from a manual working background. Of the parents, 68 per cent. of mothers and 51 per cent. of fathers attended an independent or selective school. None of the criteria laid down by the Government 10 years ago has been met.

The research has demonstrated the failure of the scheme. The poor take-up rate in some parts of the country shows that the Government have not won overall

support for the scheme. They have to come back continually to the House to amend the scheme, but they still face opposition to it. They also know that all the opposition parties intend to abolish the scheme. However, we are not vindictive and we will allow those children on the scheme to continue with it.

We have made that clear every year, but the Minister has again tried to perpetuate the myth that that will not happen. The Minister cannot claim that we will harm the 27,000 children on the scheme. We are not vindictive, and we will allow them to continue their education under that scheme. However, we will not perpetuate a scheme that does not meet the criteria that the Government promised the House it would follow. In the past 10 years, the Government have refused to meet those criteria.

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham) *rose*——

Ms. Armstrong: I shall not give way.

I shall not say anything about fairness, except that the Government have abandoned that concept totally. It is 10 years since the introduction of the scheme, but the Government have still not won an educational consensus in favour of it. They have abandoned any semblance of fairness. The figures on the city technology college programme that my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) analysed and broke down this week reveal how far down the road of seedy discrimination the Government have travelled.

We will oppose the regulations, because we believe that the continuation of the scheme represents the Government's recognition of the abject failure of the Education Reform Act 1988. That Act spelled out how the Government thought that education was going. Since the Act gave the Secretary of State 415 new powers, he has run away from his repsonsibility for the state sector. The Prime Minister is now joining in and saying that the only way forward for those parents who want a decent education system is to opt out of the state system. Money is therefore being given to assisted places——

Mr. Gerald Howarth: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I thought that we were debating the amending regulations rather than the Education Reform Act, excellent though that Act is and widely welcomed though it is in my constituency.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I was becoming a little anxious myself. I am sure that the hon. Lady will realise that, as I had to call the Minister to order, I must also call her to order. We are dealing not with the broad issues of the scheme but with the aspects of the regulations before us.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The long experience that many of us have had in this Chamber teaches us that it is impossible to discuss in isolation what is happening in, for instance, an order. I have been involved in countless debates on Northern Ireland orders and other debates of that nature. It is fundamentally impossible to debate narrowly without referring to the background that makes these regulations necessary, so I hope that you will be a little more tolerant with us about it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Those on both Front Benches have responded to advice from the Chair. I am grateful to them for doing so, and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will do likewise if he catches my eye.

Ms. Armstrong: I understand why Conservative Members do not want me to broaden the debate, but I also want to keep within your strictures, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I always attempt to do.

I understand that, if we reject the regulations tonight, the scheme will not be funded next year. If my supposition is right, the reasons for the Government wishing to continue the scheme need to be clarified. It is amazing that they want to put so much faith in providing "excellence" for youngsters but say that that cannot happen within the state system. They are really saying that any sensible parents who really care about their children would not seek to have them educated within the main stream of the state education system but would take them out of it.

Mr. Walden: Would the hon. Lady mind if I harked back for a moment to something she said which was new to me, although perhaps not to my hon. Friend the Minister? She said that a Labour Government would graciously allow children already receiving such education to finish their education before closing that door. But the Labour party plans to close many other doors, such as grant-maintained schools, city technology colleges and grammar schools. Would she extend her beneficence and allow children in grant-maintained schools, city technology colleges and grammar schools at least to finish their education before she closes the door on all those opportunities, which are open to people from more humble backgrounds than many in this country?

Ms. Armstrong: I hope that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will allow me to answer that point, although it falls outside the remit of the regulations. We shall not close those schools, but will return them to local authority organisations, which is different. Far from closing doors, we will be opening them. We are determined to ensure that the state system should be able and effective to offer the highest standards to every child—that is where I think that the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) and I are not so far apart. As long as the Government are determined to say that the only way to achieve excellence is by opting out, nobody will believe that the Government have any faith in the state system. How can we expect parents to have faith in that system?

We wish to ensure that every child, whatever his or her background, gets the best opportunity. The Government have abandoned those youngsters. The Secretary of State told the Select Committee that he did not have responsibility for what went on in schools. He told *Woman* magazine that parents misunderstood when they came to him expecting him to be the one who knew what was going on in schools.

The Labour party will accept responsibility. We are so serious about making education work that we want everyone to want every child to suceed, and will put the resources and commitment into that. I think that some Conservative Members also want that. As long as we have a system that advocates that it is all right to invest a lot of money in a few youngsters and let the rest manage with crumbling schools, rotting buildings and demoralised

[Ms. Armstrong]

teachers, parents will ask, "Who cares about our child? Who cares about our school? The Government certainly do not care."

Mr. Christopher Hawkins (High Peak): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have been listening carefully to the debate on this subject, in which I take a considerable interest. I have not yet heard one line of the hon. Lady's speech which relates to the regulations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have already told the Minister and the Opposition spokesmen and women that the regulations are comparatively narrow. We cannot discuss all the merits or demerits of the assisted places scheme.

Ms. Armstrong *rose*——

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Before the hon. Lady was interrupted by my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Mr. Hawkins), she suggested that the Secretary of State should take responsibility for everything that goes on in schools. Would a Labour Secretary of State take responsibility for—for example—the picketing of a school for children with special learning difficulties, as happened in Liverpool recently?

Ms. Armstrong: As I understand it, that has not happened, and we certainly would not condone or support anything like that. The hon. Gentleman has been watching the fiction—and good fiction it is too.

The Minister said that the system was giving us value for money and the Government were selecting only schools with a proven record.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: I am grateful to the hon. Lady, and I am sure that our debate has been enhanced by the little forays that have taken place.

The hon. Lady said that a Labour Government would take complete responsibility for education, which is interesting. What responsibility will parents be left with?

Ms. Armstrong: Yet again, Conservative Members show their paucity of knowledge of the education system. We want a partnership between parents, local authorities, teachers and schools. One cannot pursue a partnership by saying, "I do not have any responsibility." The difference between the Government and the Opposition is that we accept that we have a responsibility. We shall not have full responsibility, but we shall not duck that which we have.

The Minister led us to believe that the Government knew enough about schools to support only those with a proven record. How were those schools monitored? How many inspections have taken place in the past year of schools that have assisted places? Has the Minister made sure that every child in those schools has had entitlement to the national curriculum laid down in the Education Reform Act 1988 as necessary for all schoolchildren? How does the Minister know about a school's proven record or that such schools would flourish without the assisted places scheme?

The Minister's answer to me yesterday shows that almost a third of the intake of many schools is being paid for by the taxpayer through the assisted places scheme. Those schools would probably not be viable if the scheme was removed. Those schools cannot prove that they are open and that they would maintain standards if they did not have assisted places.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I am not quite clear about the trend of the hon. Lady's argument. She seems to be saying that the maintained system is better than independent schools with assisted places. That is a travesty of the truth. I and others who have taught assisted place pupils know that the quality of teaching in the scheme is excellent. If the hon. Lady is saying that the maintained system is better, that destroys her argument. Will she explain why her party will vote against this measure, because the reason is not clear?

Ms. Armstrong: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman has not understood my argument. I have said throughout my speech that I have faith in the state system. I want to put all my faith and resources into making sure that that system is as good as possible for every child, and I want to ensure that all children can get what they need within the system. As long as the Government maintain escape routes, they will not put their faith in the state system. They make sure that they do not send their children to the state system and have no investment in it. That does none of us any good.

I am concerned to ensure that state education is such that everyone will fight for it tooth and nail. The Government have shown that they are not prepared to do that by trying to perpetuate the get-out route of the assisted places scheme. They do not effectively monitor what is happening in assisted places schools. I accept that many of those schools may provide good, albeit often narrow, education for many of their youngsters.

The assisted places scheme will not uplift the education system and show people that Parliament is committed to seeing that the state system works—which would encourage people to put their all into it. The Government have shown at every stage that they run from the state system as quickly as possible. Britain needs a Government who will work for and with the state system, and who believe in it. The only salvation for the education system is a Labour Government.

11.28 pm

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): In defending the regulations, the Minister touched on the essence of the problem when he said that the money involved was being well spent. Therefore, one needs to know something which the general public and Conservative Members do not seem to know, and that is the cost of the scheme, which is detailed in a Government publication.

Let us consider what we are in the process of amending. The scheme began in 1984-85 at a cost of £22 million. In the next year it received another £30 million, then another £38 million, then £46 million, then £51 million, then £59 million, then £62 million, then £60 million and then £70 million. That comes to £438 million. It is heading towards half a billion pounds. That is how much the scheme is costing. When I have given those figures in various statements that I have made, many people are appalled at the amount of money that the scheme is costing.

Amending the regulations will deepen and intensify the amount of money that is being spent on the scheme. That amount of money is being taken from the state sector which is in urgent need of money. If one were to add to that sum the £60 million spent on grant-maintained

schools and the £187 million spent on city technology colleges, the total comes to £685 million—more than half a billion is being spent on these privatisation schemes.

Ministers go up and down the country telling various sections of the community in the big cities that they can have £5 million or £6 million, yet many of the schools which have assisted places are getting more than £1 million each, and there are 240 of them. The amounts of money are getting bigger and bigger and whole families are receiving such assistance.

Let us be clear that we are amending the regulations in the interests of those people who come not from the schools where there is poverty, but from middle-class areas. They are spawning on the public purse and taking money that should go to all our children in the state education system. That is what the Government are defending tonight.

Just think what could be done with that vast amount of money. Major debates have taken place in the Chamber about far less money than the amount being spent on this scheme. Conservative Members know that the figures that I have just read out are from the Government's expenditure plans for education for this year and next year. They are not our figures.

Our crumbling schools, short of books, teachers and equipment, could do with that money. That money is being taken away from needy children and given to children who do not need it. I hear the Minister telling us that it is money well spent, but well spent on whom? It is being reft from those who really need it who are in terrible crumbling schools. When the Minister visited Sheffield he himself described the schools are crumbling.

Most people have no knowledge of the vast amounts of public money that are being spent, and throughout his defence of the regulations the Minister never mentioned it; he merely used generalisations. I know that Conservative Members will be surprised at the amounts involved.

The assisted places scheme is now a flourishing and fundamental part of the private system. Whole schools rely on it and hundreds of children in those schools are being paid for by money taken from the children who need it.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): My hon. Friend the Minister quoted a number of modest salaries, where the parents will have to pay. Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that affluent, middle-class people will benefit?

Mr. Flannery: I am saying that payment should not be made and that the children should attend ordinary schools. The Minister mentioned a figure of 60 per cent. in some cases. The regulations make such a tiny change that they appear to mean little or nothing, but now we have learnt for the first time that two, three, or four children from one family can be favoured by attending a school that has smaller classes and better equipment than other children enjoy. The poor children are not given a chance. Conservative Members laugh.

My hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) wrote to the former Secretary of State for Education, the right hon. Member for Norfolk, South (Mr. MacGregor):

"I am writing to ask you whether you will cut the level of state subsidy to private schools to the levels of spending which you and the Environment Secretary have dictated are enough to run maintained schools."

He went on to illustrate that in a rate-capped area two or three times more money was being allocated to children in private schools.

The amount of money involved in respect of city technology colleges is now vast and has already reached more than £700 million.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, when Nottingham city technology college was started, Nottinghamshire was asked whether it expected any closures because of falling rolls? It replied in the negative, but the moment that the contract for the CTC was signed, the closure of three schools was announced. One of them could have been given to the CTC at a cost of £4 million, which could have been used to benefit the children of Nottingham.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The hon. Gentleman's intervention is rather wide of the subject for debate. I am sure that the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) will not stray down that path.

Mr. Flannery: I would love to do so, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I know that I must not. However, I may point out that all the other schools combined received only as much money as that college, so I would keep quiet about that subject, if I were the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart).

The list of schools for which the regulations are being amended was published this morning. It runs to page after page of small print, and hundreds of millions of pounds are involved. It is clear from that list how dependent the private sector has become on that source of money. That is drastically wrong, but the Minister tries to convey the impression that he is doing the country a favour.

Only a few children will benefit from the changes. Should we entertain, at a time of slump and crisis, regulations that siphon off money from ordinary people —3 million are out of work and no doubt that figure will be shown tomorrow morning to have increased—to give a tiny group a special education? Is that the Minister's idea of fairness? How can anyone in all conscience support, especially at a time of slump and crisis, a rip-off that will affect 95 per cent. of children? That money is being siphoned into the private sector.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): The bonus is that the 95 per cent. of children who are of concern to the hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to take advantage of the scheme and the schooling that it makes available. It is the 95 per cent. of pupils whom we are trying to support—not the 5 per cent. to whom the hon. Gentleman refers.

Mr. Flannery: The hon. Gentleman's thought processes are very convoluted. He seems to be saying that the Government are trying to help the children—95 per cent. —who attend terrible, crumbling schools, which are short of equipment and so short of teachers that they are bringing in foreigners to teach. If he thinks that that is a good thing, heaven help us: he will probably support anything in the regulations.

This is an evil measure, which grants special favours to a tiny group of children. If Conservative Members do not think that our wish for them to be taught along with others is honourable, I do not know what they want from education. We shall develop our philosophy shortly, when we have thrown out the Conservative Government.

11.40 pm

Mr. Gerald Howarth: This has been an instructive debate for the House, and, I hope, for those outside.

As we have heard, the marginal cost of the scheme is infinitesimal. The interesting display that we witnessed from Opposition Members clearly demonstrates that their purpose in opposing the regulations is motivated by spite and malice. As my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) pointed out, they want to deny choice to 93 per cent. of children who would then have no access to the private sector.

Ms. Armstrong: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that the Government's answer is for every child in the country to obtain an assisted place?

Mr. Howarth: I am supporting my hon. Friend the Minister's wish to upgrade a scheme that extends choice. The Opposition would deny that choice to the children who will benefit from the scheme.

The Opposition's spite is directed particularly towards those who come from poorer homes: it is they who would otherwise not have access to such education. I hope that this message will go out to the country. What Opposition Members offer is a denial of choice, and the same "take it or leave it" approach that they adopted in the 1970s, when they rammed compulsory comprehensive education down people's throats.

Let me give Opposition Members a warning. A recent opinion poll showed that 57 per cent. of Labour voters supported the assisted places scheme. If I were an Opposition Member, I would be very cautious about imagining that there was any electoral advantage in the Opposition's view.

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): I support everything that my hon. Friend has said. Is the scheme not, however, merely the precursor of another—the voucher scheme, which will allow all parents to choose how their children are educated?

Mr. Howarth: That is a subject for future debate.

I believe that the regulations will be popular throughout the country——

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Howarth: No, I will not.

Mr. Fatchett *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) is not giving way.

Mr. Howarth: No, I will not give way: the hour is late. *[Interruption.]* I assure Opposition Members that my hon. Friend's policy will result in Cannock and Burntwood being not only held by the Tories, but held with a larger majority.

11.43 pm

Mr. Fallon: With the leave of the House, Madam Deputy Speaker, I shall reply briefly to the debate. I sense that the House wishes to come to a decision on this matter.

To answer the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery), the scheme was inaugurated in 1981, not 1984. There are just 295 schools in the scheme. Many schools would like to participate in the scheme and have applied to participate. So far, however, only 295 are in it.

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): Will my hon. Friend confirm that in the north of England, particularly in the north-east, the take-up is less? Will he look into that carefully so that parents in that part of the country have the opportunity to send their children to schools that participate in this excellent scheme?

Mr. Fallon: The matter has been reviewed. When the scheme was expanded slightly last May we were able to redress the regional imbalance in both the midlands and the north-east by adding some schools from those areas to the scheme.

May I point out to the hon. Member for Hillsborough that the amount involved in running the scheme is not money taken away from the state sector. The hon. Gentleman asked me for the total amount of money spent on the scheme. It is to be about £70 million. The £70 million will be spent on educating the same number of pupils in the maintained sector. The hon. Gentleman gave the game away. We heard him say clearly that these pupils should go to their local schools. That is compulsion, not choice. That is the Labour party's policy.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) answered very effectively the question asked earlier in the debate by the hon. Member for Hillsborough. The Opposition want to rub out the scheme not because they want to save money—no money would be saved—but because of sheer, unadulterated, ideological spite. They want to take it out on the least well off in our society.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Fallon: No. I said that I would be brief.

The hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) began by complaining that she had had to face three different Ministers in our last three annual debates on these regulations. Perhaps that says something for job mobility and career prospects on this side of the House, as opposed to the Opposition side. What the hon. Lady did not tell the House, which I intend to do, is that she quoted large chunks of the speech that she made last year, on 18 July. She quoted exactly the same research that she quoted last year from a publication that is now over two years old.

The hon. Lady specifically asked me whether these schools are regularly inspected. Yes, they are regularly inspected. Many schools applied to be on the assisted places scheme. We turn down applications from schools whose academic record is not good enough to satisfy our criteria. Every year the schools on this scheme have to send us their examination results. We check constantly the academic standards of the schools on the assisted places scheme.

Ms. Armstrong: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Fallon: I am just about to conclude my speech.

The real difference between the two sides of the House is that the hon. Member for Durham, North-West believes that the only way to excellence is through the uniform, monolithic monopoly of council schooling that we have seen since the war. We believe that the best way to promote excellence is to give choice. In the end it is choice that

drives up standards—parents' choice, not that of education directors, or bureaucrats, or Ministers. We want parents to be able freely to choose.

The assisted places scheme that we are amending tonight is not the only way in which we have widened choice. Since 1981 we have encouraged a variety of different schools: city technology colleges, grant-maintained schools, council schools with fully delegated local budgets. We have widened choice in all sorts of ways, but this scheme remains good value for money and a guarantee of access to excellence for those few pupils who deserve to benefit from it. I commend the regulations to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 143, Noes 52.

Division No. 222] **[11.48 pm**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon John
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Nicholas Baker.

NOES

Armstrong, Hilary
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Beggs, Roy
Bermingham, Gerald
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clelland, David
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Dixon, Don
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Fatchett, Derek
Flannery, Martin
Foster, Derek
Galloway, George
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Terry
Livsey, Richard
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Morley, Elliot
Nellist, Dave
O'Hara, Edward
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Rogers, Allan
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Frank Haynes.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) Regulations 1991, which were laid before this House on 2nd July, be approved.

East Newcastle Quayside Development

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

11.59 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): At one point this evening, I thought that we would be discussing the East Newcastle quayside development at one of the breakfast meetings of which the urban development corporation is so fond. I am pleased, therefore, that we are able to have the debate at a relatively reasonable hour of the night.

I have substantially rewritten the speech that I had intended to make when I was first lucky enough to draw a place and to secure an Adjournment debate. I had not realised how powerful Adjournment debates can be. The Government first suggested that some matters were sub judice and that the debate could not therefore take place. I am grateful for the fact that it was decided that the debate could be held despite there being some matters before the court. I shall not trespass on those matters. It is perfectly possible for me to make my points without doing so. I know that the Minister will understand why, when I approach those matters, I deal with them in a more general way than I might otherwise have done.

The changes that have taken place over the past few days have been quite surprising. First, the parliamentary questions that I had tabled, which the Minister orginally told me could not be answered because the matter was sub judice, have now miraculously been answered—or the majority of them answered—in letters to me from the Minister. I suspect that that happened solely because I had secured an Adjournment debate. The replies are perfectly reasonable and satisfactory, and I have no quarrel with the points that the Minister makes, although I wonder why he could not simply have answered my questions in a sensible, reasoned way in the first place.

Secondly, my tabling of those questions and the prospect of the debate have prompted vigorous public debate in the local newspapers on Tyneside. I suspect that it was the prospect of this debate that compelled the chairman of the urban development corporation, the Economic League's Mr. Paul Nicholson, to issue the justification of his behaviour that appeared in *The Journal* today.

The third reason that has led me in some respects to adjust what I proposed to say is a disappointing one for me. I have heard from the Audit Commission that it cannot investigate the financial arrangements of the urban development corporation because it has no competence in these matters. However, I have had a meeting with my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), the shadow Secretary of State for the Environment, and I am satisfied with the assurances that he has given me concerning the disclosure of information relating to the financial affairs of urban development corporations. I think that Labour will come to power before we get any investigations from this Government, but I am quite content to wait, because a Labour Government can only be less than a year away.

Although I am grateful to the Minister for the information that he has divulged, it reflects no credit on him, the Department of the Environment or the urban development corporation that that information has had to be dragged out of the Department through the mechanism of an Adjournment debate. There was nothing contentious about the information; it should have been provided voluntarily.

I propose to do two things in the debate. First, I shall say a little about what is wrong with the present development and the way in which the developers are proceeding and then I shall suggest a series of initiatives —I hope constructive—which I hope will provide a solution, break the present deadlock and perhaps even diminish some of the animosity that has surrounded this affair.

Let me make this absolutely clear: I do not oppose the redevelopment of the quayside area—far from it; I welcome that redevelopment. What I oppose is the existing development and the way in which it was arrived at. I am opposed to the bullish way in which the urban development corporation on Tyneside went about the preparation of the development. The Newcastle quayside development affair encapsulates all that is worst about the urban development corporation structure. I cannot understand why the urban development corporation decided to choose a developer first and then set out to try to acquire all the land from others who were told that they were being kept out of the development consortia. In those circumstances, why on earth should those who are not part of the development consortia voluntarily agree to being kicked off their land?

It is not my view that everyone who supports the urban development corporation is ill-motivated. There are those who genuinely believe that using the planning and compulsory purchase powers of the urban development corporation to push Mr. Godfrey Bradman's business interests is in east Newcastle's best interests. There are others who are less honourably motivated. It strikes many in the Labour party as a remarkable coincidence that the different developers on three separate sites north of the River Tyne have three things in common. I am referring to the Closegate site, the separate east quayside site and the Cosalt development in north Tyneside. The three things that they have in common are, first, that their proposed developments are hideously ugly; secondly, that they cost the public purse an awful lot of money in subsidies; and, thirdly, that the favoured developers are all staunch supporters of the Conservative party. Indeed, in north Tyneside, the favoured developer is a Member of the House.

These issues are highly political in the north. Both sides will make the urban development corporation an election issue. It will be an issue of Labour v. Conservative. In the Northern region, there is Labour resistance to the urban development corporation. There are also regional quislings. I regret that the debate on such important issues has been conducted in this manner because on economic development issues generally there is, in the Northern region, as bipartisan an approach as it is possible to find anywhere in the country. No region has done more to help itself through difficult times. That has involved co-operation at regional level between the Confederation of British Industry and the Trades Union Congress, and between private industry and developers and the public sector, including Labour-controlled local authorities. I very much welcome that way of doing things in the region and regret the fact that what has happened over the quayside scheme does not resemble the way in which we normally conduct our affairs.

I was told at the outset by the chief executive of the urban development corporation that I could make my views known on the development, just like any other member of the public. He has said publicly—I have the press cutting with me—

"The Member of Parliament for East Newcastle seems to work assiduously to chase jobs away from his constituency."

That is a very political remark, which I very much resent. Apart from my work on the Labour Front Bench in this place, I spend more of my time on economic development matters in my constituency than on any other issue. If the Conservatives wish to say, "The Member of Parliament for East Newcastle chases jobs away from his constituency", I suggest that they go to the real industrialists in east Newcastle—the real employers there—such as NEI Parsons or Swan Hunter, the shipbuilders, and ask their management and work forces whether they believe that to be true. I know what the response would be—the management and work force would show those Conservative politicians the gate.

I said that I would say a little about the problems and then suggest some solutions. The overriding problem for the site—this is not the fault of the urban development corporation—is the traffic. The site is difficult, and whoever had been the economic development authority would have found the problem intractable and the site expensive to prepare for development. The site contains what has become a well-established traffic route from east to west, but it is an extraordinarily difficult route for traffic. I have here a report of the city engineers dealing with traffic issues which is dated June 1989. Since then the situation has deteriorated. The report says:

"The quayside route operates at the limits of its capacity, at peak times particularly. Its route experiences congestion and queues, mainly associated with the Guildhall roundabout ... Traffic has little opportunity for transferring to other routes, the cathedral route being equally congested. Clearly, both routes are essential for east-west movement, and neither can carry the traffic off the other. What is also clear is that neither route can accommodate more traffic under current circumstances."

Those circumstances will be familiar to everybody who knows Newcastle, so it was always going to be a priority to sort out the highways issues before determining the nature of the development that would sit alongside it, or before determining who the developer would be. The development corporation chose to put the cart before the horse. It chose first the developer, then the development that he proposed, and has said that it will not be altered. Then it set about solving the traffic problems. Things cannot be done that way round.

A number of other issues will have to be addressed before any solution to the impasse is arrived at. I do not like the shape of the development. The scheme is wrong, not just because of the traffic issues, although they are of paramount importance, but because there is too much of it. The Bradman proposal is substantially to overdevelop the site, and to do so in a way that is not redolent of Tyneside in any way. The Fine Art Commission has made this point and has also said that the development does nothing to parallel the natural and impressive sweep of the river. Its view should have been respected rather than being sneered at by supporters of the Godfrey Bradman scheme. They sneered because they know that they can use the powers of the development corporation to bulldoze all opposition and criticisms out of the way, regardless of the merit of those criticisms.

The Minister may find my next point a little more welcome. I am not opposed to bulk in the buildings that will eventually go up on the site. The buildings that have traditionally dominated the quayside area have always been of a considerable size, and as long as the chosen solution is not to put the skyline of Manhattan on the north bank of the Tyne, it will be possible to have reasonably sized buildings on the site. However, it depends on their function, particularly if that is to draw traffic-borne personnel on to the site at peak hours.

As the Member of Parliament, I have to insist that the relationship of that development to the two communities which neighbour it—St. Anne's and the much larger community of Byker—is handled sympathetically. There is no evidence that that has yet been addressed, and I pay tribute to two local councillors, Rick Anderson and Geordie Allison, for the important and constructive interest that they have taken in these matters. I pay tribute to the local community groups, and in particular the local clergy, for having tried to address some of these important questions. My corporate constituent, Procter and Gamble, is being treated roughly and has done nothing to deserve the rough handling that it is getting from the urban development corporation. I want to put that point on record.

I suppose that it is also right that I declare a pretty distant interest in the matter. I worked for Procter and Gamble in 1974 and 1975. I still have an enormous affection for it as a company, although if I thought that it was wrong, I would stand up and say so. It knows that. I cannot go any further on the Procter and Gamble issue, except to state general sympathy, because the other matters are before the courts.

Although the fight over the landholdings arises inevitably from the approach that the urban development corporation has adopted, it is destructive of the best interests of Newcastle and Tyneside. It has also obscured the real merits in the idea of business apartments that Mr. Lesser Landau has proposed. The idea should have been explored more thoroughly, because Newcastle is trying to develop a service base and get away from the perhaps too narrow industrial base that Tyneside has had to date.

The site is right for a project of business apartments because it has a central location. The idea is also right for the site because it would not—perhaps it is dangerous to say that it would not; it would be less likely to—generate the traffic flows about which I am so worried.

To suggest a way forward, I believe that the agreement that has been made with Bradman cannot endure. It is not a tenable basis on which to proceed. It is incomprehensible that a few influential figures in the Northern region defend it so passionately in the face of the pretty obvious evidence to the contrary. My view is that the legitimate private sector interests—I include Procter and Gamble and separately the Laing, Dysart, Landau consortium and Amec—must sit down and discuss some solution that is acceptable to them. They should then go to the public authorities—the city council and, while it is still there, the urban development corporation—with a solution that they have agreed and which takes into account the points that I listed earlier.

In that context, I welcome the arrival of Amec on the scene. It is a known quantity on Tyneside, through its subsidiary William Press, the offshore oil firm. It is a large employer. I have met representatives of it on two occasions and have been impressed by both their calibre and their

[Mr. Nicholas Brown]

sincerity. But Amec was not a party to the original competition. It is only natural that other developers who feel badly enough about the way in which they have been treated by the urban development corporation think that it is unfair that Amec should be able to buy into the development now.

There is a need to arrive at a consensus and make progress. The Bonapartist approach that the urban development corporation is adopting, especially the politically contentious approach, will not help. Consensus and compromise are the only viable way forward. It is the way in which we have normally handled our affairs in the Northern region. It is firmly my view that the Thatcherite solutions to such problems are not on. The Northern region will not have them and after the next general election we shall not have to do so.

12.17 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Robert Key): It is my privilege and my challenge, as an inner cities Minister, to travel the length and breadth of Britain seeing for myself what is going on in our vibrant great cities, whether the cities of Merseyside, Salford and Manchester or, as in the past day and a half, the astonishing communities that I have found in Newcastle, Sunderland, Stockton and Middlesbrough, where there is all-party support for so much that is going on. Therefore, I find it a serious anti-climax to come back from Newcastle tonight for this debate to find the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) seeking to justify his luddite tendencies, representing, as he does, prehistoric socialism. That seems quite out of character with what I have found in the north-east of England.

I acknowledge the presence for the debate tonight of the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell). I have enjoyed the hospitality of his constituents very recently. I welcome the opportunity to talk about the highly successful urban regeneration achievements of the Tyne and Wear development corporation. The hon. Gentlemen may recall that, when it was set up in 1987, the riverside areas of Tyne and Wear were suffering the legacy of the decline in the traditional industries which had once lined the banks of those famous rivers.

The long-standing industries of the area had left behind derelict, contaminated sites, which were extremely unsightly and which required a determined and single-minded effort to transform them into assets rather than liabilities. The Government saw areas such as this as requiring the purposeful attention of bodies whose main aim was the regeneration of their areas, and local people would have expected nothing less. I shall never forget meeting a delegation of local residents on the Scotswood estate in west Newcastle. Its members had a spirit of determination to overcome the problems left behind by history that I have found nowhere else.

Against that background, urban development corporations were set up. I acknowledge the muted presence of my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope), who has been a long-standing supporter of UDCs. It would be wrong also if I did not mention the strong support of and work done for the Tyne communities by my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter).

The Tyne and Wear development corporation has been extremely successful in its activities to date, not least because of its substantial local expertise. The majority of board members of the corporation are either born and bred in the north-east or have long connections with the area, unlike the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East. Those local connections have been invaluable.

So far, the development corporation has been responsible for the creation of 2,500 jobs on Tyneside and Wearside, and there are commitments to provide a further 4,700. Over 350 housing units have been completed and 112,000 sq m of industrial and commercial floor space have been provided through developments promoted by the development corporation. In addition, private sector investment of £250 million has already been secured, with a further £500 million committed.

These achievements have not gone unnoticed. The *Estates Times* of 1 February reports:

"There is an unmistakable air of confidence and optimism in the region. The myth of Tyneside and Wearside being rundown backwaters of ailing traditional industries beset by rampant unemployment is slowly being eroded by the remarkable achievements seen in recent years. Without a doubt, the catalyst for this change has been the UDC".

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East said that he felt that these would be general election issues. They certainly will be. It seems to me that the hon. Gentleman will be. It seems to me that the hon. Gentleman had better start packing his bags. I suspect that he is at odds with the leader of his council and with most of the elected members of his constituency party. It has been represented to me from the north-east that people are exasperated by the hon. Gentleman, but dare not speak out.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Dare not speak out—gosh!

A motion setting out the views that I have expressed was recently carried by my constituency party. I asked for it to be carried so that I knew that my views had its support. The motion was carried unanimously. There were no abstentions.

Mr. Key: What a pity that the hon. Gentleman did not have a word with the leader of the city council. He has told me:

"We have always regarded the relationship between the City Council and Tyne and Wear Development Corporation as a constructive one both on this scheme and generally."

Councillor Beecham continued:

"At the time of selection of the preferred developer, the local authority was consulted and we stated that we could live with the choice of either NQD plc or Laing plc."

He added:

"The local authority was also consulted on the NQD plc planning application which it was able to support. It has also taken a view strongly recommending rejection of a planning application of the alternative scheme."

It seems that the hon. Gentleman has his wires crossed.

In the few minutes that are available to me, I shall deal with what is happening at east quayside. The east quayside project is the principal flagship of the development corporation. The site—about 25 acres of derelict and unsightly riverside—has been widely accepted as having outstanding potential because of its dramatic location and proximity to the city centre. Despite those locational advantages, it has remained undeveloped and derelict for more than 20 years, mainly because of the combined

factors of land assembly problems and infrastructure. The development corporation was set up in May 1987 to deal with such sites, and the east quayside site has always had a high priority in the corporation's strategy.

In November 1987, the corporation invited three developers to prepare options for the site: Newcastle Quayside Developments—NQD—John Laing plc and Brookmount plc. Initial submissions were considered by the board in January 1988, but they did not contain sufficient detail. Therefore, each developer was given a further six months to prepare more detailed proposals and allowed up to £30,000 towards the cost of the exercise. Those more detailed proposals were received in June 1988 and were incorporated into a week-long exhibition, open to the public, in July 1988 that was held in the Guildhall on the Newcastle quayside.

Each proposal was examined to assess its outputs—jobs, houses, land reclaimed, office space and so on. Each was judged qualitatively on its ability to encourage regeneration of a wider area and careful thought was given to the need to maximise private investment.

NQD was selected as the preferred developer and I understand that the TWDC has entered into an agreement with it not to negotiate with any developer other than NQD until three months after legal proceedings connected with the compulsory purchase order have been concluded.

Mr. Nicholas Brown *rose*——

Mr. Key: I would rather make progress to get to the substance of the hon. Gentleman's complaint.

The compulsory purchase order was confirmed in July 1990 following a public inquiry, but two of the original objectors to that order challenged the decision in the High Court and have now lodged further appeals with the Court of Appeal. I must be careful, therefore, not to say anything which might prejudice those legal proceedings.

I have already replied in writing to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East, and I am delighted that he then found that he could rewrite parts of his speech. The hon. Member made much in his local press about the fact that he had persuaded his hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), the shadow Secretary of State for the Environment,

"that a Labour Government would publish the financial dealings of the TWDC."

That is pretty good, given that they are published anyway.

Each corporation has to prepare, in respect of each financial year, a statement of accounts complying with certain requirements of the Secretary of State. Those requirements are notified at the outset and remain in force from year to year unless changed. Each corporation is also required to produce annually a report to the Secretary of State on its activities in the preceding financial year. The report must include a copy of the audited statement of accounts. The Secretary of State lays this report before each House immediately before the summer recess.

Each urban development corporation must have an effective internal audit section to provide an independent appraisal of its system of financial control—a safeguard against fraud—and to ensure that the corporation operates with due regard to efficiency, effectiveness, and economy. The corporation's accounts and statement of accounts must be audited annually by external auditors appointed by the Secretary of State. Those auditors are expected, among other things, to examine value-for-money issues, and to draw the attention of the board and the Department to major issues, as well as submitting detailed points to management.

I must stress that there has been a close, consistent and friendly working relationship with the local authorities—all Labour-controlled. The willingness of those authorities to work alongside the corporation is quite unlike the stance and attitudes adopted by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East. He has attacked the TWDC for a number of years, sometimes from opposing viewpoints. What are his motives? Is he engaged in a vendetta against the development corporation, or is it just prejudice? I hope that it is neither. Up and down the country, local authorities of all persuasions are now working in a spirit of co-operation, and the hon. Member's stance is at odds with this spirit. I believe that it is time to bury the hatchet.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-eight minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 18 July 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[Mr. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LONDON UNDERGROUND (SAFETY MEASURES) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Order for Third Reading read.

To be read the Third time on Wednesday 24 July.

KING'S CROSS RAILWAYS BILL *(By Order)*

Order for consideration, as amended, read.

To be considered on Wednesday 24 July.

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [13 May], That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Debate further adjourned till Wednesday 24 July.

KING'S CROSS RAILWAYS BILL

Motion made,

That the Promoters of the King's Cross Railways Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read) and, having been amended by the Committee in the present Session, shall be ordered to lie upon the Table;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Oral Answers to Questions

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

EC Food Directives

1. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which traditional British foods are affected by EC directives.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Curry): I have always argued very firmly in Brussels against burdening the food industry with unnecessary bureaucratic rules.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: Will my hon. Friend resist any further regulations from the Community that might interfere with the traditional names of favourite English foods? May we have an assurance that well-known English foods, using their generic names, such as Cheddar cheese, York ham or Devon or Cornish cream will not be brought within the regulations and that he will resist any attempt to change those names? Will he also defend the British kipper from any suggestion that the wisest cure constitutes a health risk?

Mr. Curry: The answer to the first part of my hon. Friend's supplementary question is that at the meeting of the Agriculture Council in Luxembourg last month, when I represented the United Kingdom, I gave a considerable peroration on precisely that subject. It is wholly unnecessary and perfectly silly that generic names should be included in any bureaucratic regulations. There are a very limited number of cases in which that sort of special protection could be afforded any sort of justice. We shall certainly resist that.

As for the kipper, I share my hon. Friend's predilection for that delicacy. I see no reason why any food should be interfered with, other than on health grounds, and there are no health grounds whatever to get in the way of the good old British kipper.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister agree that it is daft that we should be spending so much time in Europe discussing, for example whether an Eccles cake has to come from Eccles? Does he further agree that it would be damaging if the directive were approved in its present form because it would restrict innovation and prevent the trade in, and export of, good British food? We should be making sure that consumers get what they want and at a good quality and that we are able to export good quality British food.

Mr. Curry: Precisely.

Mr. Cormack: Was my hon. Friend's peroration successful? If not, will he repeat it until it is?

Mr. Curry: The line-up comprises six states that prefer the original proposals and six states that support the alternatives that the United Kingdom has put forward. At present, it is a case of an irresistible force meeting an immovable object—we are part of the immovable object and we intend not to be moved on the subject.

Animal Welfare

2. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking to improve standards of animal welfare in the EC.

14. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking to improve standards of animal welfare in the EC.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Maclean): We are pressing for the adoption of comprehensive Community rules setting high welfare standards for animals on farms, during transport, and at slaughter. In particular, we are seeking to have the United Kingdom's high welfare standards adopted on a Communitywide basis.

Mr. Evans: I thank the Minister for that reply. Will he assure me that animals with a militant tendency or left-wing views or which do not pay their community charge—*[Interruption.]*—will not receive any protection? Will he also give an assurance that the Government and our European partners will give adequate protection to the Leader of the Opposition—*[Interruption.]*—so that he does not end up before the election, as he will after it, in the knacker's yard?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is well wide of animal welfare.

Mr. Maclean: I suspect that many animals would not behave like some Opposition Members.

Mr. Hardy: Does the Minister accept that his words and those of his right hon. Friend offering substantial support for the cause of animal welfare in Europe enjoy substantial public support? However, does he also accept that there is now significant doubt about whether the principle expressed in those words will be matched by action in the Community, especially in view of the fate of a motion to protect the smaller cetaceans, on which the Ministry does not appear to have acted accordingly to the Secretary of State's words.

Mr. Maclean: I entirely reject the last part of the hon. Gentleman's question. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was able to secure substantial protection for whales. He also managed to keep the motion to protect small cetaceans on the agenda of the international whaling conference. The British Government will stand by everything that we have said about the protection of animals. We are arguing strenuously in Europe for that and it would help very much if the Opposition would support us rather than carping in the House and trying to undermine our position at every opportunity.

Mr. Burns: I am sure that your failure to call me earlier was not personal, Mr. Speaker, although it has happened twice in the past few months.

Mr. Speaker: It was not personal.

Mr. Burns: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I congratulate my hon. Friend on the action that his Department took last year to stop the use of crates for the production of veal and I urge him to use all his influence to prevent that obnoxious practice in the rest of Europe. In the meantime, will he urge all consumers of veal in Britain to boycott mainland continental veal until that reprehensible system is ended?

Mr. Maclean: My hon. Friend makes a good point and highlights the difficulty of Britain taking unilateral action, as we rightly did last year, to ban veal crates because we believe that they are cruel. The net result has been that most veal eaten in this country is now imported—and produced under the very system that we outlawed in Britain. That is why we are arguing strenuously to have our high welfare standards on veal incorporated throughout the European Community. I strongly support the campaign of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals to draw to British consumers' attention the fact that very little veal in this country is produced under humane systems and that if they want humanely produced veal they must seek it out in the shops, where they will find that humanely produced veal is nearly all British.

Mr. Tony Banks: I entirely endorse what the Minister says and I am glad that he is prepared to endorse the RSPCA's campaign, but how can consumers know that they are buying humanely produced veal unless the supermarkets and butcher shops tell them? I think that people should avoid veal altogether, because they cannot know whether the veal cattle have been exported from this country and kept in the crates that the Government have banned here—a ban supported by the Labour party.

Mr. Maclean: The hon. Gentleman raises an intriguing point. We can have a proper solution to this, and consumers will have the right to know exactly what they are eating, only when we have a Europewide solution and proper marking. We must also not forget that shops and supermarkets are the only places where consumers would know where the veal was produced, because some supermarkets are marking their veal as humanely produced in Britain or are selling small quantities of imported humanely produced veal. The problem lies in restaurants and cafeterias, some of which are not far from this Chamber, where veal may be on the menu, but we have not a clue where it has come from nor how it has been produced.

Sir Peter Emery: Will my hon. Friend tell the House exactly what measures he will be able to take concerning the export of live horses other than for breeding, as the practice of exporting horses purely for slaughter is obnoxious and unnecessary?

Mr. Maclean: We shall continue with the action that we have been taking since that issue first came on the agenda. We believe that the minimum values rules operated in this country are an excellent means of protecting horses. We do not want to have to resume the export of live horses and ponies. We shall continue to resist that strenuously and argue to that effect in Europe. Our policy will not change.

Dr. David Clark: Has the Minister seen the report by scientists commissioned by Greenpeace into French drift nets being used in the same fishery as our Cornish fishermen went to earlier this week? Is he aware that the scientists monitored three common dolphins and two striped dolphins that had been caught in the unacceptably

long drift nets? The Minister knows that the suffering of dolphins and porpoises is completely unacceptable to the British people, so what does he intend to do about it?

Mr. Maclean: Of course we are concerned about allegations from Greenpeace or anyone else of dolphins being caught in drift nets. I understand that as of this afternoon, in the first three days of fishing no dolphins have been caught. We shall monitor the position carefully, and we must find a Europeanwide solution to the problem. If the hon. Gentleman has any evidence, he should bring it before us.

Meadow and Pasture Land

3. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on his Department's policy towards traditional meadow and pasture land.

Mr. Curry: The environmentally sensitive areas scheme provides protection and enhancement of meadow and pasture land. We are consulting on how to strengthen that programme.

Ms. Quin: Has the Minister read the recent report of the Royal Society for Nature Conservation which gives details about the alarming loss of traditional meadows and pasture land, with their wealth of wild flowers? Will he discuss the report's recommendations with its authors? Will he give a guarantee that those meadows and traditional pastures outside the areas of protected status will be retained for the future?

Mr. Curry: I have read the report and note that it is supportive of the environmentally sensitive area principle. The hon. Lady will know that, as part of the environmentally sensitive area consultations, we are talking about the creation of new meadow land. She will also know that, in the countryside premium under the set-aside scheme, there is specific provision for the creation of grass land and meadow land, and in the new countryside stewardship scheme there are at least two or three categories that are eligible for aid and which affect grassland—for example, limestone in river bottoms. We are extremely concerned to maintain those traditional grass lands. The thrust of our policy is to enhance the environment. We shall certainly be in contact with the authors of the report to see whether they have any suggestions, as, clearly, we are pushing in the same direction and have exactly the same preoccupations.

Sir Dudley Smith: Is my hon. Friend aware that the Warwickshire nature conservation trust has taken 50 acres of excellent pasture land and meadows into its care to look after it for the community and is also seeking further tracts of land? Does he agree that that example should be copied by other counties up and down the country?

Mr. Curry: It is an example which should be copied by all organisations in a position to take action. There is widespread concern to ensure that the traditional countryside is preserved. That does not have to be to the detriment of effective and efficient agriculture—the two are perfectly compatible and there is no reason why we cannot pursue them in harness.

CAP

4. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what he next expects to discuss in the EC Agricultural Council proposals for reform of the common agricultural policy.

6. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the latest developments in negotiations over the common agricultural policy.

9. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning the latest proposals for the reform of the common agricultural policy from the European Commission.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Gummer): I expect the next discussion in the Agriculture Council to take place on 23 and 24 September. I will then place on record again our opposition to those parts of the MacSharry plan that discriminate against British agriculture, northern agriculture, specialist agriculture, efficient agriculture, the interests of the consumer, European agricultural ability to compete with the rest of the world, and use the reform not to reform agriculture itself, but to put forward Mr. MacSharry's personal views.

Mr. Moss: When my right hon. Friend next meets Mr. MacSharry, will he extend an invitation to him to meet my fen arable farmers in north-east Cambridgeshire—preferably under tight security—to explain to them the Irish logic of his proposals? His suggestions mean that they will be expected to take a cut of 35 per cent. for their cereal prices without any compensation, whereas small farmers in Ireland, Greece, Germany and France will be adequately compensated. Does my right hon. Friend agree that those are the economics of the madhouse and that the livelihoods of my constituents would be decimated to protect the incomes of less efficient farmers in Europe?

Mr. Gummer: Clearly, those proposals are not acceptable, because they discriminate against successful farmers in the United Kingdom and in other countries. The proposals were best summed up in the editorial in *The Sun*, which stated that the scheme, which was designed to control costs in the future, involved spending an extra £4 billion now. *The Sun* comments:

"More savings like that and we are all ruined."

Mr. David Nicholson: My right hon. Friend deserves congratulations and encouragement on maintaining his resistence to proposals which, by imposing an upper limit of 90 head for the beef and suckler cow premium and 750 head in the less-favoured areas for the ewe premium, will greatly damage farmers in my constituency, in Somerset and in the rest of the south-west. When will the European Community start trying to raise the standards in France, Germany and the Mediterranean countries to the standards of efficiency and structure which prevail in Britain, rather than penalising British farmers?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend is quite right to point out that the plans before us would uniquely discriminate against those producing sheepmeat in the United Kingdom. They would be particularly damaging to farmers in Wales, Scotland and the Lake district. No group of farmers deserve discrimination, but that group of

farmers is particularly vulnerable. We have sought to help it through special measures, but it is now suggested that that group should be uniquely discriminated against. That must not happen.

Mr. Evennett: Does my right hon. Friend agree that those ridiculous proposals would mean an increase of nearly 20 per cent. to the taxpayer and would do very little to affect the price of bread to our constituents? My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) has spoken about the 35 per cent. cut in the cereal price. If that became operational, would it be followed by a 35 per cent. reduction in the price of bread to my constituents in Erith and Crayford?

Mr. Gummer: The standard loaf, at a price of 65p, uses wheat worth 8·5p—that is the payment to the farmer. If the cost of the standard loaf were cut by 10 per cent.—one newspaper has suggested that that would be the result of the proposals—the payment to the farmer would have to be reduced to 2p, which is clearly impossible. It has been suggested that the MacSharry package would be helpful to the consumer, but that is not so. All the evidence is that the discrimination would result in higher rather than lower prices.

Mr. William Ross: Is the Minister aware that in his initial response he said no so often, so firmly and with such good reason that I thought that he had joined the Unionist party? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the term "extensive" farming is simply another name for low-level, inefficient production, which would fly in the face of all that we have done in this country for many years? Does he also agree that one does not make the less efficient viable by crucifying the efficient? In the GATT negotiations, will he bear it in mind that we cannot open our doors to all the surpluses of the world, which would destroy all that we have laboured for in this country for so many years? Those who have food surpluses should have a duty to world agriculture.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman will not lead me down the dangerous path of discussing internal Unionist politics. I am one of those who wish that the Unionist party would sometimes say something other than no.

We in the European Community have proposed in the GATT round a proposition that would be extremely difficult for our farmers to bear, but which would be bearable at the pace at which we have put it forward. I believe that other countries should recognise what a very important offer we have made. I do not believe that it is possible for the European Community to move far from that proposition, because it would then not be possible to bear. Our farmers deserve that other countries should recognise what is on offer and take it. We need a GATT agreement if we are to obtain the extra world trade that we all seek—that is, an agreement that can be borne by those who produce the food and look after the land.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does the Minister accept that his answer to the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) ought to be widely welcomed by all the farming unions in Wales? Will he confirm that he regards Welsh sheep farmers, whom he helpfully mentioned a few moments ago, as a specialist sector particularly worthy of support? Does he agree that one aspect that ought to receive attention is the establishment of European Community standard abattoirs available to specialist sheep farmers in Wales to enable them to sell their dead produce abroad?

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that the hon. and learned Gentleman will agree with me that it will be much easier to achieve movement on abattoirs and European standards now that, at long last, we have got the standards. We have been very much held up by the length of the negotiations. We hope now to move as soon as possible on that front.

Newspaper reports that suggest that there are those who think that Welsh farmers would benefit from Mr. MacSharry's proposals, must be based on very slim knowledge of what those proposals mean. The report to which some newspapers have referred says precisely the opposite. It points out that under the present headage limits, Welsh farmers would suffer very considerably, particularly those in central Wales.

Dr. David Clark: May I assure the Minister that the Labour party shares the view that the MacSharry proposals, including the proposal to increase the cost of the common agricultural policy, will be unacceptable to the British people? Does he appreciate that although it is all very well for him to get excited and tell us what he is against, the House has a right to ask what he is in favour of? Does he not think that he would be taken more seriously by the farmers and taxpayers of Britain if he tabled his own counter-proposals and built on the environmental proposals in the MacSharry plan? If he did that, he would begin to determine the scope of the debate instead of allowing other people to dominate it.

Mr. Gummer: I know that it is difficult for the hon. Gentleman, who is a long-time supporter of the Common Market safeguards committee and who hates the European Community, to come to the House and admit publicly that he does not understand how the European Community works. There is no way in which counter-proposals may be tabled.

My views have been made perfectly clear. The five basic points of reform that we want have been repeated time and again, both here and in the Agriculture Council, and they are gaining considerable support from my fellow Ministers of Agriculture. The one thing that this House has learnt over many months is that the Opposition spokesman on agriculture knows so little about the European Community that he finds it difficult to give advice to anyone.

Mr. Lord: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that a 35 per cent. reduction in support for cereal farmers is ludicrous and would be absolutely disastrous for them? Are not the negotiations on agriculture becoming a war of attrition and resulting in lower profits for our farmers? May I urge my right hon. Friend to come up with radical new proposals for reforming the common agricultural policy so that our farmers can see that they have a future in agriculture, instead of having to engage in a continuing battle against what seems to be a continuing decline?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend must surely agree that it would be acceptable, particularly within the context of GATT, to reduce direct price support, so long as we are able to help farmers by means of more direct and money-saving ways at the same time. What is objectionable about the MacSharry proposal is that about 90 per cent. of farmers would not have the reduction. The

reduction would therefore be borne, not only as to their own percentage but to cover that which ought to be carried by others, by the 10 per cent. who remain. What is wrong with the proposal is that the compensation goes to some but not to others and that the cut is borne largely by efficient farmers, many of whom are in the United Kingdom.

Milk Marketing Board

5. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy towards the milk marketing board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I welcome the milk marketing board's decision to submit plans for transforming itself to co-operative status.

Mr. Strang: Does the Minister recognise that many of us dispute the view that the abandonment of the current milk marketing scheme would be in the overall interest of milk producers? Does he deny that for farms that are relatively remote from major population centres, any curtailment of the guarantees currently provided by the milk marketing board could be catastrophic?

Mr. Gummer: The milk marketing board proposes that it should make some changes, because it recognises the major problem—the hon. Gentleman must come to terms with it—that more than 35 per cent. of the liquid milk now bought is legally outside the scheme and that supermarkets, which are major selling agencies, can buy their milk from countries that are, naturally, outside the scheme. The milk marketing board is trying to produce a package that will better protect the producer and meet the needs of the consumer. If the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) is opposed to the change and does not agree that the milk marketing board should seek what it believes to be the best answer, he is proposing a scheme in which he feels that he knows better than the board. I am not prepared to say that.

Mr. Conway: My right hon. Friend will know that the majority of Shropshire dairy farmers support the need for change and the view of the milk marketing board. Has my right hon. Friend read the letter in *Farming News* from the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark)? Is not it surprising that he is taking a more stick-in-the-mud attitude which will not help dairy farmers improve their incomes or businesses?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend may have seen that the shadow Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food wrote in *The House Magazine* that he did not think that there should be changes in the milk marketing scheme. He, too, thinks that he knows better than the milk marketing board. I warn him directly that if the British people find that the milk marketing scheme falls about the ears of the producers because changes were not made in time, they will know who to blame for the disaster that would befall our milk producers. The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) may laugh, but it is he who said that changes in the market should not be met by changes in the milk marketing scheme.

Mr. Skinner: Does the Minister agree that there is little that the milk marketing board can do for the two dairy farmers in Bolsover who have had to cease production because of the dioxin levels in the milk in that area? Will he guarantee that while he is arguing for the polluter to pay —we all accept that—somebody should compensate those farmers in the meantime if Coalite or any other polluter takes the matter to court? I suggest that some compensation should be paid and account should be taken of the 25 other farms that may be affected in the future.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman rightly brings to the attention of the House the plight of two dairy farmers, both of whom I have met on their farms. I know very well how seriously they are affected. I asked the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) whether I could visit those farmers since they are in his constituency and he kindly allowed me to do so.

The most important thing is that we are discussing with those farmers ways in which we can experiment on their farms to try to find the source of the pollution. During that time we shall be paying them for the facilities that they will provide and for the fact that they are keeping their animals for us and enabling us to do that research. The research will take about two or three months and, during that time, I hope that we shall be able to understand more closely how to proceed. The hon. Member for Bolsover has been kind enough to accept that this is a complex matter of fault and that we shall have to search for a long time before we find an answer. In the meantime, we shall be helping the farmers as far as we can.

Confectionery Industry

7. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to make an official visit to York to discuss current confectionery industry issues.

Mr. Curry: I am always ready to discuss confectionery issues in York and elsewhere.

Mr. Gregory: Is my hon. Friend aware of the great concern in the city of York among the 6,500 employees in the confectionery industry about the problem of counterfeiting? While British products such as KitKat have become kit kit and kit kier, those jobs are at risk. Will he talk to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to ensure that there are adequate safeguards for good British products and that appropriate action is taken, especially in the middle east and the far east?

Mr. Curry: I appreciate my hon. Friend's concern about shady snacks in the souks, if I may put it like that. He will know that the protection of intellectual property which covers precisely that issue is an important element of the GATT talks. I shall certainly undertake to point out to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry the importance of the problem for the industry, which I know is important in my hon. Friend's constituency. I shall certainly do all that I can to prevent such a theft of jobs from the United Kingdom and from Yorkshire, to which I am particularly attached.

Fishing Industry

8. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received from representatives of the fishing industry on the question of a decommissioning scheme.

Mr. Curry: I have made it clear that any decommissioning scheme must be part of an effective package of measures to conserve fish stocks and control fishery effort.

Mrs. Ewing: Does the Minister accept in principle the need for a decommissioning scheme? If so, is he prepared to sit down with representatives of the Scottish fishing industry and, instead of passing the buck directly to them, discuss in detail the relative contributions that will be made by the Government, the European Community and the industry to a conservation package which would have the confidence of the industry, rather than the present arrangement of the eight-day tie-up, which puts lives and livelihoods at risk?

Mr. Curry: We are always ready to sit down with the representatives of all United Kingdom industries, as we have demonstrated frequently in the past. We shall continue to do so.

Mr. Harris: Although I recognise the difficulties and pitfalls of a decommissioning scheme, will my hon. Friend nevertheless accept that the overwhelming desire of all hon. Members who represent fishing constituencies is that the Government should consider seriously the possibility of just such a scheme? Will my hon. Friend consider with great care the proposals put to the Government by the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations, because many of us believe that at least the outline of such a package is contained in that scheme?

Mr. Curry: Decommissioning as the sole response to the problem of overcapacity is something which we cannot accept. However, we can accept that decommissioning as part of a sensible package of effective control may have a role. Therefore, we shall discuss it with all aspects of the industry. I frequently meet representatives of the NFFO —as it happens, I met them this morning to discuss a different matter. We met the Scottish Fishermen's Federation in Brussels early last week in the margins of the Council. I shall continue to have the closest contact with those organisations and also with those representing other parts of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Does the Minister recollect that only a few moments ago the Secretary of State was ranting and railing at the House, telling us that we must accept all European solutions? As there is a European solution with decommissioning, as there is access to European Community money and given the fact that he has been much more conciliatory today, will he now push strongly in his discussions with the various bodies for a proper decommissioning scheme as part of the conservation measures? We would all welcome that.

Mr. Curry: The problem with the European scheme is that it regards decommissioning as being isolated from other conservation measures. I have made it clear that that is not a sensible approach, but we shall certainly consider it in the context of a more thorough approach to conservation. Certainly, we hope to advance that conservation matter at the next Fisheries Council in October. I repeat my promise to remain in contact with all the organisations involved.

Mr. Bellingham: The Minister will be aware that the Wash shell fishery in my constituency has its own peculiar problems, and the fishermen there are extremely grateful that he took time off last Friday to visit them. Does he believe that the decommissioning scheme that is being talked of could have any relevance for that fishery?

Mr. Curry: Whatever scheme we introduced would be extendable to all British fisheries. We could not possibly produce a scheme that would apply only to a small sector of the industry. I realise that my hon. Friend's fishery is a special case, as it is basically a shellfish fishery, but we would not consider excluding it.

Mr. Morley: We welcome the Government's partial U-turn: we are glad that they are moving towards a decommissioning scheme. Is the Minister aware, however, that this week 900 jobs were lost in a fish processing factory in Grimsby? One of the main reasons for that—apart from the economic recession that the Government have caused—is that the lack of a coherent policy for the fishing industry has caused problems with the price and supply of fish.

Will the Minister embark on talks on decommissioning, as part of a package to ensure that we have a stable and sustainable fishing industry? How much longer must we wait for a decommissioning scheme and how many more jobs must be lost before the Minister comes up with one?

Mr. Curry: We all regret the closure of the Findus factory and the consequent job losses. The problem is that there are not enough fish. To what extent would the hon. Gentleman be willing to liberalise imports to ensure increased supplies for the processing sector? That is an important question.

Beer and Lager

10. **Mrs. Currie:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the balance of trade in beer and lager products.

Mr. Curry: Net imports of beer and lager were valued at just under £89 million in 1990.

Mrs. Currie: As the Minister knows, many of my constituents work in Burton-on-Trent breweries run by companies such as Bass. Is not it a disgrace that we should have a trade deficit in beer and lager products? Given that many lager drinkers cannot tell the difference anyway, should we not be able to make Australian-type, Canadian-type, Danish-type and German-type lagers in Britain? If we can manufacture Japanese cars in this country and sell them successfully to Japan, why on earth do we have a trade deficit in beer and lager products, instead of a great big surplus?

Mr. Curry: I was born in Burton-on-Trent and no one could feel a greater desire than mine for its products to be exported much more widely.

Mr. Ron Davies: Is not it a sad reflection on a country with such a fine tradition of brewing that we now import twice as much beer and lager as we export? Is not that typical of the state of our trade balance in the food and drinks sector generally which currently has a deficit of over £5 billion? If the French, German and Dutch Governments can support their export initiatives, why on earth do our Government refuse to back British export initiatives and British interests?

Mr. Curry: First, the British Government provide such support; secondly, the breweries are, on the whole, extremely large companies and quite capable of being in the export business themselves: thirdly, the exporting habit is, unfortunately, not as widespread in the United Kingdom as it should be.

We have considerably expanded our beer and lager exports. Many of the lagers that are sold here are brewed in the United Kingdom under licence and there is no reason why—if we pay more attention to priorities—we should not be able to export more British lagers to the European Community. When my right hon. Friend the Minister and I visit Brussels, we never find it impossible to locate a hostelry offering British beer in the capital of Europe.

BSE

11. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the total incidence and regional concentrations of bovine spongiform encephalopathy in England and Wales.

Mr. Maclean: The incidence of confirmed cases of BSE in 1990 was about 0·33 per cent. of the average adult cattle population of England and Wales. Nearly half those cases have occurred in the south-west of England.

Mr. Barnes: Will the Minister confirm that BSE rates are as high as ever in this country and that there are now 31,000 confirmed cases? The Government estimated that there would be 20,000. Why is there such a difference between the Government's hope and the reality?

Mr. Maclean: The disease is following the pattern predicted by the epidemiologists. In the past few months the increase has been very slight, although the overall number of cases continues, slowly, to rise. We would expect that. The source of the disease was cut off a few years ago, when the Government took action on animal feeding. The animals now appearing with the disease were infected earlier and we must now wait until the numbers decline and die out of the system.

Mr. Marland: May I congratulate my hon. Friend on the steps that the Government have taken to eradicate BSE? If the Ministry has any influence on planning applications for the construction of BSE incinerators, will he treat them with great care and ensure that no animal incinerators are put anywhere near residential areas or even in industrial estates? The devices should be situated in isolated areas that are well away from everything else.

Mr. Maclean: My Ministry will give all the help that it can to local authorities and others, including technical advice on the design of incinerators for carcase disposal.

Mr. Ted Garrett: Does the Minister accept that there are 20 million tonnes of cereals in stock within the EC intervention fund? Does he accept also that despite the complaints of some that we are having a wet summer, the signs are that we shall have another record cereal crop? Arising from those two simple facts, is the Minister sure that the set-aside scheme is working?

Mr. Curry: The set-aside scheme was never designed to deal with cereal surpluses. Instead, it was designed to give some assistance to those who found it difficult to face the downward movement of prices. We still regard the scheme as part of the formula, but we regard producer closeness to the marketplace as the essential centrepiece of any reform of the sector.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 18 July.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is conducting bilateral discussions with President Gorbachev.

Mr. Hinchliffe: In view of the embarrassing revelations that the Secretary of State for Employment knew in June 1990 of possible embezzlement and fraud at BCCI and that the Department of Trade and Industry stated that it has not received the letters which the right hon. and learned Gentleman says he sent to it on the matter, will the Leader of the House, as a matter of urgency, set up a full and independent inquiry into the whole sorry affair?

Mr. MacGregor: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment received a letter from the BCCI staff which primarily expressed concern about redundancy arrangements at the bank. He received also a copy of a covering letter which the association sent to the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). My right hon. and learned Friend wrote to the right hon. Member for Chesterfield on these matters and, as far as I know, the right hon. Gentleman did not come back to him on them.

As for the second part of the hon. Gentleman's supplementary question, I understand that the matter is being looked into at this very moment.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thurdsay 18 July.

Mr. MacGregor: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Sir Fergus Mongomery: Does my right hon. Friend agree that if a member of the Cabinet was accused publicly by his colleagues of being unwise, unprincipled and responsible for confusion, he should do the decent thing and resign? If he agrees with that principle, and if he has noticed an item on the front page of *The Guardian*, should not the shadow Foreign Secretary resign?

Mr. MacGregor: I say to my hon. Friend—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the supplementary question was in order.

Mr. MacGregor: I cannot imagine any of my colleagues saying such a thing about any member of the Cabinet. If my hon. Friend is referring to the comments in the press this morning of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) about the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), I was interested that he said,

"Everybody knows"—

this is the statement on defence—

"it's a policy change, but no one is admitting it."
If the right hon. Gentleman says, "We will not get rid of nuclear weapons under any circumstances", that really is a change. This demonstrates that the Labour party—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Lord President should relate his reply to Government policy.

Mr. MacGregor: Government policy is very clear on the nuclear question, but the Opposition cannot, even now, give a simple answer to a simple question about their defence policy.

Mr. Hattersley: I look forward to receiving a simple answer to a simple question. Does the Leader of the House share the view expressed by the director general of the Confederation of British Industry on the "Today" programme this morning that Britain is no longer suffering from a depression but from a slump?

Mr. MacGregor: I share the view—*[Laughter.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This takes up a lot of time.

Mr. MacGregor: I will give the right hon. Gentleman a simple answer to his question. The CBI's director general said on the "Today" programme this morning:

"The manufacturing side of our economy is in much better international shape than it's been for many years."

That is a much simpler answer than the right hon. Gentleman and other Opposition Members have given on the nuclear issue for many months.

Mr. Hattersley: It may have been a simple answer to someone's question, but not mine. Can the Leader of the House attempt to justify his evasive answer having seen, as I suspect he has, the European Community's judgment on the British economy? It is that British investment will fall next year, while German investment will increase by 6 per cent.; and that unemployment in Great Britain will rise to more than 3 million next year, accounting for more than half the total increase throughout the whole Community. If that is not a slump, how would the right hon. Gentleman define one?

Mr. MacGregor: We made it clear in the Budget forecast that recovery would begin in the second half and that view is shared by the CBI and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. As to the European Commission's predictions on unemployment, I point out that it does not have a good record of making accurate forecasts. It indicated that unemployment in Germany would rise and it has not; and that employment in France would grow and it did not; and it asserted that training skill levels for school leavers were lower in West Germany than in Greece—and I do not think that anyone else believes that. I suspect that the Commission's unemployment forecast will turn out to be as accurate as that of the right hon. Gentleman in the 1983 general election, when he forecast that unemployment in this country would rise to 4 million—and it never did.

Mr. Hattersley: The Leader of the House does not seem to have a good record when it comes to remembering the Prime Minister's forecasts. In the House last week, the Prime Minister revised his forecast for recovery from the second half of this year to round about Christmas. Is not the truth that now that the glitz and glamour of the G7 summit is over, we are back in the real world of Britain's economic situation—and that real world is a catastrophe, caused by the Conservatives' policy of the past 10 years?

Mr. MacGregor: The most important things for long-term prosperity and for jobs are to get inflation down, as we are doing and which Labour singularly failed to do, and to keep public expenditure under control and at reasonable levels, which Labour also singularly failed to do. The right hon. Gentleman may remember that at the last general election, he committed Labour to increasing public expenditure by some £34 billion. Labour is at it again and that would be a real recipe for disaster for growth in the early part of the 1990s.

Q3. **Mr. Bevan:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 18 July.

Mr. MacGregor: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave a few moments ago.

Mr. Bevan: While we welcome the impending nuclear disarmament that will emanate from the G7 summit, does my right hon. Friend agree that Britain's independent nuclear deterrent would be put at risk, and could lose all credibility, if we cancelled the fourth Trident submarine —as Labour proposes to do?

Mr. MacGregor: I share my hon. Friend's strong welcome for the agreement on the START negotiations that was reached yesterday and I am sure that the House shares that welcome. However, my hon. Friend was right to draw attention to the sham of Labour's defence policy. Not only is it totally confusing, but although they will keep nuclear weapons for negotiations, on the other hand they totally undermine the credibility of our deterrent. Four Trident submarines are essential to ensure that one is on station all the time.

Mr. Madden: Why are the Government trying to gloss over the background to the closure of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International? Why are they refusing to hold an inquiry into the Bank of England's role? What advice did the Treasury give to local authorities around the country? Most of all, what did the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley) do with the correspondence alleging corruption and negligence inside the bank which he apparently received from the present Secretary of State for Employment?

Mr. MacGregor: There is absolutely no glossing over. Obviously, we are all concerned about what has happened to a number of small depositors and borrowers at BCCI. The important thing now is for the Bank and the liquidator to get on with the practical arrangements and to move as fast as possible. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has already said that he will be reviewing what happened and will see what lessons can be learnt from it. The hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) will be aware that the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee is meeting next week and that the Governor of the Bank of England will give evidence to it. Obviously many questions can be asked about what has happened over that period. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that there is no question of trying to cover up and no question of a sham.

Q4. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his engagements for Thursday 18 July 1991.

Mr. MacGregor: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Nicholson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that if the European regional funds, from which businesses in my constituency are unlikely to benefit significantly, were massively increased, the result would be a heavy cost to the British taxpayer? Does he also agree that it would be the height of irresponsibility to recommend such a policy without working out or stating honestly its cost? Is not that what we have come to expect from the shadow Foreign Secretary and the Labour party?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend is referring to some of the practical issues that arise out of moving very quickly to convergence and why it is right to take the view that the Government take in relation to economic and monetary union and moving to a single currency. If one moved to convergence very quickly and that required a very big increase in regional funds very early, it would mean taking more money from taxpayers in Scotland to give to Sicily.

Q5. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his engagements for Thursday 18 July 1991.

Mr. MacGregor: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave a few moments ago.

Mr. Salmond: What information, if any, was supplied by the Bank of England to Treasury Ministers, including the present Prime Minister, on the contents of the October 1990 Price Waterhouse report indicating serious fraud in BCCI? Does the Leader of the House accept that if it can be established that Ministers or the regulatory authorities had knowledge well before June this year of serious fraud in that bank, the Government cannot continue to wash their hands of the financial disaster facing depositors and local authorities?

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman is probably referring to the Price Waterhouse report of March 1990. He said October, but I understand that it was in March. We are probably talking about the same report. The Bank had given the Treasury explicit assurances that although previous audit reports showed evidence of poor banking standards and losses—this applies to all these reports—they provided no evidence on which it could act in respect of the widespread fraud that was subsequently uncovered in the section 41 report. The evidence of bad banking standards and losses was being tackled by injections of capital from shareholders and by substantial management changes. It was the change in management that ultimately led to the discovery of extensive fraud, which led to the section 41 investigation. That was the first time that the Bank had evidence of serious and widespread fraud on which to take action.

Mr. Knapman: Does my right hon. Friend recall the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Romford (Sir M. Neubert) on Tuesday and the slur and slander by the general secretary of the Labour party on the President of the United States and particularly on the President's manner of election? Has my right hon. Friend received any indication from the Leader of the Opposition that he wishes to dissociate himself—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This matter is not the Government's responsibility. *[Interruption.]* This is taking time. Let us move on.

Q6. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 18 July.

Mr. MacGregor: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave a few moments ago.

Mr. Douglas: While not being too thirled to statistics, although they are important, will the right hon. Gentleman acknowledge that the rate of unemployment in the United Kingdom and Scotland is dramatically high and is producing great suffering? Will the Government and the right hon. Gentleman in particular stop behaving like a cross between a pit bull terrier and a Scot—a Scots terrier —*[Interruption.]*—the type of dog which would ravage us first and then scurry away to get the ambulance. When the ambulance man comes along, he pours on the iodine and says, "If it isn't hurting, it isn't working." It is hurting, but it ain't working because it is producing great suffering on the part of the people of Scotland and many unfulfilled opportunities.

Mr. MacGregor: Obviously we regret any increase in unemployment, because it affects families very substantially, but it is important to keep the matter in context. If one looks at the other side of the coin, one will see that there are 1 million more jobs than there were in 1979. We have more jobs in this country than most other countries as a proportion of the working population.

We are taking extensive measures to deal with unemployment, particularly the longer-term unemployed. It is significant that about half of all the unemployed find jobs within three months. It is also quite reasonable to point out that a wide variety of the measures that the main Opposition party is putting forward would increase unemployment, destroy part-time jobs, impose extra burdens on industry and therefore make the position much worse.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): May we have the business for next week, please?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 22 JULY—Motion for the summer Adjournment, followed by proceedings on the Consolidated Fund (Appropriation) Bill.

TUESDAY 23 JULY—Consideration of any Lords amendments which may be received to the Ports Bill.

Proceedings on consolidation measures. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

WEDNESDAY 24 JULY—Opposition Day (19th allotted day). There will be a debate described as "The Failure of the Government's Economic Policies" on an Opposition motion.

Supplemental timetable motion on and consideration of any Lords amendments which may be received to the Dangerous Dogs Bill.

THURSDAY 25 JULY—Debates on the Adjournment.

The House may be asked to consider any other Lords amendments which may be received.

It may also be for the convenience of the House to know that the provisional business for the first week after the summer Adjournment will be as follows:

MONDAY 14 OCTOBER and TUESDAY 15 OCTOBER—There will be a debate on a Government motion to approve the Defence Estimates 1991 (Cm 1559, volumes 1 and 2).

At the end on Tuesday, motion to take note of EC document No. 5577/91 relating to the future of the European Coal and Steel Community. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

WEDNESDAY 16 OCTOBER—Second Reading of the Cardiff Bay Barrage (No. 2) Bill, subject to the decision of the Select Committee on Standing Orders.

THURSDAY 17 OCTOBER—Debate on a motion to take note of the outstanding reports of the Public Accounts Committee to which the Government have replied.

FRIDAY 18 OCTOBER—Debate on the policing of London on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

The House may be asked to consider any other Lords amendments which may be received.

The House will also wish to know that European Standing Committee A will meet at 10.30 am on Tuesday 23 July to consider European Community Document No. 4717/91 relating to the Environmental Labelling Scheme.

[Tuesday 23 July:
Proceedings on the Consolidation Measures
Water Industry Bill [Lords]
Water Resources Bill [Lords]
Statutory Water Companies Bill [Lords]
Land Drainage Bill [Lords]
Water Consolidation (Consequential Provisions) Bill [Lords]
Deer Bill [Lords]
Statute Law Revision (Isle of Man) Bill [Lords]
Agricultural Holdings (Scotland) Bill [Lords]
Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Regulations.

Tuesday 23 July:
European Standing Committee A
Relevant European Community Document
4717/91 Ecological Labelling

Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee
HC 29-xv (1990-91), HC 29-xxv (1990-91).

Tuesday 15 October:
Floor of the House
Relevant European Community Document
5577/91 Future of ECSC Treaty

Relevant Report of European Legislation Committee
HC 29-xviii (1990-91).]

Mr. Grocott: Following the exchanges at Prime Minister's Question Time on the Bank of Credit and Commerce International, can the Leader of the House arrange for either the Secretary of State for Employment or the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to make a statement to the House to spell out exactly what has happened to two letters, one dated 12 June last year and one dated 19 June last year, which drew attention to the serious problems facing BCCI and which now seem to have gone missing? My hon. Friends the Members for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) and for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) received totally unsatisfactory answers. Will the Leader of the House ensure that the relevant Secretary of State comes to the House to give an answer?

I wish to refer to the controversy over the Government's failure to make a statement on Rosyth and related naval matters earlier this week. Will the Leader of the House confirm what we know to be the case, but we want to see it on the record, that at no stage did the Government offer us, the Opposition, a statement on Rosyth on Tuesday? We should like public confirmation of that.

On another matter relating to defence and the need for a statement, will the Leader of the House undertake that the Secretary of State for Defence will come to the House next week to give us details of the proposed regimental changes and—this is important to many of our constituents—their implications for the civilian employees of Ministry of Defence establishments? We want to know the Government's precise plans as early as possible.

Given today's horrendous unemployment figures—this is the 15th consecutive monthly increase—will the Leader of the House confirm that our only opportunity to debate that will be in our precious and limited Opposition time next Wednesday and that, once again, not surprisingly, the Government have refused to find time for a debate on the jobs crisis that is affecting so many people?

I turn now to another important point—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry if the Parliamentary Private Secretary, the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart), is getting upset, but these are important matters—*[Interruption.]* Believe me, the Leader of the House is nothing to do with me.

I am sure that, like us all, the Leader of the House recalls that the House was rightly recalled during last summer's recess for an emergency debate on the Gulf. We all fervently hope that there will not be any comparable need for Parliament to be recalled during this recess, but may I have the absolute assurance from the Leader of the

House that if there is a crisis, either abroad or domestically, which leads us, the Opposition, to ask for a recall of Parliament the right hon. Gentleman will see to it that Parliament is rapidly recalled?

The one reason—*[Interruption.]* It is always nice to annoy Conservative Members, Mr. Speaker. Finally—Conservative Members will not like this one either—the real reason why we should dearly like Parliament to be recalled during the summer recess is so that the Prime Minister can dissolve the House of Commons and call a general election. Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that there is no prospect of the Prime Minister plucking up the courage to do that?

Mr. MacGregor: That was a large number of questions and I should be here for a long time if I were to reply to them in full, which is what I am tempted to do. In answer to the hon. Gentleman's first point about the letters, I have answered the main substance of that, as I understand it. I said that the letters related to redundancies at BCCI and that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment has responded to that. I have said that another point that was raised in the letters is now being looked into. I shall certainly ensure that the House is informed, but that it is informed in the appropriate way. We must judge the right way to inform the House.

In answer to the hon. Gentleman's point about a statement on Rosyth, it is always difficult to strike a balance between ensuring that we get on with the announced business of the day, which is often very full, and deciding on the number of oral statements that should be made, and when. The hon. Gentleman knows that, through the usual channels, we spend a great deal of time trying to get that right in the interests of the House. I hope that I have got it right on most occasions, although I do not claim that I have always done so. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence discussed with me the possibility of an oral statement, but it was my understanding that the Opposition did not want an oral statement on their half-day Supply day. Therefore, I decided that it would not be appropriate to have an oral statement on that day. I wish to make that clear. There was a genuine misunderstanding about the matter. I hope that the House feels that the decision that we took following discussion between the usual channels to make a statement yesterday was the right way to proceed.

The hon. Gentleman asked about a statement on the review of the regimental system. I can confirm that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence will make a statement before the House rises for the summer recess. I am not sure whether it will cover civilians, but I shall certainly convey to my right hon. Friend the hon. Gentleman's request. The hon. Gentleman said that the matter caused anxiety among his constituents. I am sure that he accepts the point made rather frequently yesterday that one cannot express anxiety about such matters and possible losses of jobs as a result of the changed requirements facing defence and at the same time advocate much larger reductions in defence expenditure. I hope that that will be borne in mind when my right hon. Friend makes his statement.

I am tempted to give the hon. Gentleman a long and full answer on unemployment, but I shall forbear to take the opportunity to do so. There have been many opportunities, including in Government time, to discuss economic matters and unemployment. It was possible to do so during the proceedings on the Finance Bill and on several other occasions. It will be possible to raise unemployment next week in time other than the Opposition Supply day. It could be raised on the motion for the Adjournment, in the Consolidated Fund debate and in the debates on the Adjournment on Thursday. If unemployment is raised in the debate on the motion for the Adjournment, I shall certainly point out the consequences for employment of Labour policies.

Naturally, if there is a crisis which justifies recalling Parliament, we shall do so. Whether it was justified would have to be a matter for discussion through the usual channels.

In response to the hon. Gentleman's point about my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, let me say that the Government have a great deal of excellent business still to do. The Government are getting ahead with the firm and proper business of government. I have the utmost confidence in my right hon. Friend's judgment, including his judgment about when we should have a general election.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I draw the attention of the House once again to the busy day ahead of us? I ask hon. Members to ask questions about business next week or when we return. Will they also bear in mind the ballot that has been taken to select the subjects for the Consolidated Fund Bill debates? I ask hon. Members not to ask questions about matters which will be the subject of a debate on Monday.

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there will probably be no statement about the channel tunnel rail link route before the House rises for the summer recess? Is it seriously proposed that there should be no public statement until the House reassembles on 14 October? In view of the great interest in the route, the great anxiety that the matter causes and the related problem of blight, will my right hon. Friend persuade the Secretary of State for Transport to make an official statement during the recess followed by a statement in the House as soon as we return?

Mr. MacGregor: I am aware of the great interest in that matter. I will certainly discuss with my right hon. and learned Friend the suggestion made by my hon. Friend. I am aware of the anxiety of many people that a statement should be made as soon as possible. However, my hon. Friend will recognise that we have a crowded programme for next week.

Mr. Speaker: It may be for the convenience of the House, if the House will allow me, to draw attention to the first 12 debates that have been drawn out of the ballot for the Consolidated Fund: first, United Kingdom relations with Latin America; second, Her Majesty's Government's policy with regard to Cambodia; third, the Department of Health's decision to license RU486; fourth, BCCI; fifth, nuclear deterrence; sixth, the number of High Court judges; seventh, trade union reform; eighth, economic and employment prospects for Londoners; ninth, European Community agricultural policy; tenth, training and enterprise councils; eleventh, tourism and the case for a tourism ombudsman; twelfth, the construction industry.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): As a member of the Select Committee on Procedure, may I congratulate the Leader of the House on responding so promptly with the motion to be debated today on the Committee's report on Select Committees? In that the motion allows for an expansion of the remit of the Scottish Affairs Committee, and knowing that the Leader of the House would not wish the House to embark on an academic or window-dressing exercise, may we assume that next week the motion will be laid for setting up a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs?

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his opening remarks. I must tell him in all honesty—because I always believe in being frank in these matters—that he is being a trifle optimistic in his hope for next week.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): If, as seems likely, during the summer recess the Labour party falls apart over militants, Europe, defence and trade union matters, will my right hon. Friend consider recalling Parliament so that the nation may be aware of exactly where the Labour party stands on all those issues and so that we on this side may capitalise on it?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend makes an ingenious suggestion, but it is not in the category of crisis because the Labour party will not have the opportunity of applying its policies in practice. A number of other events will be taking place during the recess, not least two conferences, where I have no doubt that the divisions in the Labour party will be clearly revealed.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Has the Leader of the House seen today's publication of the Public Accounts Committee report on the debacle of the abolition of the dock labour scheme? Is he aware that that report says that the scheme was intended to cost £25 million but actually cost the Government £141 million? According to the report, that was due to the crass incompetence of the Government rushing through the legislation without any checks. The Conservatives' blinkered ideology led them to push ahead without considering the consequences. Will the right hon. Gentleman find time for a debate so that every member of the Government may bear his share of responsibility? If the municipal treasurer of any Labour-controlled authority had made such wildly wrong estimates and cost his authority such a great sum, he would be drummed out of office, as the Government soon will be.

Mr. MacGregor: The Government will reply to the report of the Public Accounts Committee in the usual way, and a debate will take place on those matters also in the usual way.

Sir Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): My right hon. Friend will have seen that 43 right hon. and hon. Members have added their signatures to early-day motion 1084 under the heading, "Immigration: (Carriers' Liability)".

[That this House, whilst recognising the intention of restricting improper attempts to enter the United Kingdom, as outlined by the Home Secretary in his statement of 2nd July 1991, is of the opinion that the doubling of the £1,000 charge payable by the carrier for each passenger who fails to produce valid documents is an unfair imposition on the great majority of British shipping and aviation carriers who have attempted to comply with the requirements of the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987.]

He will be aware that that relates to the Government's proposal to increase from £1,000 to £2,000 the fine levied on airlines for carrying immigrants to this country without adequate papers. Has he also noted that a prayer has been tabled to annul that order? Can he guide me on whether, as we approach the recess, the introduction of that doubling of the fine can take place before the matter has been debated in the House, that prayer having been tabled? In other words, any intention by the Government to rush it through will not now be possible until we resume on 14 October.

Mr. MacGregor: I will write to my hon. Friend on the procedural point he raised. Regarding the point of substance in the early-day motion, during the first three months of this year more than 2,400 cases of improperly documented passengers were recorded. We recognise that some carriers are making efforts to check documentation prior to departure, but in many cases those could be made more stringent. Some carriers are known to be making less vigorous checks, or none at all. My hon. Friend will recognise that there is widespread concern in the country about people arriving at United Kingdom airports without proper documentation, and that adds greatly to the problems of dealing with immigration cases and so on. That is why the Government thought it necessary to increase the charge payable.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Does the Leader of the House recall that last week he told me he would convey to the Secretary of State for Defence my concern over the case of three soldiers, one a constituent of mine, who lost their legs? Has he seen my new early-day motion 1134, which congratulates *The Times* on its excellent coverage of, and leading article on, the case on Monday?

[That this House welcomes the leader in The Times *on 15th July which called for adequate compensation to be paid to the three guardsmen, Adrian Hicks, Sean Povey and John Ray, who lost their legs in a training exercise in July 1989; recognises the support given for compensation by a very large number of honourable Members as well as very senior officers in the Grenadier Guards and the general public; and urges that this matter be satisfactorily resolved before the House rises on 25th July.]*

May we have an assurance that the matter will be dealt with in some way before the House rises for the recess? An injustice has been done to three young men who joined the Army for the very best of reasons and who, through no fault of theirs, have been crippled for life. I hope that I shall not be misunderstood if I say that it is unfortunate—I do not blame the Leader of the House—that the matter has been trivialised by hon. Members wearing or not wearing top hats. The issue is extremely serious and Members on both sides of the House are deeply concerned about it.

Mr. MacGregor: I am aware of the concern, and I know that my right hon. Friend is also aware of it. Indeed, I have passed on the concern, not only after it was mentioned last week but on several occasions, and my right hon. Friend continues to give it serious and urgent attention. As the hon. Gentleman will know, these are difficult and complex matters. However, everyone has great sympathy for those concerned and we are anxious to ensure that they have full

information. The hon. Gentleman probably knows of a meeting that took place recently between officials and the legal representatives of the three guardsmen. I shall again convey the hon. Gentleman's feelings, which I know are shared by my hon. Friends. I cannot promise a statement next week, but I shall certainly discuss the matter with my right hon. Friend to see how any further information can be passed on during the recess.

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): Serious allegations have been made of widespread abuse of children in three county council children's homes in Leicestershire during the 13-years period from 1974 to 1986. The allegations are concerned with the sexual abuse and assault of the children. Charges are pending in respect of the allegations —*[Interruption.]* Therefore, the case is sub judice and I cannot comment further—*[Interruption.]* I have taken advice on this matter, Mr. Speaker. However, without prejudging the outcome of the case, if those allegations are substantiated, it is my firm opinion and that of the Conservative group leader on Leicestershire county council that there should be a full public inquiry——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that that is enough. The hon. Gentleman has now made his point.

Mr. MacGregor: I recognise that the case is presently before the court and is therefore sub judice. I understand, however, that the local authority has commissioned an independent review and has asked the Department of Health social services inspectorate to carry out an inspection of its children's homes.

Mr. Gordon McMaster (Paisley, South): Will the Leader of the House join me in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) and the Renfrew district council on the case that they have put forward for a national stadium in Renfrew district? Will he find time next week for the Secretary of State for Scotland to make a statement on the future of a national stadium for Scotland? Does he agree that this is not merely a Scottish matter because the Scots think that supporters of English football teams have a right to see their teams being beaten in comfort?

Mr. MacGregor: I shall not be tempted to answer the last question because I have views on that and it might be unwise to express them. I cannot promise a statement on that matter next week. We have a lot of business and I have already mentioned the problems involved in achieving a balance. Obviously other opportunities are available to the hon. Gentleman for raising the matter.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Will my right hon. Friend announce next week the results of the inquiry that he promised to carry out into how executive agencies should report through Ministers to the House? Is he aware that, if we continue with the present arrangements, with answers not being given properly in *Hansard*, the House will lose control of those agencies, which are staffed exclusively by civil servants paid with public money?

Mr. MacGregor: I have already mentioned ways in which all the information can be made available to the House and the public. My hon. Friend will know, however, that the Procedure Committee has dealt with that issue in its recent report, and I understand that the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee is also looking into it and may have recommendations to make. I shall wish to take account of the views of both Committees in my discussions with my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Privy Council Office.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): The Leader of the House will be aware of concern throughout the country about the continued imprisonment of the UDR Four. Last week we were assured that there would be a statement soon. How soon is soon? Am I being a trifle optimistic in hoping that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will make a statement before the House rises for the recess?

Mr. MacGregor: As I think the hon. Gentleman knows, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is considering the matter and will then decide whether, under his discretionary powers, he would be justified in referring the case back to the Northern Ireland Court of Appeal. I cannot say how soon "soon" is, but I shall have a further word with my right hon. Friend to see whether he can say when he is likely to come to a decision.

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): In yesterday's all-too-brief Welsh debate, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales rightly stressed his accountability to the House. Will my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House give an assurance that the Government will allocate a full day's debate on the Welsh Office consultation paper on the structure of local government in Wales before the consultation period on the document ends on 31 October?

Mr. MacGregor: I understand the importance of the matter, and there are many ways in which my hon. Friends can express their views on it. I would not wish to give my hon. Friend an assurance that it will be possible to have a full day's debate on the subject before 31 October. I am very much aware of the pressures on the timetable, and I have already announced the business for our first week back after the recess.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): May we have a statement on the two letters of June 12 and June 19 last year, which were ultimately sent to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and which the Leader of the House said referred primarily to redundancy? Is it not true that those letters, which came from employees of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International, contained allegations of fraud? Did not the writer of those letters predict that, unless the Government acted, there would be a catastrophe for both investors and employees?

Mr. MacGregor: I have already answered that question, and Mr. Speaker has announced that there will be a debate on the matter on Monday.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there would be a wide welcome for a statement on the guardsmen next week? Will he also confirm that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will make a statement on the G7 summit, which he conducted with such great skill?

Mr. MacGregor: I do not think that I can add to what I have already said about the guardsmen.

I entirely agree with what my hon. Friend said about the leadership that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has shown at the G7 summit, at which so many

[Mr. MacGregor]

constructive views and decisions were carried forward. I can confirm that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will make a statement on it in the House tomorrow.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): Will the Leader of the House consider setting aside time for a debate on the ramifications of the G7 summit? It should be a debate on, not so much the role that the Prime Minister played in the summit, but on the worries expressed—since the announcements were made yesterday—by those in eastern Europe who fear the wholesale collapse of the economies of the newly democratised countries of Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia because the Russians are not able to purchase their products? It is absolutely essential that the west takes a proper and positive role in supporting the Russian economy so that the newly democratised countries do not collapse.

Mr. MacGregor: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman did not feel able to acknowledge the outstanding leadership that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister showed at the summit yesterday, and I am sure that many hon. Members will wish to acknowledge that tomorrow. The issue to which the hon. Gentleman referred can be raised when my right hon. Friend makes his statement tomorrow——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Why tomorrow?

Mr. MacGregor: The answer to that question is simple: my right hon. Friend is having bilateral talks with President Gorbachev this afternoon, and therefore he wishes to report to the House at the earliest opportunity after those talks are completed.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Will the Leader of the House try to persuade the Attorney-General to make a statement next week on the specific allegation that Mr. Mohammed Fayed and others sought to discredit and attack the chairman, advisers and members of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry by making the appalling suggestion that they were subject to bribery and corruption? Does my right hon. Friend agree that this is a far too serious issue to justify waiting till after the recess before a statement is made? Will he seek to persuade the Attorney-General to say what, if anything, the Government propose to do about it?

Mr. MacGregor: I shall draw my hon. Friend's comments to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Leader of the House clarify the position between himself and the other side of the usual channels in relation to the Rosyth statement? I thought that the right hon. Gentleman chose his words extremely carefully. Was it his view that the Opposition did not want a statement on Rosyth?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That happened yesterday.

Mr. Douglas: I understand that, but can the right hon. Gentleman say whether, in future, we will have clarification as to what type of statement the Opposition refuse—whether they refuse a general statement or a statement on a specific subject such as Rosyth?

Mr. MacGregor: I think that the hon. Gentleman is asking for the impossible if he wants me to reveal exactly what discussions took place every time a statement is made or not made. Often those discussions cover a lengthy period. I cannot assure the hon. Gentleman that I shall do that in the future.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): My right hon. Friend will know that, from time to time, I have asked that there should be a full day's debate at least once a year on science policy and the allocation of national science resources. My right hon. Friend will also know that the parliamentary office of science and technology has recently produced a report on the relationship between defence and civil research and development. Would it not be appropriate that that document should be one of the basic documents that we discuss during the two-day debate on defence in October?

Mr. MacGregor: I do not know whether we would want to table that document; I shall have to consider that. The main document is the defence White Paper, but matters relating to defence research and development could be raised during the debate.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): Further to the comments of the Leader of the House on the statement next week on the regimental structure, can he ensure that that statement will be made before Wednesday so that the Select Committee on Defence has an opportunity to examine it before the summer recess? When he communicates with the Secretary of State for Defence, can he refer him to column 357 of yesterday's edition of *Hansard* where the Secretary of State said that the Opposition should tell the truth? Today it has been proved that the Opposition did tell the truth, and the Leader of the House should tell his right hon. Friend to be more modest when he comes to the Dispatch Box next week.

Mr. MacGregor: On the statement next week, I cannot say now precisely when it will be as it is obviously a matter that must be considered early next week when we look at the business. I shall convey the hon. Gentleman's point to my right hon. Friend, but that must be without prejudice to exactly when we make the statement.

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): Has my right hon. Friend seen the early-day motions signed by Members on both sides of the House referring to the loss of heritage and identification in the counties of Lancashire and Yorkshire that has been felt by many of their constituents? Is my right hon. Friend aware that the unhappiness about the loss of ancient county references for postal purposes, road signs and for maps is widespread, not least in the west midlands where, ironically, Edgbaston cricket ground is no longer in the county of Warwickshire? Given that widespread unhappiness, will my right hon. Friend arrange for a debate on this subject, preferably before the end of the recess, as the consultation period is under way now at the Department of the Environment?

Mr. MacGregor: There are many early-day motions and I do not carry the text of all of them in my head. I believe that my hon. Friend could raise that issue on the motion for the Adjournment on Monday.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): Is the Leader of the House aware that there is growing concern on Teesside that the privatisation of the Tees and Hartlepool port as a

result of Government legislation that will be considered next week will result in that port falling into foreign hands under the Government's competitive tendering provisions? Is he aware that guidelines for the sale of ports were introduced in another place but are now in the Vote Office? Will the right hon. Gentleman assure me that the guidelines will end up in the Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority Bill rather than simply in the Vote Office?

Mr. MacGregor: I do not want to give a guarantee on that as that is a matter for my right hon. Friend. I do not know the details of the matter, but if the hon. Gentleman is right obviously the documents are in the Vote Office now. If that is the case, they are available. I shall convey the hon. Gentleman's point to my right hon. Friend, but this is an extremely late stage at which to consider additions to the Bill.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): May we have a debate as soon as possible on air travel so that we can discuss, notwithstanding Lord King's fit of pique, the enormous benefits to air travel of the Government's policy of privatisation and increased competition? A debate would also give us the opportunity to explore the position of the Labour party. On the one hand, it constantly complains that we do not introduce enough competition into privatised industries, but, on the other, it lost absolutely no time in rushing to the defence of Lord King when he started to whine about having to face competition from companies such as Virgin Atlantic.

Mr. MacGregor: I agree with my hon. Friend that the policies that we have pursued—privatisation, greater competition and greater liberalisation among the world's airlines—have been greatly to the benefit of the consumer and have led to improved services. They are a clear indication that what we are doing is right for the consumer. I should welcome the opportunity for these matters to be debated in the House and to make the contrast suggested by my hon. Friend. However, I cannot give a guarantee that it will be during the next week or so.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): Will the Leader of the House find time for a statement next week on the disturbing evidence of Mr. Robin Robison, former administrative officer of the Joint Intelligence Committee, who has shown that sophisticated eavesdropping technology is now so totally out of control that many people, including a former wing commander in the Royal Air Force, a former Falklands war hero and possibly scores of Members of Parliament, are having their telephones tapped without the prior knowledge of any Minister, let alone Parliament? It is a constitutional outrage. The Home Secretary should come to the House and explain his role.

Mr. MacGregor: The Interception of Communications Act 1985 requires interception to be authorised by a warrant issued by a Secretary of State. It provides for the oversight of the arrangement by an independent commissioner and provides a mechanism for complaint by individuals to a tribunal. I do not think, therefore, that a separate statement by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is needed. Certainly it would not be right to comment on individual allegations.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): In view of the considerable importance attached by many of my constituents to improved public transport, can my right hon. Friend offer the prospect of an early debate—if not before the House rises, then during the overspill period—on the question of the future of London bus transport? If one is looking for an improved way to carry more people safely and with energy efficiency in London, better conditions for travel by bus are paramount.

Mr. MacGregor: I recognise my hon. Friend's concern, but I cannot provide him with an assurance that during the overspill period, which is never very long, there will be time for a debate on that matter. There are other ways, however, in which my hon. Friend can raise it on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): My question is a matter of concern to hon. Members in all parts of the House—the violence in the security industry and the clear evidence that it has been infiltrated by organised crime. Guns and other dangerous weapons are being used against members of the public and the staff employed by publicans and others in the leisure industry. Is it not time that the Secretary of State for the Home Department made a statement to the House on whether he intends to introduce regulation of the industry to prevent those criminal elements from infiltrating the security industry further, thereby allowing security companies that want to operate effectively to do so, thus protecting individuals, the police and other members of the community from the dangerous activities of these men of violence?

Mr. MacGregor: Although there are many important matters that could be raised in the House, the time available for doing so in Government time, or in statements next week and during the first week after we return from the summer recess, is limited. There are other ways, including putting questions to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, that the hon. Gentleman could use to pursue the matter further.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Has my right hon. Friend's attention been drawn to the amendment to his motion on the Order Paper, "Select Committees Related to Government Departments", which has been tabled by the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) and myself, proposing that there should be a Select Committee on Northern Ireland? Northern Ireland has——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is referring to today's business?

Mr. Stanbrook: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: I am going to select the amendment. Does that help?

Mr. Stanbrook: I am asking about the Government's attitude to the amendment, because it will be reached at a very late hour. Northern Ireland has more Ministers per head of population than any other part of the United Kingdom, yet it has the least parliamentary discussion. This is a way in which we can increase the discussion. Will the Government accept that amendment?

Mr. MacGregor: It would be very unfair if I were to deal now with all the matters that are to be raised later in the day. It is appropriate that I should deal with them when we reach them later in the day.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): As the Leader of the House knows, the health service is important to all of us, yet it is disgraceful that the local health board for the Lothian region has repeatedly broken commitments to the community, particularly the community in Leith, which in particular means that a promised new hospital will not be built, unless it is with private money. Is that not something that we should debate next week? Is it not something that we should look at closely because it is a betrayal of everyone who has contributed to the health service? At the end of the day, we are talking not about charity but about a basic right. The Government talk about a citizens' charter. Let us discuss the health service and that hospital above all else.

Mr. MacGregor: I do not understand the hon. Gentleman's point about charity. Substantial funds are being spent on the health service as a whole and on the Lothian health board. I dispute entirely any idea that that health board has been underfunded because it has been funded on the same basis as other health boards. This year it received an allocation of £352 million for recurrent expenditure in 1992. In real terms, that represents an increase of nearly 28 per cent. since 1979.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Is my right hon. Friend aware of growing public anxiety at the shady activities of charity promoters and some charities? Would that be an appropriate subject for debate as soon as possible after the recess, bearing in mind that it is now 10 years since Christian Aid submitted its accounts to the Charity Commissioners? Will my right hon. Friend consider with his Cabinet colleagues legislation to be announced in the Queen's Speech to give the Charity Commissioners some real teeth, bearing in mind the arrogant behaviour of Oxfam which, in its recent report, rejected the criticism of political activity?

Mr. MacGregor: I accept that there is a need to make considerable changes to charity legislation and we are committed to doing that. I should like to see us do so as soon as it is practicable. I cannot say that it will be included in the Queen's Speech because it is a matter for announcement at that time. However, I can give my hon. Friend an assurance that we are keen to undertake major changes in charity legislation as soon as we can.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Has the Leader of the House seen the press publicity this week about the activities of the Secretary of State for Education and Science in a school in Hampshire where children were plainly engaged in party political activity? As a former Secretary of State for Education and Science, does the Leader of the House recognise that the approval of parents and head teachers should have been secured before such activity commenced? Does he agree that the Secretary of State needs to maintain a balance to avoid the accusation that schools are no longer places of education but are being used, as in this case, for the purposes of indoctrination?

Mr. MacGregor: I have been photographed with school children on many occasions on the many visits that I have paid to schools; and I know that the same applies to Opposition Members as I have seen some of the photographs. Therefore, I do not understand the hon. Gentleman's point. If he regrets the fact that it was the occasion of the 100th grant-maintained school, I should tell him that many people believe that grant-maintained schools are one of our most successful reforms. I see frequently that they are widely welcomed by parents and staff and I believe that they will be of great benefit to pupils as well.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): Will the Leader of the House look carefully at the newspapers today and tell me whether he shares my horror and unhappiness at the continuing traumas of the vicar's daughter who was raped and whose attacker is now being let out of prison so early? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the crime of rape against women needs to be punished far more severely and that victims need much greater support? The Government have made large strides through much more sensitive police treatment and handling of these difficult cases, but the reality of that poor girl's plight is that she will now be living in fear and terror of being attacked again.

Mr. MacGregor: I support all my hon. Friend's general remarks and understand fully why she has made them. I cannot comment on the individual case because I have not yet had an opportunity to read the press report. As I have said, I certainly support the general thrust of what my hon. Friend said.

Ms. Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): I am sure that the Leader of the House is aware of the increasing concern about the plight of the thousands of Shias who are stuck in the marshlands of southern Iraq, out of sight of television cameras—apart from one or two brave camera men and women who have gone there—and out of sight of the photographers. As the United Nationas envoy has recently been there, will the Leader of the House ask the Foreign Secretary to make a statement to the House before the recess on whether there is any possibility of the same effort being put into helping the Shias as has been put—rightly—into helping the Kurds?

Mr. MacGregor: I know of the House's interest in such matters, but I cannot guarantee that my right hon. Friend will be able to make a statement because of the pressure of business. However, the hon. Lady could raise the issue on the motion for the Adjournment on Monday if there is not time for a statement.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Does my right hon. Friend believe that this may be the time for a further debate on hospital trusts? Despite the blunders of the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) and other Labour Members in trying to mislead the public by saying that hospitals that apply for trust status are opting out, is my right hon. Friend aware that the excellent Heatherwood hospital in Ascot, in my constituency, which is applying for trust status, is having its application opposed by the local Labour party? The Labour party is asking the public to sign a petition which states that Heatherwood hospital is going private. That is a straightforward lie and a con, and a debate would give the hon. Member for Livingston and others the opportunity to put right members of the Labour party all over the country and to tell them to stop lying to our constituents.

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend has other ways in which to raise that issue, but I entirely agree that it is

wholly wrong to suggest that trust status means that a hospital is going private. Everyone knows that that is not true, and such a claim should not be repeated.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): As the Leader of the House has clearly read newspaper reports in the past two or three days about Tory Members of Parliament and some of their acolytes booking the Dining Rooms to make money for the Tory party, may we have a register of all such bookings when the House is sitting and during the recesses? I have the impression that, because the Tory party is losing the money that it once received from British Airways, Lord King and others, it is making up for that through those bookings and is abusing the procedures of the House with the local Tory parties around the country.

Mr. MacGregor: I recall having read in the press not long ago of a large and very expensive fund-raising dinner which took place on behalf of another political party. I merely draw that to the hon. Gentleman's attention.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): Can my right hon. Friend find time to widen the debate on the way in which we conduct business in the House? In the past couple of days there has been a row about the problem of finding enough time for statements and to allow us to question Ministers on important matters which are usually of a narrow constituency interest. Will he consider extending the sensible system of Committees of the whole House which examine European business so that instead of going to a press conference Ministers could have a room in the House and access to hon. Members to make statements when there was not sufficient time to do so on the Floor of the House? We should then have a chance to question Ministers in front of members of the press and to have our queries answered.

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend will no doubt be able to make that suggestion to the Select Committee on Procedure and the Sittings of the House which we have just set up. However, I know that under all Governments—not just the present Government—a large number of statements are made during Government business on larger and smaller issues. There would be great practical constraints on carrying out his suggestion that all statements should be made in the House.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Is the Leader of the House aware that at a meeting in Oxford today UK Nirex will reach a decision—it may have already done so—about whether Sellafield or Dounreay will be the chosen site for the disposal of low and intermediate level radioactive waste? Is he also aware that UK Nirex has made it clear that that decision will not be made public for some considerable time? In view of the importance of the issue, especially in the highlands of Scotland, will he use his best offices to ask the Secretary of State for Energy to ensure that a statement is made to the House before the House rises next week? The industries and councils of the highlands and islands in particular will want to know whether the cloud has been lifted from their shoulders.

Mr. MacGregor: I did not know about today's meeting, and I can give no guarantee of further statements in the House next week, but I shall draw my right hon. Friend's attention to what the hon. Lady has said.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): As there will be no time for a debate on the volunteer reserve after Monday's Consolidated Fund debate, will my right hon. Friend try to find time for such a debate in the next week? Is he aware of the concern felt by members of the Royal Observer Corps all over the country about the insensitivity with which the recent announcement about their future was made? I should like the matter to be thoroughly discussed, if that is possible.

Mr. MacGregor: It will not be possible for us to deal with the matter in Government time, but my hon. Friend may wish to take advantage of one of the opportunities that will be available to him next week.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): In replying to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), the Leader of the House referred to a fund-raising dinner held by the Labour party. That dinner was held outside the House, in Park lane; my hon. Friend was talking about the abuse of dining facilities in this place by Conservative Members who are using them to raise funds for the Tory party—and, it appears, bringing in strangers who appear to be charging for the use of those facilities.

This is an abuse, and the Leader of the House must deal with it very shortly. I hope that he will make a statement next week, and that, when he does so, he will tell us what is meant by the "annual quota of dinners" for Conservative Members. I have never heard of that. I have been here for a few years, and I have used the facilities, but I have never abused them. What is going on over there?

Mr. McGregor: I do not know what the annual quota is, so I shall have to look into it.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): As a degree of urgency is involved, will my right hon. Friend arrange before the summer recess for a number of copies of the newspaper *Militant* to be made available in the Library, the Tea Room, the Smoking Room and Norman Shaw as so many Opposition Members seem to enjoy reading it?

Mr. MacGregor: Many of us are aware of the considerable number of Opposition Members who support Militant policies. I shall be happy to acquaint my hon. Friend and others with some of the documents that I see in this connection; no doubt he will do the same.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): May I press the Leader of the House on the question of the use of the Dining Rooms, and urge him to carry out an investigation? He must know—it has been reported throughout the national press this week, and mentioned in certain court proceedings—that there is an annual allocation of Dining Rooms to Conservative Members——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not referring to a case that I believe may be sub judice.

Mr. Madden: Indeed not.

It has also been claimed that commercial organisations posing as Conservative party fund raisers have free use of the Dining Rooms, and instruct Members of Parliament to take rich American tourists to the shop, the Terrace and the Strangers Gallery. Is it any wonder that our constituents cannot get into this place when it is chock full of American tourists being charged through the nose by these bogus organisations? It is high time that the Leader of the House carried out an urgent investigation and cleaned up this racket as soon as possible.

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) mentioned the contribution of British Airways. Last year, for every £1 contributed to the Conservative party by British Airways, the Transport and General Workers Union contributed nearly £40 to the Labour party, but I have not heard anyone suggest that members of the TGWU should not be allowed to come into the House and enjoy its facilities. I think that it is extremely difficult to draw the line.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): Has my right hon. Friend had a chance today to read an important and interesting article in the national press in which the shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), makes it clear that his party's policy of a national minimum wage is "non-negotiable"? Given the immense concern outside the House about the policy and the fact that many organisations, including Labour organisations, have made it clear that the policy could cause up to 1 million jobs to be lost—a number of union leaders have variously described the policy as barmy or nonsensical—does my right hon. Friend really think that a one-day debate next Wednesday on the economy will be sufficient to allow my hon. Friends and I to draw attention to the catastrophic effects of the introduction of a national minimum wage?

Mr. MacGregor: That will clearly be quite a sizeable issue to be raised in the debate on Wednesday. I was interested that the newspaper report to which my hon. Friend referred stated that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) had also said that the Labour party had no intention of phasing in the reform of a national minimum wage. As I understand it, that is a change in the Labour party's policy. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment has written today to the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East on the matter, and I hope that we shall have an answer on Wednesday.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Could the Leader of the House arrange for an urgent debate on poll tax enforcement procedures? Is he aware that on Tuesday, on Tyneside, Susan Monson, a mother of three, was gaoled for three months—the longest sentence ever imposed for the "offence" of which she was found guilty —for inability to pay the poll tax? The fact was recognised this morning when the Tyneside council concerned withdrew the complaint from the court. It did so—it is to its credit that it did—when it was finally convinced that her only income was income support.

Where does that leave all the assurances that we have had from Ministers that no one who was unable to pay the poll tax would ever be sent to prison? Does not the right hon. Gentleman realise that we need a debate, during which he could announce that the Debtors (Scotland) Act 1987, which abolished the medieval barbarity of putting people in prison for debt, would be extended, as it were, to stop such gaolings in England and Wales?

Mr. MacGregor: I cannot comment on the case to which the hon. Gentleman referred because I have not read a report of it and, therefore, I do not know all the details. The hon. Gentleman will know that there are arrangements for community charge rebates for those on lower incomes. He will know also that there is the greatest possible concern—the issue is raised whenever these matters arise at meetings throughout the country—about those who have refused to pay the community charge and who have incited others not to do so.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): May I thank my right hon. Friend for announcing a two-day debate on defence? It will enable many hon. Members to be called, including, I hope, many of the 150 who sympathise with CND. Did my right hon. Friend hear the sotto voce comment of the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) that he would cancel the whole of the Trident programme? Would not that policy be disastrous for the defence of our country and for our standing in the world?

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I shall say it as loudly and for as long as I can.

Mr. MacGregor: We have had two seated interjections, which have hardly been sotto voce, that have confirmed what my hon. Friend has said. There are clearly considerable divisions in the Labour party on the matter. That is something that can be raised legitimately during the two-day defence debate.

Mr. Cryer: Will the Leader of the House make a statement next week on the "World in Action" programme entitled "Defending the Realm", during which several eminent people close to the establishment made the serious claim that MI5 and MI6 are out of control and undertake surveillance, including telephone tapping, without ministerial authority? It was said that they have information from the telephone taps that are labelled to the effect that it is specifically to be excluded from information that is given to Ministers. Will the right hon. Gentleman explain to the House in a statement why it is that at GCHQ—this was made clear during the programme—the number of people dealing with telephone taps has been increased to 75? These people could deal with 35,000 tappings a year, and yet the number of warrants that are issued by Ministers amount to only about 500. Is it not time, in the interests of democratic accountability, to stop that spy-crazed mania, which was pointed out by Peter Wright, and to replace it by decent democratic accountability to the House? We could start with a statement instead of a cover-up.

Mr. MacGregor: I did not see the programme to which the hon. Gentleman referred, but I will draw his comments to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Has the Leader of the House had an opportunity to examine early-day motion 115, on third world debt and the Group of Seven summit?

[That this House is alarmed at the high level of debt of the world's poorest countries; notes that the reality of the world's economy is that through interest payments and repatriation of profits by multi-national companies there is an enormous net transfer of wealth from the poorest countries to the banking systems of the West; further deplores the way in which the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, GATT and Lomé convention are enforcing liberal free market economic regimes on the poorest countries with the consequent disastrous cuts in public spending, high unemployment, deteriorating environment, and health care; and accordingly calls for the G7 summit to propose the writing off of the debt and real increase in commodity prices for the poorest countries' products.]

I am aware that the Prime Minister is to make a statement tomorrow on the summit's outcome, but does the right hon. Gentleman accept the urgent need for a full debate on Government strategy for dealing with indebtedness by third world countries? Such indebtedness has resulted in famine in Africa; cholera in Peru, because of health service cuts there; and devastation in many other parts of the third world. All that is the consequence of debts that are unpayable and a commodity pricing system that robs the poor to give to the richest in the world. Unless we confront that issue, this year's catastrophes will be multiplied many times over the next few years, and we will then face real disaster.

Mr. MacGregor: As the hon. Gentleman knows, because that issue is frequently debated in the House, the Government support a substantial aid programme that includes technical and emergency assistance to some of the areas that he mentioned. The hon. Gentleman knows also that we pioneered debt relief for the world's poorest countries at various international forums, and the proposals of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister form the basis of the substantially improved treatment agreed yesterday at the London economic summit. Obviously the hon. Gentleman's point can be raised when my right hon. Friend makes his statement tomorrow.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Whatever may be the reasons, 1 million people are missing from the electoral register—2·5 per cent. of those eligible to vote in England, Scotland and Wales. When can we debate in prime time the problems that that situation creates? I hope that the Leader of the House will not tell me to pursue the issue in other ways, such as on an Adjournment debate, because as you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, know, I have tried incessantly to do so for the past three years. The Government's lack of concern about electoral registration is an utter constitutional and democratic disgrace.

Mr. MacGregor: I have responded to the hon. Gentleman on that point on a number of occasions.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East): In view of the redundancies and short-time working that are affecting my constituents in Cowley, and car workers at Longbridge, Swindon, and elsewhere in the country, is there not an urgent need for a Government statement or a debate on the consequences for the British car industry of the Government's catastrophic economic policies? In the depths of what is now a slump, ought not the Prime Minister to initiate a review of the high interest rates, high value added tax, and high special car tax policies that are so damaging to the car industry and change them before further damage is inflicted on that vital national industry?

Mr. MacGregor: I reject the hon. Gentleman's charges, but, as he knows, there is to be an economic debate next week.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, East): The right hon. Gentleman said that, immediately after the House returns from the summer recess, we can expect a debate on the reports of the Public Accounts Committee. He will recall that when the House returned from last year's summer recess it debated the Committee's outstanding reports, but he may be unaware that during that recess it was not possible for right hon. and hon. Members to discover which reports were to be debated, or which of them had received a Government response—and the reports themselves were not available to right hon. and hon. Members wanting to take part in that debate.

Can the right hon. Gentleman give an assurance that, this time, a list of the reports will be published, and that those which have received a response from the Government will be identified? Can he confirm also that the reports themselves will be available to right hon. and hon. Members so that they may study them in advance and take part in the debate? I am aware that a number of the reports are embarrassing to the Government, but that is no excuse for not allowing right hon. and hon. Members to read them.

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I did not know of the situation last year, but I will look into the matter. The hon. Gentleman makes a reasonable point, and I will see what I can do to meet it.

Adjournment (Summer)

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I have a brief statement to make on behalf of Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker has asked me to remind hon. Members that, on the motion for the Adjournment of the House on Thursday 25 July, up to nine hon. Members may raise with Ministers subjects of their own choice. Applications should reach his office by 10 pm on Monday next. A ballot will he held on Tuesday morning and the result made known as soon as possible thereafter.

Property Services Agency

4.34 pm

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You may recall that last Wednesday the Secretary of State for the Environment answered a private notice question from my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) about a leaked letter which referred to a dowry being offered to ease the privatisation of the Property Services Agency. In his reply, the Secretary of State said that the reference to the dowry meant

"nothing other than the redundancy pay that we wish to protect".—[*Official Report*, 10 July 1991; Vol. 194, c. 950.]

Many people at the time thought that that answer lacked plausibility. Today's issue of the magazine *New Builder* reports authoritatively that Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte, which are advising the Government on the privatisation, had warned them that the PSA will have a negative value of at least £50 million and perhaps £100 million and that a dowry in excess of any basic redundancy costs would be required. The report states:

"The claim contradicts the statement by Environment Secretary Michael Heseltine last week to the House of Commons that any cash dowry, for PSA services would seek to cover the cost of redundancies only."

The matter is of considerable importance, not just because of the 19,000 jobs at stake, but because any talk of a dowry, or, to put it in other terms, a sweetener, runs the risk of breaking European Community rules and providing a re-run of the Rover scandal.

The Secretary of State for the Environment must surely have been aware of the advice tendered by his professional advisers. He should now come to the House and make a statement and a full apology. What can you do, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to protect the House from being misled on matters of such importance?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): The hon. Gentleman will realise that that is not really a matter for the Chair. No doubt he will wish to raise it in other ways; and I am sure that those on the Government Front Bench will have heard what he said.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As you know, money that is authorised for expenditure by Ministers must be covered by a money resolution in this House. To my recollection, no money resolution covering that kind of sweetener, bribe or dowry has been authorised. As you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I take an interest in money resolutions. It is therefore a matter of considerable concern and of accountability to the House if those promises are made which amount to expenditure by a Minister when authority for that has not been given by the House. Can you ensure that that point is examined?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I realise that the hon. Gentleman is a specialist on money resolutions. However, we are not considering a money resolution at the moment. I am sure that he will use his well-known ingenuity to raise the matter on another occasion.

Orders of the Day

Child Support Bill *[Lords]*

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered

New Clause 2

APPLICATION TO CROWN

'.—(1) The power of the Secretary of State to make regulations under section 13 requiring prescribed persons to furnish information may be exercised so as to require information to be furnished by persons employed in the service of the Crown or otherwise in the discharge of Crown functions.

(2) In such circumstances, and subject to such conditions, as may be prescribed, an inspector appointed under section 14 may enter any Crown premises for the purpose of exercising any powers conferred on him by that section.

(3) Where such an inspector duly enters any Crown premises for those purposes, section 14 shall apply in relation to persons employed in the service of the Crown or otherwise in the discharge of Crown functions as it applies in relation to other persons.

(4) Where a liable person is in the employment of the Crown, a deduction from earnings order may be made under section 30 in relation to that person; but in such a case subsection (8) of section 31 shall apply only in relation to the failure of that person to comply with any requirement imposed on him by regulations made under section 31.'—*[Mr. Jack.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

4.37 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Michael Jack): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The new clause extends the provision in clause 13 to the supplying of information by Crown servants and gives the inspectors appointed under section 14 powers to enter Crown property in prescribed circumstances.

Dr. Norman A Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): The Minister's comments were so brief that I did not have a chance to intervene. With regard to new clause 2(3), which refers to an inspector entering Crown premises, will the Minister confirm that the definition of Crown premises includes, among other things, military bases?

The Minister knows why I ask that question. He and I have had extensive correspondence about the position of absent fathers serving with Her Majesty's forces. The Minister will recall a case that was brought to my attention by my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing); and I, too, have knowledge of such a case. I am anxious for the Minister to establish by way of the *Official Report* that the definition of Crown premises includes military bases within the United Kingdom. If that is the case, I shall view the new clause with considerable sympathy. There was a gap in regulations to protect children vis-à-vis absent fathers serving with the armed forces in the United Kingdom.

I go further and ask another question. Would a military base such as an Army camp or a ship moored to the quay at Rosyth or at Portsmouth for perhaps four weeks or so —I look to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for some protection on this matter—also fall within the confines of "Crown

premises"? What is the position of soldiers stationed in an Army camp in Germany? Would such a base fall within the definition of a United Kingdom posting? If that is the case, it surely means that those service men also fall within the terms of the new clause. Upon the Minister's answers rests my decision whether to call for a Division on the new clause.

Mr. Jack: The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) puts an onerous responsibility on my shoulders at this early stage in our proceedings. I shall do my best to respond in as much detail as I can. I have already done my best, through correspondence, to indicate to him the relationship between the way in which the Child Support Agency and its inspectors will operate and the way in which service personnel normally deal with questions of maintenance.

It is important to reflect for a moment on the nature of the inspector's work. The inspector is a seeker of information in circumstances in which normal methods of inquiry by telephone or letter are not providing the required result—in civilian terms, he would go to the pay office or personnel office by appointment. The hon. Gentleman will remember that we have carefully prescribed when an inspector may act. In terms of Crown property, it is certainly my understanding that he would be able to go into areas of military activity, but only to make the inquiries that I have mentioned.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned a hypothetical situation in relation to shipping. He will know that there is much law about shipping, which we may debate another time. The relevance of the hon. Gentleman's inquiry is that we are not likely to find, for example, naval pay officers on board ships in the way that the hon. Gentleman mentioned. As for inquiries about people abroad, that would more naturally be conducted by means of correspondence and inquiry. As I said by letter, commanding officers will be involved in assisting, as they do now in a co-operative manner, the seeking of information.

Dr. Godman: The Minister knows that the armed services Acts, one of which was passed recently, allow armed services Ministers to make Orders in Council which, among other things, can take cognisance of developments in other legislation—in this case, the Child Support Bill. Will the Minister speak to his colleagues in the Ministry of Defence to ensure that aspects of this legislation which impinge on the Armed Services Act 1991, where that Act itself deals with the care and protection of the children of armed forces personnel, are taken into consideration?

Mr. Jack: The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow has an unparalleled record in Standing Committee of rightly probing the way in which the measure affects our endeavours to seek maintenance from all absent parents with a particular responsibility, whatever they may do. I certainly would not try to double-guess the answer to the hon. Gentleman's question. However, so that he is not left in doubt, I undertake to raise the matter in the way that he requested and to write to him and again highlight the developing situation.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 3

JURISDICTION

'.—(1) A child support officer shall have jurisdiction to make a maintenance assessment with respect to a person who is—

(a) a person with care;
(b) an absent parent; or
(c) a qualifying child,

only if that person is habitually resident in the United Kingdom.

(2) Where the person with care is not an individual, subsection (1) shall have effect as if paragraph (a) were omitted.

(3) The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision for the cancellation of any maintenance assessment where—

(a) the person with care, absent parent or qualifying child with respect to whom it was made ceases to be habitually resident in the United Kingdom;
(b) in a case falling within subsection (2), the absent parent or qualifying child with respect to whom it was made ceases to be habitually resident in the United Kingdom; or
(c) in such circumstances as may be prescribed, a maintenance order of a prescribed kind is made with respect to any qualifying child with respect to whom the maintenance assessment was made.'.—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

4.45 pm

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

This new clause sets out the geographical framework for the jurisdiction of the Child Support Agency. There is to be a simple and easily understood test of jurisdiction —that is, that all parties to a maintenance application should be habitually resident in the United Kingdom. Habitual residence is a test that is already recognised within family law legislation. The agency's jurisdiction for the present will not cover cases where one or more of the parties is habitually resident outside the United Kingdom. Such cases will be, as now, for the courts to decide. The circumstances in such cases are likely to be complex and therefore more appropriate for the courts to exercise their discretionary powers. Also, it would be essential for the courts to deal with a case where it was necessary to invoke any of the international agreements and conventions which provide for the reciprocal enforcement of maintenance orders. I commend the new clause——

Dr. Godman: Again I ask a brief question. I remind the right hon. and learned Gentleman that new clause 3(2) states:

"When the person with care is not an individual, subsection (1) shall have effect as if paragraph (a) were omitted."

Does that mean that, when a child is taken into care to protect his interests against abuse or allegations of abuse or neglect, the social worker or even the foster parent, if such a child is placed in foster care, could not claim on behalf of that child?

The Solicitor-General: If I have understood the hon. Gentleman's question correctly, he reminds me that subsection (2) states:

"Where the person with care is not an individual, subsection (1) shall have effect as if paragraph (a) were omitted."

Subsection (1) states:

[The Solicitor-General]

" '.—(1) A child support officer shall have jurisdiction to make a maintenance assessment with respect to a person who is—

(a) a person with care".

Obviously, it would not be appropriate to make a maintenance assessment in respect of such a person if he is not an individual, since the object of maintenance assessments is that individuals should be assessed; consequently, that is to be omitted. I hope that that is clear.

Dr. Godman: I was concerned that a certain section in the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, where a child has been taken into care, places responsibility on the local authority to seek, where possible, maintenance from an absent parent. That is why I made my intervention.

The Solicitor-General: Under the new clause it would not be appropriate to seek maintenance from an absent parent through the Child Support Agency if the absent parent were not habitually resident within the jurisdiction.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): I am still not clear what the Government are trying to achieve in the new clause. Perhaps the Solicitor-General will be able to help me. Clearly, it is intended to provide that if a parent or child is not habitually resident here, the maintenance assessment cannot be made. If that is the case, perhaps the Solicitor-General will elaborate on what would happen in that eventuality. Ideally, a court maintenance order should then be made so that it can be sent abroad to be enforced. Perhaps the Government are trying to provide that in subsection 3(c), but it is not entirely clear from the wording. If subsection 3(c) is not designed to provide for that eventuality, what is its purpose? What does "habitually resident" mean, and who is to decide on the definition?

The Solicitor-General: "Habitually resident" means that, as a matter of habit or of normal lifestyle, those persons reside in this country. It is a term of art which means just what one would expect it to mean. If those persons live in France or Germany most of the time, that is where they are habitually resident. The case would then involve complexities with which it would be difficult for the Child Support Agency to deal, although the courts are accustomed to dealing with them. For the time being, therefore, we think it wise that those more complex cases should not be foisted upon the agency in its early years, but should be left to the courts to deal with because the courts are experienced. I hope that that makes the situation clear.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 4

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MAINTENANCE ASSESSMENTS AND CERTAIN COURT ORDERS AND RELATED MATTERS

'.—(1) Where an order of a kind prescribed for the purposes of this subsection is in force with respect to any qualifying child with respect to whom a maintenance assessment is made, the order—

(a) shall, so far as it relates to the making or securing of periodical payments, cease to have effect to such extent as may be determined in accordance with regulations made by the Secretary of State; or

(b) where the regulations so provide, shall, so far as it so relates, have effect subject to such modifications as may be so determined.

(2) Where an agreement of a kind prescribed for the purposes of this subsection is in force with respect to any qualifying child with respect to whom a maintenance assessment is made, the agreement—

(a) shall, so far as it relates to the making or securing of periodical payments, be unenforceable to such extent as may be determined in accordance with regulations made by the Secretary of State; or

(b) where the regulations so provide, shall, so far as it so relates, have effect subject to such modifications as may be so determined.

(3) Any regulations under this section may, in particular, make such provision with respect to—

(a) any case where any person with respect to whom an order or agreement of a kind prescribed for the purposes of subsection (1) or (2) has effect applies to the prescribed court, before the end of the prescribed period, for the order or agreement to be varied in the light of the maintenance assessment and of the provisions of this Act;

(b) the recovery of any arrears under the order or agreement which fell due before the coming into force of the maintenance assessment,

as the Secretary of State considers appropriate and may provide that, in prescribed circumstances, an application to any court which is made with respect to an order of a prescribed kind relating to the making or securing of periodical payments to or for the benefit of a child shall be treated by the court as an application for the order to be revoked.

(4) The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision for—

(a) notification to be given by the child support officer concerned to the prescribed person in any case where that officer considers that the making of a maintenance assessment has affected, or is likely to affect, any order of a kind prescribed for the purposes of this subsection;

(b) notification to be given by the prescribed person to the Secretary of State in any case where a court makes an order which it considers has affected, or is likely to affect, a maintenance assessment.

(5) Rules may be made under section 144 of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980 (rules of procedure) requiring any person who, in prescribed circumstances, makes an application to a magistrates' court for a maintenance order to furnish the court with a statement in a prescribed form, and signed by a child support officer, as to whether or not, at the time when the statement is made, there is a maintenance assessment in force with respect to that person or the child concerned.

In this subsection—

"maintenance order" means an order of a prescribed kind for the making or securing of periodical payments to or for the benefit of a child; and

"prescribed" means prescribed by the rules.'—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

The Solicitor-General: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient also to consider Government amendments Nos. 21 and 63.

The Solicitor-General: The new clause and the amendments allow us to provide for a smooth transition in matters relating to the amount of maintenance, its collection and enforcement where, in an individual case, an assessment by the agency supersedes a court order or vice versa.

Mr. Allen: I should like to put on record the Opposition's concern about several of the provisions, although that concern is more transparent in relation to the new clause. We are concerned about the many regulations that are attached to the Bill. Both in Committee and in the other place, reference was made to the fact that the Bill contains literally hundreds of regulatory powers. Perhaps the Solicitor-General will comment in a slightly broader sense rather than focusing solely on the new clause on the concept of extending legislative powers away from the Chamber to elsewhere, such as to Committees.

The Solicitor-General: I am happy to comment on that in general terms and do so almost entirely without embarrassment. In the increasing complexity of modern life, it would be foolish for the House to seek to scrutinise every detail of our secondary legislation in the detail with which we properly scrutinise primary legislation. Even if the Government were to show the self-restraint that all Governments purport to show until they come into office, we all know that the legislative burden on the House is heavy. Consequently, when one is dealing with complex and sophisticated matters, it is much more sensible for the House to deal with the principle of the Bill and then, as often happens—it is a wise thing to do if we are to get the provisions right—to put the details of the regulations out for consultation, with plenty of notice, to the interested agencies and specialist bodies that watch the provisions closely, and then to bring them before the House for approval. I have no difficulty in commending that mode, especially in an area such as this, where it is important that we get the detail right, as well as the principle.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 5

WELFARE OF CHILDREN: THE GENERAL PRINCIPLE

'.Where, in any case which falls to be dealt with under this Act, the Secretary of State or any child support officer is considering the exercise of any discretionary power conferred by this Act, he shall have regard to the welfare of any child likely to be affected by his decision.'.—*[Mr. Jack.]*

Brought up, and read the first time.

Mr. Jack: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss Government amendment No. 8.

Mr. Jack: My noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor accepted an amendment that was tabled on the Bill's Third Reading in another place, but made it clear that further refinements would be necessary. New clause 5 is the result of those considerations of the refinements that might be made. In its revised form, it replaces the present clause 2.

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): We welcome the new clause. There have been great discussions about the existing clause 2, which the new clause will replace with wording that is more applicable to the welfare of children.

Throughout our discussions on this Bill, certain comparisons were made with the Children Bill, which is soon to become law. The phrase used was that "the interests of the child should be paramount". I should have preferred that definition to the wording of the new clause, which states that the officer

"shall have regard to the welfare of any child likely to be affected by his decision."

Nevertheless, we welcome the new clause.

I am, however, anxious to ensure that the principle that the welfare of the child should be considered in the exercise of any discretionary power conferred on a child support officer should relate to the whole Bill. When we discuss clause 43 and the amendments to be tabled to it, we hope that the Government will accept our amendment No. 5, which seeks to change the current rigid level of benefit reduction into a more flexible discretionary power for the child support officers in the case of mothers who feel unable to co-operate with the child support officers. The Minister will have time to consider that point because we have not yet reached consideration of clause 43, but if the Government accept those provisions they would, indeed, be having due regard to the welfare of the child. Perhaps the Government will also reconsider some of the Bill's more punitive aspects because if they do not, as the Bill stands, the welfare of the child will be affected.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I echo the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) and ask the Minister whether he is sure that the wording of the new clause will suffice. Although I accept that it is an improvement, it still uses the phrase,

"any child likely to be affected".

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, on the executive committee of which I serve, together with the hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims), who gives distinguished service to the society and who will seek to move an amendment later, has drawn a relevant case to my attention. A citizens advice bureau on Merseyside has reported the case of a client being called into the local office of the Department of Social Security and asked to sign a form stating that he was the father of a child and responsible for its maintenance. The child in question was six years old, but the client was unaware of his existence. If the client is unaware of a child's existence, surely it is likely that the officers who are charged with administering the provisions might also be unaware of the child's existence.

In such circumstances, unless we have real assurances that great care will be exercised, not merely is an injustice likely to be done, but a great deal of harm and distress could be caused, especially to second marriages and subsequent families. Although the new clause is an improvement, I wonder whether the provisions are enough to ensure that unfortunate consequences do not arise in many cases.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): I shall not keep the Under-Secretary of State too long because, as someone who supports new clause 5, I merely wish to clarify one point. The way in which the provisions work will become apparent only when the Department issues guidelines about the interpretation of "discretion" and the regulations. Will the Minister confirm that, when the new clause is passed, his Department will publish guidelines on how the officer is to interpret the discretionary powers? In the past, when discretionary powers have been given, it has been known for the Department to issue guidelines that undermine or restrict the way in which the discretionary power can be used.

[Mr. Ian McCartney]

Secondly, will the Department provide for welfare rights groups, women's groups, solicitors and others, as soon as practicable after the implementation of the Bill, a report on the types of discretion used in various agency offices so that we can build up a picture of what discretion is used and ensure that it is even-handed in relation to case work? If discretion is not applied properly and in the wide sense in which hon. Members on both sides of the House intend it to be used, will the Government take steps to ensure proper use of discretion so that no decision leaves a child or family with less income than it would have had?

For example, in a marginal case a mother may claim that violence could occur if the former partner was reintroduced into the relationship as a result of the agency asking her to disclose information about him. A former partner might seek access as a result of the involvement of the agency in discussions about the matter at hand. Will discretion be in favour of the woman in all circumstances so that the family's benefit is not reduced? She should be given the benefit of the doubt and the officer's discretion should not be curtailed in such a way as to mitigate against the child.

5 pm

Mr. Jack: The debate has been a short but important review of an important change which the Government introduced after the debate in another place.

The hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) talked about the importance—I think that she used the word "paramount"—of the interests of children. The terms of the new clause show how we have sought to extend the approach used where matters affecting the welfare of the child are clearly prescribed in the Bill to areas where those actions are not so prescribed. I hope that the hon. Lady takes it as a measure of our good intent that we did not resist the amendment in another place but have sought to widen it fully to reflect the importance of the welfare of the child.

The hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) made some interesting and perceptive comments. I hope that he will be able to remain with us for the debates on subsequent clauses. I shall deal later with the way in which the measure will operate, especially with reference to second marriages. It will be incumbent on a child support officer to take into account the welfare of any child. The hon. Gentleman will already have made the bridge in his own mind. I shall deal with that a little later.

The hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) made another important point about how we are to guide people. Child support is still a sensitive area. While we have conceded the point, we still have further thinking to do about the precise nature of guidance to child support officers on carrying out this sensitive work. I give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that I will read carefully his words and ensure that they are properly taken into account.

Mr. McCartney: I am happy that the Minister has given a commitment that the Government are still considering the best way of drafting the advice. Will that consideration include giving organisations involved in looking after children or representing mothers an opportunity to comment on the advice before it is finally published?

Mr. Jack: If the hon. Gentleman had been with us in Committee, he would have heard me give the assurance on several occasions—I am happy to reiterate it—that in framing the regulations and in our other work on the Bill we shall continue to consult on a wide basis, especially with many of the organisations that have already written to us to make representations. Right hon. and hon. Members will be aware that we have met some of their requirements. We shall certainly consult.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 6

LIABILITY ORDERS: ENFORCEMENT THROUGHOUT UNITED KINGDOM

'.—(1) The Secretary of State may by regulations provide for—

(a) any liability order made by a court in England and Wales; or

(b) any corresponding order made by a court in Northern Ireland,

to be enforced in Scotland as if it had been made by the sheriff.

(2) The power conferred on the Court of Session by section 32 of the Sheriff Courts (Scotland) Act 1971 (power of Court of Session to regulate civil procedure in the sheriff court) shall extend to making provision for the registration in the sheriff court for enforcement of any such order as is referred to in subsection (1).

(3) The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision for, or in connection with, the enforcement in England and Wales of—

(a) any liability order made by the sheriff in Scotland; or

(b) any corresponding order made by a court in Northern Ireland,

as if it had been made by a magistrates' court in England and Wales.

(4) Regulations under subsection (3) may, in particular, make provision for the registration of any such order as is referred to in that subsection in connection with its enforcement in England and Wales.'.—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

The Solicitor-General: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

New clause 6 introduces a technical provision which will allow enforcement of a liability order throughout the United Kingdom, regardless of where the order was made. It will thus avoid unnecessary and time-consuming reapplication should the liable person move between the separate jurisdictions of the courts of England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The provision mirrors existing provisions in the Maintenance Orders Act 1950. It is clearly sensible and I commend it to the House.

Dr. Godman: Am I correct to assume that, when a case against a person who fails to meet his or her obligations reaches the sheriff court, that person could face a period of imprisonment? If so, has the Secretary of State for Social Security apprised the Solicitor-General of any discussions that he may have had with the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Home Secretary about the suggestion that I made in Committee that such periods of imprisonment should be inflicted on a person at the weekends as opposed to in a solid block of six weeks or whatever?

The Solicitor-General: I do not instantly know whether any such discussions have taken place. I shall find out during our proceedings this afternoon. We shall deal with imprisonment in later clauses.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 7

RIGHT OF AUDIENCE: SCOTLAND

'. In relation to any proceedings before the sheriff under any provision of this Act, the power conferred on the Court of Session by section 32 of the Sheriff Courts (Scotland) Act 1971 (power of Court of Session to regulate civil procedure in sheriff court) shall extend to the making of rules permitting a party to such proceedings, in such circumstances as may be specified in the rules, to be represented by a person who is neither an advocate nor a solicitor.'.—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

The Solicitor-General: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 87 and 88.

The Solicitor-General: Clause 45 currently enables any person authorised by the Secretary of State to have a right of audience and a right to conduct litigation before a magistrates court in connection with any proceedings under the Bill. The House will recall that the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security, my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack), said in Committee that we had given further thought to the Scottish position.

The new clause makes analogous provisions for Scotland in relation to civil proceedings before the sheriff, and amendments Nos. 87 and 88 make the necessary consequential amendments to the provisions in clause 53.

In Scotland civil proceedings in the sheriff court are regulated by court procedural rules made under section 32 of the Sheriff Courts (Scotland) Act 1971. Such rules, after appropriate consultation and discussion, are formulated by an independent body known as the Sheriff Court Rules Council and, if approved, are ultimately made by the Court of Session. The new clause extends that power to allow parties to specified civil proceedings in the sheriff court to be represented by a lay person. The new clause is clearly sensible and I commend it to the House.

Dr. Godman: I have one anxiety about new clause 7, which refers specifically to section 32 of the Sheriff Courts (Scotland) Act 1971. That section refers to the power of the Court of Session to regulate civil procedures. It begins by stating:

"Subject to the provisions of this section, the Court of Session may by act of sederunt regulate and prescribe the procedure and practice to be followed in any civil proceedings".

That refers to an ordinance which allows the Court of Session to regulate its procedures by way of an Act dating back to 1540.

Sheriffs in Scotland are willing to deal in their courts with professionals who are not solicitors and advocates in, for example, proof cases brought from a children's panel. The sheriff will meet social workers and others in his or her court, and I see no difficulty arising about that.

The new clause refers to people being "represented by a person who is neither an advocate nor a solicitor."

I hope that that would not prevent such a person, when appearing in the sheriff court, from applying for legal aid. There will be cases involving children and their carers in which a non-professional would not be appropriate and an advocate would need to be employed. I am anxious that the Legal Aid Board in Scotland does not refuse such applications because of the wording of the new clause—*[Interruption.]* I hope that Conservative Members will take this seriously because it is an important matter. I want an assurance that the Legal Aid Board will not try to save money because of the wording of the new clause which, apart from that concern, I regard as a reasonable provision.

The Solicitor-General: I listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman's remarks. He pointed out that some provisions are ancient. A happier feature of a civilised society is that provisions that have been standing since, say, 1540 have been so standing because they were sensible even then and have stood the test of time.

The hon. Gentleman's main question referred to what the Legal Aid Board might or might not do in relation to certain applications. He will know that, in certain circumstances, legal aid in the form, for example, of advice by way of representation—for somebody who might need representation because he or she had failed to comply with a liability order or something of the sort—might be forthcoming from the board or the court. It would not be wise for me to give undertakings off the cuff, but I promise to look into what the hon. Gentleman said and write to him with an explanation of the likely practicalities.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 1

SAFEGUARDERS

'.— (1) In Scotland, if a child applies to the Secretary of State for a maintenance assessment to be made with respect to him, the local authority may, if it think fit, appoint a person ("the safeguarder") to represent the child in respect of such an application and any related matters.

(2) It shall be the duty of any safeguarder appointed under this section to promote the interests of the child concerned.

(3) In this section, "local authority" means a regional or islands council.'.—*[Dr. Godman.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Dr. Godman: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

My new clause is titled "Safeguarders," a term with which the Solicitor-General will be familiar. While my clause may be concerned with a very small number of children, its provisions are important. I have no doubt that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will reject it, but that he will, as always, give me a sympathetic hearing and be courteous in that rejection.

Children over 12 will have the right under the Bill to apply for maintenance on their own behalf. A provision to that effect was introduced in Committee. That provision has been received positively in Scotland by professionals with whom I have spoken following the conclusion of the Committee stage.

5.15 pm

The majority of children, many of whom will be the sons and daughters of one-parent families, will have their maintenance applications pursued by their mothers and in a few cases it will be the fathers. Children in the care of local authorities will have their interests defended and promoted by social workers in local social work departments or, in England, social services departments.

While my new clause refers to "safeguarders," the term "advocate" or "representative" would equally have sufficed. I have chosen "safeguarders" because the word is familiar in Scotland, as we have safeguarders working with children at children's hearings and on parental rights issues. Indeed, my personal view is that they are under-used in Scotland. It may be possible for them to carry out the functions under this legislation, but I suggest that safeguarders—or advocates or representatives—should be established to secure or promote the best interests of the small number of children to whom I have referred.

The concept of an advocate on a child's behalf was raised by the recent child care law review in Scotland. There is substantial support for such posts in child care legislation, and such persons would be appropriate for the functions that are likely to arise under the Bill.

Children of 12 or over in Scotland have the right to instruct solicitors, though I confess to not knowing the position south of the border. Such a child should have support and guidance because solicitors are not always the best professionals to deal with children, particularly children who are shy and inarticulate. Some solicitors use what some of us regard as pedantic and stilted English and are not always the best professionals to deal with children. I imagine that as I speak, I am losing votes hand over fist with the lawyers in my constituency.

It is important that I raise issues of this kind because there are few Scots in the House today. I refer in my new clause to a local authority meaning

"a regional or islands council".

Islands councils have been in the news recently in another context. That apart, they contain a vast body of expertise in their social works departments in dealing with children's issues. That is why the regional or islands all-purpose authority would be the most appropriate body to establish a safeguarder for a child in that situation. But hon. Members may prefer an independent body—perhaps the Child Support Agency itself—to provide such assistance to a child aged 12 or over seeking to make an application.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Will the hon. Gentleman explain precisely who are the guardians of such children aged 12 or over in Scotland? Are they solicitors, social workers and so on? I should have thought that employees of the Child Support Agency would be the best people to support such children and guide them in making claims on their own behalf.

Dr. Godman: I have already said that the agency could provide such assistance and counselling for those young people. This is a probing new clause and I know that it will not be accepted. Safeguarders are often employed by social work departments and they do not necessarily have masses of academic qualifications. They are rarely, if ever, lawyers but usually come from within the community, as do members of the panels at the children's hearings. They have some training, some knowledge and some experience of protecting children's interests.

There seems to be a case for such an advocate, representative or safeguarder in those few cases that will involve children aged 12 or more who wish to make such an application. I make no apology for introducing the new clause on behalf of what might be only a handful of young people each year. I consider it right and proper to seek from the Minister an explanation of how he intends to assist young people when they make those applications.

Mr. Jack: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) for tabling the amendment. I was moved by his suggestion and I reflected, in all genuineness, on what he said about that subject in the Standing Committee. I was pleased that he again acknowledged the fact that the Bill properly recognises a special Scottish dimension in the way children and the law interact. In sympathising particularly with his concern for, albeit, a small but important group of children, I am glad that he has brought the issue before us again.

The hon. Gentleman places the weight of his argument on giving further responsibility to local government. Many local authorities feel that they are already carrying a heavy burden of responsibility and I am not sure whether they would respond positively to an additional job. The hon. Gentleman alluded to the provisions of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, which enables a child to be represented by a local authority social worker at a children's hearing. The House should bear in mind the fact that the Bill does not deal with considerations that arise in a children's hearing, but with essentially private actions seeking maintenance from an absent parent. Local authorities are not the best or most appropriate bodies to act in those circumstances.

I wish to put two initiatives to the hon. Gentleman, which I hope will persuade him of our good intentions. I hope that he will then either withdraw the new clause or not press it to a Division. First, I intend to provide publicity and guidance to the advice agencies and to local authorities in Scotland ensuring that they are aware of the facility for children over the age of 12 years to apply to the agency for maintenance in circumstances where the caring parent of the child has chosen not to seek a maintenance assessment. Information and advice are part of the key to the problem outlined by the hon. Gentleman. Secondly —I hope that this suggestion will make the hon. Gentleman a happy man—I shall ensure that agency staff in Scotland will be given special training to enable them to give sympathetic advice and assistance to any children applying to the agency. The agency itself will, to borrow the hon. Gentleman's word, act as "safeguarder" for the child.

I also assure the hon. Gentleman that there is, of course, nothing in the Bill which would prevent the child from bringing along a responsible adult when he approaches the agency, and the guidance that we shall issue to the advice agencies will make that clear.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will understand that I have tried to respond as sympathetically and fully as possible to his real and human points.

Dr. Godman: On the basis of the assurances that the Minister has given, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the new clause.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 8

CHILD SUPPORT INSPECTORS

'.—(1) Her Majesty may appoint inspectors, to be called child support inspectors, to monitor the exercise of the powers and duties conferred and imposed by this Act.

(2) The child support inspectors shall provide an annual report to the Secretary of State giving an account of the exercise and performance of the powers and duties conferred and imposed by this Act.

(3) The Secretary of State shall cause a copy of that report to be laid before each House of Parliament.'.—*[Miss Emma Nicholson.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The new clause is in three parts. First, it proposes that Her Majesty appoint child support inspectors to play a careful monitoring role over the Child Support Agency as it carries out its important tasks. Secondly, the new clause suggests that the child support inspectors should present an annual report to the Secretary of State, giving an account of the exercise and performance of the powers and duties conferred. Thirdly, it suggests that the Secretary of State, in turn, should inform Parliament by placing a copy of that report before the House.

The Government have already listened sympathetically to the point because I discussed it on an earlier amendment in Committee. I was unable to do so fully because, owing to an over-run—an eloquency on the part of the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen)—on the last day of the Committee proceedings, we seemed to run into injury time. I therefore sought leave to withdraw my amendment so that it could be debated more fully on the Floor of the House as I believe that it deals with an important point.

In this new era of agencies, which I heartily support, we need to look carefully at how Parliament monitors those agencies. In questions to the Leader of the House earlier today, hon. Members on both sides asked for old-fashioned mechanisms to be put in place. They are already in place to monitor departmental expenditure and activities. I call them old-fashioned because, although they are dear to the heart of Parliament, they are not the most effective way to deal with the new agency world, which calls for newer monitoring mechanisms such as the one suggested in new clause 8.

Although my hon. Friend the Minister may at first respond by saying that sufficient monitoring bodies already exist, there is nothing specific to guide and monitor the work of agencies, or to report to Parliament. I remind my hon. Friend that the ombudsman can take up only individual cases of maladministration and cannot monitor the whole operation of an agency. Although parliamentary Select Committees have many duties and responsibilities under their current tasks, by their very nature they could not carry out the necessary detailed scrutiny of everyday operations. I listened carefully to the debate on new clause 1 and, in many respects, I am suggesting a larger reflection of the meaning behind that new clause.

Both sides of the House have recognised the Government's determination to put children first. There is broad agreement behind the principle of the Bill, which is that both parents should continue to be financially responsible for their children. None the less, as many of us have said and as the Minister has been at the forefront in saying, the relationships with which the Bill deals are among the most intimate, sensitive and difficult that families and friends experience—those between the child and the parent.

I support the principle behind the Bill so strongly because a former staff member of mine was a child of a single parent—his father ran away when he was only 11—and he told me on several occasions that his very identity had felt threatened throughout his childhood because his father never gave his mother a halfpenny. He believed that that simple transaction—providing financial support, however modest—would have strengthened his identity. He is a fine young man, well on the way to receiving his degree, and it was astonishing to see how strongly and powerfully he held that view.

As a result of that experience, I asked other youngsters with whom I have worked, and many of those on youth initiative schemes, how they felt—and their view was just the same. Such sensitive relationships may be buttressed by what appears to be a mercenary transaction. It may seem odd to think of money being linked with family relationships. It is not relevant in happy families, but in unhappy families money acts as a sort of link and should not be discarded as one medium to identify personal need in terms of personality and practical support.

5.30 pm

On 13 June, the Minister said that he would be monitoring the operation of the Child Support Agency, the agent's chief executive would monitor actions taken and the chief child support officer would be required to produce a report. As I said then, that surely means merely that someone in charge is taking a careful and professional look at what he or she is carrying out. That is self-monitoring—a good professional discipline, presumably done on good, professional guidelines, with the individual doing his or her best to reach the standards that Parliament has laid down in the Bill. It is what one can only describe as vertical monitoring by those who will hold responsibility for the work that they are carrying out, rather than external monitoring by an organisation which is not responsible for the initial actions.

My new clause provides for what I can only describe as real monitoring which, if there were no agency, might be carried out by individual Members of Parliament tabling parliamentary questions to Ministers. I do not believe that such a method would be relevant under the new scheme, but my proposal would be relevant. I know that my proposal is something of an innovation, but that should surely not rule it out of court. My proposal is a departure from normal practice in maintenance law and social security matters, but that should commend it to the House. I have been appalled at the slack standards of some social services departments which have hit the headlines recently. The actions of some departmental staff have been to the detriment of the children in their care and I sincerely believe that we should look at new ways of ensuring that best practice is carried out throughout the United Kingdom.

We have a social services inspectorate and Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools. It is surely even more necessary to have an inspectorate in a sphere where there are difficult interactions between different authorities. We know how difficult it is in the modern world for different authorities and departments to mesh well for the good of the client within reasonable time constraints. In this instance the authorities involved are the courts, the

Department of Social Security and the Child Support Agency—a tripartite possibility for chaos, slackness and slowness. Although it offers great potential for rapid interaction and rapid movement, it has built-in potential weaknesses.

On 11 June, the Minister referred to the concern expressed in another place, when the Bill was debated, about the number of regulations in the Bill. He said that the Lord Chancellor had

"counselled the other place that we would require flexibility. By devising the powers of the Bill in the form of regulations, we should have the opportunity to make changes in the future, if that became necessary in the light of experience." —[*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 11 June 1990; c. 15.]

If the Minister cannot accept the new clause, perhaps he will reassure me that he will continue to look carefully at the issue and possibly introduce a regulatory change if my worries later prove justified. In another place, the Lord Chancellor himself said that the

"controlled use of regulations allows a valuable flexibility within the scheme . . . and most importantly, any unfairness which is uncovered in the operation of the system can be rectified."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 25 February 1991, Vol. 526, c. 778.]

The existence of an external and independent monitoring body would provide an excellent mechanism for bringing to light any unfairness in the practical operation of the regulation. We would be setting up a permanent watchdog to safeguard the interests of children and parents in vulnerable positions. A substantial proportion of those served by the Child Support Agency will also be benefit claimants. Their needs are critical and sensitive, and sometimes difficult to look after. An external monitoring organisation would solve all the difficulties that I have identified, and I commend the new clause to the Minister.

Mr. Allen: As the Bill comes from Committee back to the Chamber and then goes to the Lords, it is incumbent on us to make one or two proposals. While reluctantly accepting the Bill, we must try to make the best of a bad job. I hope that the Government will accept that it is important that when the Bill moves on from Report we should make some progress on the issue of monitoring.

The Government have been free with the use of the phrase "monitoring developments" and I believe that the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) has done the House a great service in introducing the new clause, which the Opposition certainly support. As it stands, the Bill has no proposals for effective monitoring by this place, either through an annual report or, as the hon. Lady said, through independent monitoring of the agency. Many of us are concerned about the way in which the new Benefits Agency has worked.

Today I received a letter—it had taken six weeks for the Benefit Agency to answer an initial inquiry. The letter was not answered by the chief executive, but someone in the department. Whatever faults the old system of questions may have had, at least one received a response from the Secretary of State, nominal or not. We should be careful not to slip into a system in which there is no accountability and no monitoring of the new agency. The new clause provides an ideal opportunity for doing so.

I should like the Minister to comment on a possible precedent. I was fortunate enough to be a member of the Public Accounts Committee. We considered the issue of monitoring the liable relative office's work. We produced a report which recommended ensuring that

"the pressure on offices to achieve a substantial increase in maintenance recoveries does not lead to undue pressure being put on lone parents to co-operate".

The Committee's underlying recommendation was that it did not want liable relative officers to feel that they were on the front line, and had to knock work pressures across the counter to their clients.

As the Public Accounts Committee made such a recommendation to the Department and the Treasury, it would be helpful to know whether such monitoring is taking place. If there has been a serious response to that recommendation, we have a base for what the hon. Lady has suggested in terms of effective monitoring when we move from liable relative work to child support work.

There are a number of other specific issues that the Minister may wish to comment on so that we can answer some of the key questions as the Child Support Bill unfolds, and ensure that it is monitored and kept up to standard. How effective is the agency in delivering maintenance to caring parents? We need a sort of mission statement. What is the take-up of the scheme? We need to be able to move quickly to correct problems in sectors where we feel that the take-up is not of an appropriate rate. Is the agency cost effective? A recent oral answer suggested that the agency was expected to

"reduce the taxpayer's expenditure on benefit by an additional £400 million".—[*Official Report*, 20 May 1991; Vol. 191, c. 628.]

What information will exist as to whether those savings have been made? How will such savings be redeployed to improve provision for lone parents? Will we have information on the percentage of expenditure on administration compared with how much is recovered from absent parents? We should not end up with the same problems that we have discovered with the social fund. Whatever the arguments about its merits, let us ensure that the administrative costs of the agency are kept within reasonable bounds.

Will we have information on how confidentiality is protected for the caring parent? What monitoring will there be on the effect of the obligation to co-operate? My hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) will also refer to that issue later.

Invariably, the work of the liable relative officer—and, in future, that of the child support officer—is of a high standard. Hon. Members on both sides of the House are free in their compliments on the work of those officers. However, in Committee we referred at great length to the fact that there are one or two rotten apples in the barrel. Those officers give clients a hard time—perhaps because they are under pressure, stressed by conditions or lack of pay or case hardened. The training of such officers will therefore be absolutely essential. I hope that the Minister can tell us how that training will be conducted and, above all, how the work of officers will be monitored.

The hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West has advocated either independent monitoring outside the House or full accountability to the House via a report from the Child Support Agency. If the latter option is adopted we will be able to raise cases directly with the Minister and assist him, however reluctantly, to make the legislation work better.

Mr. Jack: There has been an interesting debate and I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) on her proper persistence in asking us to reconsider this matter. I hope that my hon. Friend will not think me churlish if I refer first to some of the comments made by the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen).

The hon. Gentleman said that the Opposition reluctantly accepted the Bill. I hope that that does not suggest that his warm and friendly attitude to the Bill, as demonstrated on Second Reading and in Committee, has been diminished. On previous occasions he has told us that he welcomes the broad principles of the Bill and I hope that that still stands because that general support has been greatly welcomed by the Government.

My hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West demonstrated, with her usual eloquence, the importance that she attaches to the accountability and monitoring of, and the reporting on, the activities of the Child Support Agency. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State shares her views about the effective operation of the agency. He agrees with my hon. Friend that the agency must be constructed in such a way that it can do the job that the Bill empowers and, more important, requires it to do.

I have thought hard about the suggestions made by my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West, but we have what can be termed a mechanical problem. Some of the people that my hon. Friend might seek to question would not be able to come to the House in the way in which my hon. Friend envisaged. My hon. Friend will be aware that Select Committees and the Public Accounts Committee could summon those people for examination, which might be the proper way to provide such monitoring. The one person who can be examined in this Chamber, however, is my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. It is through him that the system of accountability will be principally operated. My hon. Friend does not need to be reminded of the number of parliamentary ways in which that could be done.

Miss Emma Nicholson: It is not my contention that the House should grill specialists and professionals. I do not believe that Parliament is the appropriate mechanism by which to manage the affairs of outside agencies, departments or elected services. The Government should be at arms length from practical management. All I am seeking is that a report from an external monitoring agency should be put before the House. I am not suggesting we should grill the professionals—that is more in line with the Opposition's philosophy of hands-on management, which leads to a degradation of standards. I want the Government to set those standards and to give us an effective way in which to monitor them.

5.45 pm

Mr. Jack: I am grateful for that clarification. I am sure that the chief executive of the Child Support Agency and the chief child support officer will breathe a sigh of relief that they will not be so grilled. The Select Committees and the Public Accounts Committee have the right to invite such persons to be examined, but it is for those Committees to decide whether to act accordingly.

The chief child support officer will be accountable to the Secretary of State and the chief executive of the Child Support Agency for his work. He will also have to produce an annual report for the Secretary of State. In answer to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North, that report will deal with some of the adjudicatory functions of that agency. The chief child support officer's report will be placed in the public purview in the Library of the House, if in no other place.

Mr. McCartney: I believe that the proposals of the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) do not differ greatly from those operated by the Audit Commission in terms of internal audits which are independent of local authority departments. Local authorities are required to appoint a permanent audit commission, independent of themselves, within the confines of their authorities. That independent authority puts forward proposals on behalf of the users of authority services and it promotes good management practice, value for money and provides an assessment of whether the proper functions of an authority are operating.

Given that the Government have introduced such a concept in local government, they should accept something similar in terms of the Child Support Agency. The Government have already said that they intend to spend a great deal of money on monitoring that agency. Why not have independent monitoring so that assessments can be made similar to those provided successfully by the independent auditors for local authorities?

Mr. Jack: I am bound to say that one of the best monitors of the performance of the Child Support Agency will be the parents with care. Some of them will receive maintenance for the first time and if there are any problems they will be the first ones to comment on them.

It is important to appreciate that the Child Support Agency, in common with the Benefits Agency and Contributions Agency, will have to publish a business plan. That public document will make their performance targets abundantly clear. The hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) should study that business plan because it will reveal the type of information against which the performance of the Child Support Agency and that of the others can be compared. Those business plans can be the subject of scrutiny by Select Committees and the Public Accounts Committee.

The business plan will be the responsibility of the chief executive of the Child Support Agency. Anyone with certain responsibilities is bound to want to carry them out properly. However, some of today's comments may undermine the absolute integrity of the people who will be responsible for running the agencies. That will be their best defence. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West will see that the accountability of the chief child support officer and the chief executive —through the production of their reports—to this House will lead to a great deal of monitoring, interaction and control to ensure that the agency delivers that which it is supposed to do.

Ministers who are responsible for policy will take seriously the points that my hon. Friend has put to us. They will watch how the agency evolves. The agency will be able to benefit from what has been learnt by other agencies that already are improving the delivery of social security to those who need it.

Miss Emma Nicholson: I have listened with care to the Minister's speech and I am grateful to him for his thoughtful response. He thinks deeply about the points

[Miss Emma Nicholson]

that we put to him and takes his responsibilities seriously. Nevertheless, I am not sure that the purpose of the new clause has been fully understood.

The hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) referred to local government audits. It was an excellent and apposite point. In our excellent and commendable reforms of the national health service we have stressed the importance of the Government-inspired medical audits. However, whatever the professionals may do to improve the standards that we in Parliament, on behalf of the public, demand of them, they are only human and can fall below their own high standards. The best way to maintain those standards is for other professionals to monitor them.

I accept that I have lost the argument today. Perhaps I am too far ahead in time in suggesting that provision should be made for monitoring the professionals. At some time, however, we shall have to address the external monitoring of agencies by professional monitoring bodies. That would relieve Secretaries of State of the onerous and difficult task of creating a professional monitoring body within their own Departments. That is not, I believe, a duty that they should have to perform. It is for the Government to set standards and to ask professionals to monitor them and report back.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the new clause.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendment made: No. 8, in page 1, line 16, leave out clause 2.—*[Mr. Jack.]*

Clause 3

Meaning of certain terms used in this Act

Amendment made: No. 78, in page 2, leave out lines 16 and 17.—*[Mr. Jack.]*

Clause 4

Child Support maintenance

Amendments made: No. 9, in page 2, line 32, leave out subsection (2).

No. 10, in page 3, line 2, leave out from 'can' to 'to', in line 4, and insert

'comply with such regulations as may be made by the Secretary of State with a view to the Secretary of State or the child support officer being provided with the information which is required-'.

No. 11, in page 3, line 8, leave out 'child support maintenance' and insert 'amount'.

No 12, in page 3, line 9, leave out from 'parent' to end of line 12.

No. 79, in page 3, line 25, at end insert—

'( ) No application may be made under this section if there is in force with respect to the person with care and absent parent in question a maintenance assessment made in response to an application under section 6.'.—*[Mr. Jack.]*

Clause 6

Applications by those receiving benefit

Amendments made: No. 13, in page 3, line 43, after '(b)', insert 'she'.

No. 14, in page 4, line 10, leave out 'That authorisation' and insert

'The authorisation mentioned in subsection (1)'.

No. 15, in page 4, line 28, after 'to', insert

'the Secretary of State or'

No. 16, in page 5, line 4, at end insert—

'(14) The fact that a maintenance assessment is in force with respect to a person with care shall not prevent the making of a new maintenance assessment with respect to her in response to an application under this section.'.—*[Mr. Jack.]*

Clause 7

Right of child in Scotland to apply for assessment

Amendments made: No. 80, in page 5, line 13, at end insert—

'(1A) An application made under subsection (1) shall authorise the Secretary of State to make a maintenance assessment with respect to any other children of the absent parent who are qualifying children in the care of the same person as the child making the application.'.

No. 17, in page 5, line 29, leave out from 'can' to 'to', in line 31, and insert

'comply with such regulations as may be made by the Secretary of State with a view to the Secretary of State or the child support officer being provided with the information which is required-'.

No. 18, in page 5, line 35, leave out 'child support maintenance' and insert 'amount'.

No. 19, in page 5, line 36, leave out from 'parent' to end of line 39.

No. 81, in page 5, line 42, after 'section', insert—

'(5A) It shall be the duty of the Secretary of State to comply with any request made under subsection (5)'.—*[Mr. Jack.]*

Clause 8

Role of the courts with respect to maintenance for children

The Solicitor-General: I beg to move amendment No. 20, in page 6, line 16, at end insert—

'( ) The Lord Chancellor or in relation to Scotland the Lord Advocate may by order provide that, in such circumstances as may be specified by the order, this section shall not prevent a court from exercising any power which it has to make a maintenance order in relation to a child if—

(a) a written agreement (whether or not enforceable) provides for the making, or securing, by an absent parent of the child of periodical payments to or for the benefit of the child; and

(b) the maintenance order which the court makes is, in all material respects, in the same terms as that agreement.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to consider Government amendments Nos. 93, 94, 45, 46, 95 and 96.

The Solicitor-General: These amendments relate to the collection and enforcement powers of the Child Support Agency. They will allow us the alternatives of continuing to make child maintenance agreements effective either through the courts, as consent orders, or through the new agency's collection and enforcement powers. They will also allow the agency, when resources are available, to collect and enforce any other form of child maintenance or spousal maintenance where the agency is collecting related child maintenance.

Once the agency is up and running, it may be wise for it to take on these wider and more comprehensive duties. The amendment provides us with the power to choose how far and how fast we should go. I commend the amendment to the House.

Amendment agreed to.

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): I beg to move amendment No. 100, in page 6, line 41, leave out from 'him' to end of line 45 and insert

'; or—

(b) no such allowance is paid but he is disabled,'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to consider the following: Amendment No. 98, in page 6, line 45, at end insert—

'(d) he is registered as disabled in a register maintained under Schedule 2, paragraph 3(1) of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989.'.

Government amendment No. 101.

Amendment No. 99, in clause 50, page 34, line 42, at end insert—

"registered as disabled" has the same meaning as in the Children Act 1989.'.

Mr. Scott: All these amendments seek to address the same problem. I hope that I can persuade the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) that there is so little between us that she can accept the Government's approach.

Government amendments Nos. 100 and 101 seek to expand the possible range of cases where courts can consider top-up awards of maintenance for the extra costs of caring for a disabled child. Following very careful consideration of all the views expressed on the most appropriate way of continuing to provide access to extra maintenance for a disabled child, the Government have provided in this clause for courts to be able to consider top-up awards.

When the amendment was discussed in Committee, my right hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General explained that the Government believed that this was the best way to protect the interests of the child. The services of the Child Support Agency and the standard formula would be available, as for other children, for ordinary expenses, but the courts would be able to consider applications for extra maintenance, looking at the circumstances of each case and making awards tailored to those circumstances.

Our original path in seeking to achieve that aim was to choose payment of the disability living allowance for the child, or the registration of the child as blind, as the two definitions of cases where courts would be able to make these awards. We did that because we believed initially that it provided a clear and easily understood criterion that would make it clear both to parents and to courts who could apply.

Representations were made to us and there were discussions about it in Committee. Amendments were also tabled by the hon. Member for Eccles. It was said that this was too narrow a definition to deal with the generality of children with disabilities of one sort or another. I was particularly concerned about two groups: children under the age of five who would be unable to qualify for the mobility component of the disabilty living allowance and those who are deaf or who cannot speak. We believe that our previous approach would have excluded some children who are genuinely disabled to whom the courts currently can consider making the extra maintenance award. We should have been narrowing rather than expanding the present provision.

We are looking at circumstances in which the courts should be able to consider whether and how much maintenance the absent parent should pay because the child is disabled. The courts can consider this issue, alongside others, when making maintenance awards. The payment of the disability living allowance provides a convenient signpost, but because its role is different it is possible that some cases in addition to the registered blind —some of which I have already mentioned—should be brought within the definition. It will be possible, therefore, to apply to the courts to consider top-up awards for any child for whom the disability living allowance is paid, or who is blind, deaf, without speech or substantially and permanently handicappped.

I hope that I can persuade the hon. Member for Eccles that this aproach is similar to the one that she adopted in her amendments, but I believe that our approach is better, for one reason. Our amendments focus directly on the children and provide that there is no hurdle that a parent has to overcome. The Children Act 1989, which the hon. Lady understandably used as her vehicle, places a duty on local authorities to set up a register for their area. That is intended not as a qualifying stage for access to services but as a planning tool for local authorities, to help them to make decisions about the provision of services. Parents can choose absolutely freely whether or not their child should be registered. Some parents—no doubt for perfectly valid reasons—may choose not to do so. Our approach—to include these definitions in the amendments —is what is needed. Therefore, I hope the hon. Lady will feel able——

Miss Emma Nicholson: Do the words "mental disorder" cover mental handicap and psychiatric concerns? Is it a portmanteau phrase covering both? I should hate to see a mentally handicapped child not specifically identified in the Bill

Mr. Scott: I understand my hon. Friend's concern. I reassure her that it is the compendium definition.

I hope that I have convinced the House that we have listened carefully to the representations that have been made to us and that we have responded to them with sympathy and in the most practical manner.

6 pm

Miss Lestor: I welcome the Government's recognition of the need for consistency in the definition of disabled children. With the explanations that the Minister has given, there is now consistency between the Child Support Bill and the Children Act 1989. The difficulty that we want to discuss is that the Bill does not meet all the requirements of the Children Act because children with disabilities will not be treated in the same way as all other children. Representations about that have been made by the Spastics Society, Barnardos and hon. Members concerned, including my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris).

I accept that the Government's amendments are slightly better than mine because I understand that many parents may not wish to put their disabled child on a register for disabled people. There was never any real logic behind

[Miss Lestor]

concentrating on the receipt of disabled living allowance or being registered blind as a passport to the courts for the top-up of the costs of disability. Therefore, by incorporating the much broader definition of disability, children not in receipt of benefits will be included. It was made clear in Committee that that is particularly relevant for deaf children. However, it is a double-edged sword. I welcome the inclusion of a broader definition, but only if it does not mean that more disabled children and their families will be forced to use the courts to gain an appropriate level of maintenance.

The Minister is right to say that I have looked constantly at the Children Act because it has provided a springboard when considering children. Even with the concession that has been made, the Child Support Bill contradicts the principle of the Children Act which is that children should be treated as children first, whatever their circumstances or disabilities. By pushing disabled children into the courts for top-up benefits we are not treating all children alike. The Children Act also stated that, because delays in the courts are likely to prejudice the welfare of the child, that should be avoided. I fear that delays prejudicial to the welfare of children with disabilities will inevitably arise under the proposed maintenance arrangements. Therefore, although I have said that I welcome the definition and the concession, it is now more important than ever that the courts are reformed—I accept that that is not part of this Bill, but the plea for family courts has been made over and over again—or that child support officers should be given discretionary powers to deal with costs related to disability. It would still be possible to incorporate an element to cover a proportion of disability costs in the formula.

If the new system is to work, the Child Support Agency must be given powers beyond those already suggested in the Bill. To ensure the welfare of the child we must use fully the discretionary powers in new clause 5 to which I referred earlier. The child support officers should have discretionary powers to assess the extra costs of disability for maintenance purposes.

Unless those suggestions are taken on board, even with the changes that the Government have announced, the pressure on the courts is unlikely to be reduced and children with disabilities will still be subjected to an unreliable and unjust system that contradicts the principle in the Children Act that all children should be treated the same.

Miss Emma Nicholson: Like other members of the Committee that considered this Bill, I have received letters from Barnardos and other organisations that look after handicapped children and have done so for 100 years or more. I have read the letters carefully and studied the points made. Like other hon. Members, I was concerned that somehow the particular needs of disabled children had not been identified clearly enough in the Bill.

However, I am comfortable with the Minister's initial proposals. I say "initial" because I feel confident that he will take care to scrutinise the workings of what I believe will be the new Act since his service and work for the disabled community throughout the United Kingdom has been outstanding. I have considerable knowledge of that since I am involved with a number of organisations for disabled children and I know of the exceptionally high regard in which he is held.

Despite the known concern and knowledge of the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor), I should have been worried had we gone down the route of the disabled register, I urge hon. Members on both sides of the House to forget the validity of the registers in the eyes of disabled people. People who are disadvantaged do not wish to be identified as such and I believe sincerely that asking people with a disability to identify themselves and put their names down, thus opening themselves up to self-denigration and external physical harassment, is not a humanitarian way to behave. In my constituency there is a tragic case of parents with a Tay Sachs child and two young men were arrested for physical harassment of those parents. Therefore, identification of disability sometimes attracts a wretched and non-humanitarian response.

I accept that, because we do not have that complete identification, there may be some gaps. That is why the new proposals will need careful scrutiny. I know also that occasionally there will be delays in courts of law. However, I feel confident that the Bill has been thought through carefully and that the essence of care for children is its hallmark. I am confident that my hon. Friend the Minister's amendments will stand the test of time. I know that my hon. Friend will look at them and monitor them throughout and alter them by regulation if that should prove necessary.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I welcome amendment No. 101. I share a little of the concern about delays in tribunals or courts which was expressed by the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor). I know that the Minister will keep that in mind. Perhaps he will nudge the Law Officer into moving towards reform of the court system so that we can have the family courts for which some of us have been asking for some time.

The Minister knows of my concern in these matters. Do the words "mental disorder" and the definition that he gave include autistic children?

Mr. Scott: I shall respond to the interventions from the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor), my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) and the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth). I cannot accept that by going down the route that we have chosen and enabling disabled children to have standard maintenance as well as maintenance related to their disability we will be disadvantaging them or their families. The top-up for which the court will be responsible will take total account of the expenses related to the disability and, in a way, will provide an off-the-peg service in meeting those needs. I do not believe that it would be appropriate for an administrative body to apply the discretion that is needed and which most of the voluntary organisations want. I accept that Barnardos and Mencap have argued for including the cost of disability within the maintenance requirement, but the Childrens Society, Gingerbread, the Law Society, the National Council of One-Parent Families, the Social Security Advisory Committee, the Spastics Society and Step Family argue that it should not be included in the formula but that other provision should be made. I believe that the best approach is to provide for the formula to be operated by the Child Support Agency and for the courts then to be able to use

their discretion. Having been relieved of the general duty to make orders regarding maintenance, the courts will, I believe, be able swiftly and efficiently to cope with the duty that we are now placing on them.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 101, in page 6, line 48, at end insert—

'( ) For the purposes of subsection (7), a child is disabled if he is blind, deaf or dumb or is substantially and permanently handicapped by illness, injury, mental disorder or congenital deformity or such other disability as may be prescribed.'.

No. 21, in page 7, line 4, leave out subsection (9).—*[Mr. Scott.]*

Clause 12

CHILD SUPPORT OFFICERS

Mr. Jack: I beg to move amendment No. 22, in page 9, line 9, leave out subsection (6).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 23.

Rev. Martin Smyth: May I take this opportunity to ask for clarification. As the Minister nodded when he sat down, I take that to mean that autistic children are included in the definition in Government amendment No. 101.

However, I should like some clarification. I appreciate the reason why Government amendment No. 22 has been tabled, but what is the thinking behind Government amendment No. 23? Does it refer to the child support officer for the United Kingdom, or will there be a separate officer for Northern Ireland? Why has the responsibility been placed specifically on the shoulders of the chief child support officer in Northern Ireland for any omissions or for any problems affecting child support officers there? I am not sure what it means and I should like some clarification.

Mr. Jack: Government amendment No. 23 is designed to ensure that proceedings such as those for judicial review are brought against the chief child support officer in Great Britain where the relevant child support officer who made the assessment or other relevant decision resides in Northern Ireland but is dealing with cases from Great Britain. Otherwise, there might be difficulties for clients of the Child Support Agency in bringing cases where their case had been dealt with by the child support centre in Belfast. I hope that that gives the hon. Gentleman the clarification that he requires.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 23, in page 9, line 12, at end insert—

'(7) Any proceedings (other than for an offence) in respect of any act or omission of a child support officer which, apart from this subsection, would fall to be brought against a child support officer resident in Northern Ireland may instead be brought against the Chief Child Support Officer.

(8) For the purposes of any proceedings brought by virtue of subsection (7), the acts or omissions of the child support officer shall be treated as the acts or omissions of the Chief Child Support Officer.'.—*[Mr. Jack.]*

Clause 13

INFORMATION REQUIRED BY SECRETARY OF STATE

Amendments made: No. 24, in page 9, line 17, after 'application', insert,

'or needed in connection with the collection or enforcement of child support or other maintenance under this Act'.

No. 25, in page 9, line 18, leave out

'person as may be prescribed',

and insert

'persons as may be determined in accordance with regulations made by the Secretary of State'.—*[Mr. Jack.]*

Mr. Jack: I beg to move amendment No. 26, in page 9, line 22, after 'may', insert '-(a)'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 27.

Mr. Jack: To avoid a lack of clarification, the amendment would allow information collected for the purposes of the benefit Acts to be used for purposes of child support legislation in Northern Ireland.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 27 in page 9, line 22, at end insert

'; or

(b) disclose it to the Department of Health and Social Services for Northern Ireland for purposes of any enactment corresponding to this Act and having effect with respect to Northern Ireland.'.—*[Mr. Jack.]*

Clause 14

POWERS OF INSPECTORS

Amendment proposed: No. 28, in page 10, line 3, leave out from 'question' to end of line 5 and insert

'any person aged 18 or over whom he finds on the premises.'.—*[Mr. Jack.]*

Mr. Allen: The amendment removes the phrase about inspectors interviewing people in the presence of someone else. Why?

Mr. Jack: It is merely to protect the interests of the child by restricting an inspector in the interviewing or questioning of a child.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 16

REVIEWS ON CHANGE OF CIRCUMSTANCES

Amendment made: No. 27, in page 12, line 5, leave out subsection (7).—*[Mr. Jack.]*

Clause 17

REVIEWS OF DECISIONS OF CHILD SUPPORT OFFICERS

Amendments made: No. 30, in page 12, line 22, leave out 'under paragraph 16 of Schedule 1'.

No. 31, in page 12, line 26, leave out 'under paragraph 16 of Schedule 1'.—*[Mr. Jack.]*

6.15 pm

The Solicitor-General: I beg to move amendment No. 32, in page 12, line 28, leave out from beginning to 'that', in line 33, and insert—

'(5) An application under this section shall give the applicant's reasons (in writing) for making it.

[The Solicitor-General]

(6) The Secretary of State shall refer to a child support officer any application under this section which is duly made; and the child support officer shall conduct the review applied for unless in his opinion there are no reasonable grounds for supposing'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 35 to 37.

The Solicitor-General: Government amendment No. 32 removes the requirement for applicants for a clause 17 review to have to state which of a specific list of grounds for review applies to their request. Instead, they will merely have to state in writing their reasons for requesting a review. That fulfils the commitment made by the Lord Chancellor to Lord Russell to remove the requirement for an applicant to make such a specification. There are no cost implications.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 33, in page 13, line 5, leave out subsection (11).—*[Mr. Jack.]*

Clause 18

REVIEWS AT INSTIGATION OF CHILD SUPPORT OFFICERS

Amendment made: No. 34, in page 13, line 37, leave out subsection (4).—*[Mr. Jack.]*

Clause 19

APPEALS

Amendments made: No. 35, in page 13, line 41, after 'officer', insert—

'(a)'.

No. 36, in page 13, line 41, after '17', insert—

'(b) to refuse an application for such a review,'.

No. 37, in page 13, line 42, leave out from 'decision' to end of line 46.

No. 38, in page 14, line 1, after 'of', insert 'the chairman of'.—*[Mr. Jack.]*

Clause 23

APPEAL TO CHILD SUPPORT COMMISSIONER

Amendment made: No. 39, in page 15, line 25, leave out 'the ground that the decision was wrong in' and insert 'a question of'.—*[Mr. Jack.]*

Clause 24

APPEAL FROM CHILD SUPPORT COMMISSIONER ON QUESTION OF LAW

Amendments made: No. 40, in page 16, line 31, leave out from 'who' to 'was' in line 35.

No. 41, in page 16, line 36, after 'decision', insert 'or appeal decision'.

No. 42, in page 16, line 45, at end insert

'; and

"original decision" means the decision to which the appeal decision in question relates'.—*[Mr. Jack.]*

Clause 26

REFERENCE TO COURT FOR DECLARATION OF PARENTAGE

Amendment made: No. 43, in page 18, line 29 [*Clause 26*], leave out

'satisfied that the case does not fall'

and insert

'not satisfied that the case falls'.—*[Mr. Jack.]*

Clause 27

POWER OF SECRETARY OF STATE TO INITIATE OR DEFEND ACTIONS OF DECLARATOR: SCOTLAND

Amendment made: No. 82, in page 19, line 9 leave out 'satisfied that the case does not fall' and insert 'not satisfied that the case falls'.—*[Mr. Jack.]*

Clause 28

COLLECTION OF CHILD SUPPORT MAINTENANCE

The Solicitor-General: I beg to move amendment No. 44, in page 19, line 19 leave out

'It shall be the duty of the Secretary of State to'

and insert

'The Secretary of State may'.

This is purely a drafting amendment.

Mr. Allen: It is not purely a drafting amendment. Will the Minister say why the amendment waters down the Secretary of State's duty to collect maintenance payments, and what are the existing and continuing criteria on which the Secretary of State will collect such payments?

The Solicitor-General: It is a drafting amendment. As drafted, the clause places a duty on the Secretary of State to collect maintenance whenever a maintenance assessment has been made. That is not the policy intention. Our preference is for the parties to come to a satisfactory agreement between themselves—I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will approve of that—on the arrangement for the payment of maintenance rather than for the agency to have to intervene. In the case of a mandatory application under clause 6, we would need to be sure that any such private arrangement was secure. In the case of a voluntary application under clause 4, it would be up to the party involved whether the agency was to become involved in the collection of maintenance. In that sense, it is a drafting amendment which will give effect to what I am sure everyone will agree is the right policy.

Amendment agreed to.

Miss Emma Nicholson: I beg to move amendment No. 102, in page 20, line 8 at end add—

'(4) The Secretary of State shall make regulations providing for the division of maintenance payments between the person with care and the Secretary of State in circumstances where the amount of family credit or any another benefit of prescribed kind paid to the person with the care of the child or children has been calculated on the basis that the absent parent is not paying any child support maintenance.'.

Clause 28 is very important in considering the way in which children will be supported. I tabled the probing amendment in order to ask the Secretary of State to consider more carefully the ways in which maintenance will be paid when the absent parent pays no child support maintenance. The amendment is self-explanatory and I am

confident that the Minister will give me a full reply. He will know that I am especially concerned about cases in which the absent parent has not been forced to pay any child maintenance, and I ask him to make regulations to provide for the division of maintenance payments between the person with care and the Secretary of State. I should be grateful for a full reply, but my hon. Friend will understand that this is a probing amendment.

Mr. Allen: The people who are dealt with in this clause are on very low incomes such as those on income support. A lone parent with a child under 11 years of age will be on a weekly income of £65·40. When one is trying to exist on such a low income, one's main concern is the security of that income. Any variation in that income is the difference between being able to pay a bill or not, between being able to buy a pair of shoes for a child or not, or to buy food for oneself or for the child. The amendment is extremely helpful, which is why we support the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) in her efforts to get an answer from the Minister.

Currently, in nearly a quarter of cases in which maintenance is relevant, the Department pays lone parents income support gross, and collects maintenance. That guarantees the parents security of income when maintenance is irregular or fluctuating, as it often is. The Government accept that important principle, but at present it applies only in respect of income support. The amendment would extend similar arrangements to parents with care who are attempting to enter the labour market.

Such a move would ensure that the Government's work incentives would not be undermined by the risk of insecurity of income preventing parents with care, or their partners, from contemplating entering paid employment for 16 hours a week or more, even with the help of family credit or disability working allowance.

The Minister may not wish to accept the amendment in its current form, but he would help such people greatly by accepting that a problem exists and that it could be tackled by means of a similar amendment.

Mr. Jack: I thank both my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) and the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen). My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave my hon. Friend an undertaking, which I have echoed, that we would give careful consideration to the problem of interrupted maintenance payments, especially in respect of families receiving family credit. We want to find a way of responding to the spirit and content of my hon. Friend's remarks, and also to the genuine concern expressed by the hon. Member for Nottingham, North.

The difficulty is, however, that, unless we throw over what is generally accepted to be a good principle of family credit—that of providing an uninterrupted award for 26 weeks at a time—it has not yet proved possible to accommodate some of the variables that could arise if the payment of maintenance was interrupted. I do not wish to raise hon. Members' hopes unnecessarily: we may never be able to accomplish that.

I can give some encouraging information, however. If the initial maintenance award—which may not have been in place at all before the advent of the Child Support Agency—comes during the period of an existing award of family credit, the structure of the benefit will provide protection for the family concerned. Their existing award cannot be changed. The additional income will come at a time when budgeting is based on the present level of income from work, combined with family credit and other social security benefits. If there is so much as a fear at the back of the mind of the parent with care that payment might be interrupted, the addition to the family finances can be retained as a "buffer state" against such an eventuality.

I hope that I do not do my hon. Friend an injustice when I say that, according to the wording of the amendment, the Secretary of State would keep half the money. I am not entirely sure that that is what she wants. I believe that both she and the hon. Member for Nottingham, North want to ensure that the maximum amount is available to families.

Miss Emma Nicholson: I trust that, if the amendment did mean that, the Secretary of State would give his half back.

As I have said, this is a probing amendment. My hon. Friend the Minister responded swiftly to my request for a meeting, and we shall discuss the amendment then. That is why I did not go into much detail. I hope that we shall come up with a solution, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend for offering me the opportunity.

The amendment was not designed to enrich the Secretary of State, although, knowing him, I am sure that he would have given the money back. Perhaps we should try it.

Mr. Jack: In the same spirit of generosity, I accept my hon. Friend's explanation. I am sure that the Secretary of State would not want to establish a small fund in respect of family credit.

Let me say to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North that, as we rightly focus on specific parts of the Bill, we are in danger of losing sight of the whole package. For the first time, an agency is being established that will act extremely quickly on behalf of parents in care in the event of an interruption in the flow of maintenance. I have discussed the matter with those who will have the job of implementing the measure, and I assure the hon. Gentleman that they will react with all possible speed, enabling, for instance, the placing of a deduction-of-earnings order on anyone who interrupts the flow of maintenance. The agency's prime task will be to support parents with care, and to ensure the maintenance of income for those on family credit wherever possible.

As the hon. Gentleman is keenly aware, although there may be a variable in payment for those on income support —wherever possible, we encourage individuals to maintain their personal methods of payment—if that is interrupted, income support can be paid gross.

I look forward to my discussions with my hon. Friend, and I hope that, following my reasssurances, she will not press the amendment to a Division.

Miss Nicholson: I am grateful for those reassurances. I am also grateful to the Minister for allowing me an appointment with him. I warn him that I shall arrive with three different formulae in an attempt to deal with this difficult problem. I am sure that one, if not all, will meet with his approval, and that he will be longing to implement all three at once.

Let me be serious for a moment about this very serious subject, and reiterate my concern for women who wish to return to work. I have always believed that real freedom is

[Miss Nicholson]

economic freedom; once a person has a wage packet, however slender, he or she can stand up and be counted, look the world in the face and support dependants with more confidence. The weakness of any form of state benefit is the problem of lack of maintenance from the recipient's former other half. That is bound to make parents in care less than confident about the future. I have forwarded to my hon. Friend letters from lone mothers who want to return to work; they are perhaps my main concern.

I am happy to withdraw the amendment in the knowledge that my hon. Friend and I will have an extremely full debate, and that I have a tripartite bundle of perfect proposals for him to accept.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 29

COLLECTION AND ENFORCEMENT OF OTHER FORMS OF MAINTENANCE

Amendments made: No. 93, in page 20, line 9, leave out 'under section 28'.

No. 94, in page 20, line 10, leave out 'child support maintenance' and insert

'payments under section 28 or subsection (1A),'.

No. 45, in page 20, line 12, leave out from 'payable' to 'to' in line 15.

No. 46, in page 20, line 16, at end insert—

'(1A) The Secretary of State may arrange for the collection of any periodical payments or secured periodical payments of a prescribed kind which are payable for the benefit of a child even though he is not arranging for the collection of child support maintenance with respect to that child.

(1B) Where—

(a) the Secretary of State is arranging, under this Act, for the collection of different payments ("the payments") from the same absent parent;

(b) an amount is collected by the Secretary of State from the absent parent which is less than the total amount due in respect of the payments; and

(c) the absent parent has not stipulated how that amount is to be allocated by the Secretary of State as between the payments,

the Secretary of State may allocate that amount as he sees fit.'.

No. 95, in page 20, line 21, leave out 'subsection (1)' and insert 'this section'.

No. 96, in page 20, line 24, leave out 'subsection (1)' and insert 'this section'.—*[Mr. Jack.]*

Clause 30

DEDUCTION FROM EARNINGS ORDERS

Amendment made: No. 47, in page 21, line 1, leave out first 'as'.—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 31

REGULATIONS ABOUT DEDUCTION FROM EARNINGS ORDERS

The Solicitor-General: I beg to move amendment No. 48, in page 23, line 2, leave out 'requirement imposed on him by the regulations' and insert

'regulation under this section which is designated for the purposes of this subsection'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this we may take Government amendment No. 49.

The Solicitor-General: Clause 31(8), as it stands, makes it a criminal offence not only to fail to comply with the requirements of a deduction-from-earnings order, but to fail to comply with any related regulation. While it is right that there should be sanctions against people who simply refuse to operate deduction-from-earnings orders, some of the regulations will cover minor matters such as the procedure to be followed in complying with an order. It would be quite oppressive if automatic criminal offences resulted from that, and the amendment prevents it.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 49, in page 23, line 3, at end insert—

'(8A) In subsection (8) "designated" means designated by the regulations.'.—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 32

LIABILITY ORDERS

The Solicitor-General: I beg to move amendment No. 50, in page 23, line 28, at end insert—

'(4) On an application under subsection (2), the court or (as the case may be) the sheriff shall not question the maintenance assessment under which the payments of child support maintenance fell to be made.'.

The amendment prevents a magistrates court, or in Scotland a sheriff, from questioning the maintenance assessment when considering an application for a liability order. The correct method of challenging a maintenance assessment is through the review and appeals mechanism, as provided for in clauses 17 and 18. The amendment does not seek to restrict a person's right to challenge decisions made under the Bill; it merely seeks to ensure that they are heard in the correct forum.

Amendment agreed to.

6.30 pm

Clause 36

REGULATIONS ABOUT LIABILITY ORDERS: SCOTLAND

Amendment made: No. 83, in page 25, line 11, leave out paragraph (b).—*[Mr. Jack.]*

Clause 37

ENFORCEMENT OF LIABILITY ORDERS BY DILIGENCE: SCOTLAND

Amendment made: No. 89, in page 25, line 21, after 'warrant', insert 'anywhere in Scotland'.—*[Mr. Jack.]*

Clause 38

COMMITMENT TO PRISON

The Solicitor-General: I beg to move amendment No. 51, in page 25, line 34, leave out from 'sought' to 'he' in line 36 and insert '—

(a) to levy an amount by distress under this Act; or

(b) to recover an amount by virtue of section 35,

and that amount, or any portion of it, remains unpaid'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 53 and 84.

The Solicitor-General: There is some substance in the amendments, but I shall be able to deal with them briefly. They are mainly technical.

Amendment No. 51 is consequential and is linked to clause 35, which was inserted by the will of the Committee. It provides that garnishee and charging order enforcement action may be taken by the Secretary of State under the provisions of the Bill. This is beneficial and welcome. The amendment means that the agency will have to have attempted distress action or garnishee or charging order action before applying to a magistrates court for a warrant to commit a maintenance debtor to prison. This means that the full range of collection options will be considered and at least one or other of the enforcement measures attempted before the final sanction of imprisonment is considered.

I said that I would mention the matter briefly when we were debating an earlier clause as a consequence of an issue having been raised by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman). The hon. Gentleman asked whether enforcement of liability orders throughout the United Kingdom meant that civil imprisonment would be an immediate possibility once a liability order was registered in the sheriff court, without a hearing by the sheriff. The hon. Gentleman will understand the relevance of what we are now considering. The answer is that the court will have to ensure that the various methods of collecting money have been considered and have failed before it goes on to take the step of civil imprisonment. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will welcome that.

Dr. Godman: I wish to ask the Solicitor-General some questions relative to amendment No. 84. Section 4(4) of the Civil Imprisonment (Scotland) Act 1882 states that

"a warrant of imprisonment may be granted of new, subject to the same provisions and conditions, at intervals of not less than six months, against the same person in respect of failure to pay the same sum or sums of aliment and expenses of process."

Does that mean that a person could be gaoled over and over again?

Subsection (5) states that

"the imprisonment shall not to any extent operate as a satisfaction or extinction of the debt, or interfere with the creditor's other rights and remedies for its recovery".

Am I right in thinking that after the individual is released from prison he still has all the debts to pay?

I remind the Solicitor-General that from 1985 to 1989 the number of civil prisoners in Scottish prisons who had been convicted under the Debtors (Scotland) Act 1880 and the Civil Imprisonment (Scotland) Act 1882 produced an average of one a year. We are therefore talking of only a few people. In the circumstances, would it not make good sense for such persons to be imprisoned at weekends? If they have to serve six weeks imprisonment, why should they not serve that period over 10 weekends? If such persons were employed, such an arrangement would enable them to retain their employment.

Mr. Hardy: I reinforce the request of my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman). Does the Solicitor-General recognise that magistrates are increasingly perturbed at having to send people to prison to serve short sentences for non-payment of fines, for example? I recognise that there is a distress mechanism designed to avoid custodial sentences, but the prison population is enormous and prison sentences for non-payment of fines, for example, can be counter-productive, to put it mildly, and engender bitterness and perhaps viciousness subsequently. Consideration should at least be given to the proposal that there should be weekend imprisonment, if imprisonment there has to be. Alternatively, community service orders could be made to obviate the need for imprisonment. Incarceration is costly to the community and not necessarily helpful to those receiving such sentences.

The Solicitor-General: I can answer straightforwardly the three questions of the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) and the one question of the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy).

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow produced an illuminating statistic when he said that only one person—I think that I have this right—was imprisoned in Scotland last year for failing to pay debts that he could well afford to pay. We are talking of the ultimate sanction. There are many methods which can be used to try to get people to pay before it is necessary to send them to prison. If, however, someone refuses to pay when he has the means to do so and he has to be sent to prison, and if after six months or a year he is equally obdurate and continues to refuse to pay, it might be necessary to send that person to prison again. No one would wish to do that, of course, and I am sure that the courts would try to implement every other method available to them to avoid that happening. As I have said, there are plenty of other methods. Whether the prison sentence should be served at weekends is outwith the scope of the Bill and would be a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland or my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Dr. Godman: Will the Solicitor-General, in his characteristically courteous way, convey my views about weekend imprisonment to the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Home Secretary?

The Solicitor-General: I can certainly offer to do that. I hope that I have answered the questions of the hon. Members for Greenock and Port Glasgow and for Wentworth.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 53, in page 26, line 12, leave out '21' and insert '18'.

No. 84, in page 27, line 4, at end insert—

'(14) Where a liability order has been made, the Secretary of State (and he alone) shall be regarded as, and may exercise all the powers of, the creditor for the purposes of section 4 (imprisonment for failure to obey decree for alimentary debt) of the Civil Imprisonment (Scotland) Act 1882.'.—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 41

CONTRIBUTION TO MAINTENANCE BY DEDUCTION FROM BENEFIT

Mr. Jack: I beg to move amendment No. 54, in page 28, line 31, after 'that', insert '(a)'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Government amendment No. 55.

Mr. Jack: The amendment would allow arrears of maintenance to be recovered by deduction from benefit within the existing restrictions on deductions from benefit.

[Mr. Jack]

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 55, in page 28, line 33, at end insert

'; and

(b) arrears of child support maintenance are recovered.'.—*[Mr. Jack.]*

Clause 43

FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH OBLIGATIONS IMPOSED BY SECTION 6

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 29, line 44, leave out second 'her' and insert 'either parent'.

In the form in which the Bill left the Committee, it appeared that there was an exemption from an obligation to co-operate that related to the parents of the child if by so doing they would cause harm and undue distress to the child or children. That did not appear to extend to children of the absent parent, and there could be circumstances in which co-operation could cause harm and undue distress to such children. The matter was brought to my attention by the NSPCC, which was naturally concerned about it. Accordingly, I tabled my amendment.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security then tabled new clause 5, and I apologise to the House for not being in the Chamber when the clause was discussed. I believe that the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) referred to the problem which concerned me. I should explain that I was detained by a meeting of a Select Committee.

It seems at first glance that new clause 5 might meet my concerns. Rather than discuss the matter at length, I will give my hon. Friend the Minister the opportunity to respond now.

Mr. Jack: I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) for introducing this important amendment and I well understand the motives behind it. The amendment is designed to protect the interests of children living with absent parents. It was an underlying theme of earlier discussions, on which we have sought to reflect, that concerns about children in that position should be recognised.

We do not take lightly the risk of harm or undue distress to the children of the absent parent. New clause 5, to which my hon. Friend alluded, obliges the Secretary of State and child support officers, when taking action under the Bill, to have regard to the welfare of any child affected by the exercise of discretion. That covers consideration both by the Secretary of State under clause 6, and by a child support officer under clause 43. I believe that that existing obligation is sufficient in itself to respond to genuine risks to the welfare of the absent parent's children. However, I listened carefully to my hon. Friend's remarks and I will reflect further on them when we devise the advice and guidance that we shall be giving to the staff who will have to operate that provision.

Mr. Hardy: I share the concern expressed by the hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) who gives distinguished service to the NSPCC. May we take it that the interests of children born into the absent parent's subsequent family will also be considered?

Mr. Jack: Clearly it will be a case of the child support officer listening—in accordance with the requirements of the clause—to the information that is put before him. I cannot anticipate the nature of that information or other aspects of it, but we shall give that aspect consideration when devising the guidance to which I referred earlier.

Mr. Sims: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's explanation and for the assurances that he has given. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Miss Lestor: I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 30, line 6, after '(5)' insert '(a)'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider the following amendments:

No. 3, in page 30, line 7, leave out

'may give a reduced benefit direction with respect to the parent' and insert 'shall notify this to the parent, in writing;

(b) such a notice shall include a statement as to the right of the parent to appeal to a child support appeal tribunal against the child support officer's decision and shall specify the time limit for bringing such an appeal;

(c) if the parent decides not to appeal, the child support officer may give a reduced benefit direction only after the expiry of the time limit for bringing an appeal; and

(d) if the parent appeals, a child support officer may give a reduced benefit direction only after the outcome of that appeal has been notified in writing to the parent.'.

No. 4, in page 30, line 19, at end insert—

'(11) Once a reduced benefit direction has been given in respect of a parent no further reduced benefit direction may be given in respect of her failure to comply with any requirement under section 6(1).'.

No. 5, in page 30, line 34, at end insert—

'(12) The Secretary of State shall make regulations specifying circumstances in which the child support officer may give a reduced benefit direction—

(a) for such shorter period as may appear to him to be appropriate;

(b) for such smaller amount as is appropriate in the circumstances of the case.'.

Miss Lestor: I reiterate our support for the principle that parents should, as far as possible, and whatever the circumstances of their partnership—if they had a permanent relationship in the first place—maintain their children. That support should be emotional as well as financial, and the two are not interchangeable.

We are considering a sensitive and often distressing aspect of human relations, as was said by the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson). Most of us agree that such matters should remain in the private domain wherever possible. If it is necessary for outside agencies to become involved, one hopes that they will handle matters with suitable sensitivity, and with respect for the decisions and opinions of the parents—particularly lone parents—and the children concerned. I am not convinced that clause 43 goes anywhere near meeting those criteria.

Most mothers will and do co-operate when questioned in pursuit of a maintenance claim, as the figures show. Women who do otherwise have good reason. They may not be sure who the father is, or disclosure of his name may cause distress to his new or former partner. The child may have been conceived in a relationship with a very close relative. It is also possible that the mother fears violence. She may have experienced it already—or fears it because she has lived under the threat of violence in the past. Some

women also have a perfectly reasonable desire to have nothing more to do with the father, even through a third party.

If the new arrangements are as positive for parents as the Government suggest, a mother's reasons for not co-operating must be very strong. The Government claim that specially trained people will determine whether to proceed with an individual claim, but many women will find it difficult to talk freely to a stranger—however sympathetic that person may be—without knowing whether their fears will be respected, or whether their remarks will lead to the claim not being pursued.

Many women have told me that they are willing to talk only if there is a guarantee that their partner or ex-partner will not be pursued. One is dealing with subjective judgments, and it is difficult to put oneself in another person's shoes. The sums of money involved are pathetic, and I wonder whether the process can be justified in terms of the potential human misery to which it may give rise.

6.45 pm

I am all in favour of increasing co-operation with agencies, but I cannot condone what is clearly an attempt to gain information by a form of coercion. Why do the Government turn their back on incentives and choose instead to impose benefit penalties and the withdrawal of passported benefits, even if the mother co-operates and a maintenance claim is successfully concluded?

I was pleased when, earlier this year, their Lordships overturned the benefit penalty clause—the old clause 22—but I was disappointed to see it reintroduced in Committee. It is the view of a wide range of voluntary organisations, children's charities, church groups, and other bodies and individuals that there is no financial or practical justification for imposing economic penalties on people who are already poor—penalties that will punish the child along with the mother.

Right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House received an excellent briefing from 17 voluntary organisations which spells out in detail their shared objections and fears. The Government claim that without sanctions the whole scheme would flounder. However, I do not recall any Minister ever telling the House that a major cause of a reduction in maintenance recovery by the DSS over the past decade has been the absence of benefit penalties. On the contrary, in a previous debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) eloquently pointed out the disastrous consequences of the DSS giving maintenance collection a low priority in its allocation of staff, which is partly responsible for the fall in maintenance payments.

In Committee, the Government agreed to widen to some extent the groups of mothers who would be exempted from penalties. Clauses 6 and 43 allow a woman not to co-operate where there is a real risk of harm or undue distress to her, or to the child living with her. I welcome that provision, but the Secretary of State admitted that the benefit penalty will be one of the harshest in the social security system. There are good grounds for allowing greater flexibility, including a reduction in the penalty in cases of hardship. The Secretary of State claimed that clauses 6 and 43 provide a safeguard that goes beyond the existing legal position. That is true, as far as it goes, but is it not currently the case that maintenance must be pursued before any benefit can be paid? If so, how can penalties for non co-operation be viewed as an additional safeguard? That is totally illogical.

It is not clear what action might be taken against a woman who does not know the whereabouts of a former partner. A west midlands citizens advice bureau cites the case of a lone parent with two children, in which, under a court order, the father paid maintenance of 5p per child because he was unemployed. However, it was suspected that he might be working again, so the DSS said that the lone parent should seek a variation of the order, to have it increased to £20 per week. It has been deducting that amount from her benefit even though she has not received a penny extra in maintenance. She gave the DSS her ex-partner's last known address, but she has been told that the address is incorrect and unless she applies again with his current address her benefit will be stopped altogether. That cannot be right, but most of the agencies, and in particular the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, have given us examples of that. How will clause 43 apply in those circumstances?

We all support the view that it is in the child's interest to have continuing contact with the non-resident parent whenever possible. However, the Government have deliberately kept separate the issues of maintenance and access—and, in that context, I do not mean access awarded by the courts. The Bill fails to take proper account of the different ways in which a non-resident parent may have agreed to share the caring of his child. I have raised that point on many occasions with the Minister, but I have not received a satisfactory explanation or elucidation of his views.

Weekends, holidays and days out may have been agreed to the mutual satisfaction of both parents and the child. Many non-resident fathers make a useful contribution to the upbringing of their child. Indirectly they make a financial contribution by having the child at weekends and holidays, as I have said. However, the Government, in their wisdom, see fit in all circumstances to reassess the situation and bring the issues down to money.

If a father has remarried, but says, "I'll have Johnny at the weekends and for holidays because that is my responsibility; however, I can't pay any money because my circumstances are difficult", we will intervene in law and force him to pay money. We will therefore inject into a relationship a sourness and disgruntlement that were not there before.

In Committee we expressed our grave concern that so much of the detail of the new maintenance collection system would be left to regulations. We have yet to see those regulations. Will regulations under clause 43 be available in draft? Will they go to the Social Security Advisory Committee for consideration? Will guidance on the implementation of the regulations be sent for comment to all the voluntary organisations which have sent their detailed comments on the proposals to the Minister? That is the least that we can expect in view of the fact that, as I have said, much of this is being left to regulation.

I share the concern expressed by organisations that appeals on the benefit penalty cannot work satisfactorily if there is no published guidance on the circumstances in which the penalty will be applied. The issue should not have to wait for case law to emerge, but I am afraid that that will happen. For those reasons, although we accept

the principle that the absent parent should help to maintain the child, we want to amend the Bill to provide additional safeguards to mothers and their children.

Amendments Nos. 2 and 3 are intended to ensure that the benefit penalty would be applied only after the expiry of the time limit for appealing against it or after an unsuccessful appeal. That is very important. In other words, the benefit penalty should be used as a last resort after all hearings, including appeals, have been completed. That seems only fair. In view of the evidence that I have referred to from the NACAB—and I could have spent much longer referring to other cases—I hope that the Minister will respond favourably.

In Committee the Minister said that a parent with care who refused to co-operate and who did not seem to have reasonable grounds for non-co-operation would have six weeks to change her mind. After that time had elapsed, the case would be referred to a second child support officer who would notify the mother in writing of a further period in which to change her mind. That would probably be about two weeks. If the mother continued to feel unable to co-operate and failed to persuade the child support officer that she had good cause, the benefit penalty would be imposed immediately. Only then could she appeal to a child support tribunal. That seems less than fair. In fact, it could cause real harm to the child because of the effect on the family's income.

It is important that the agency treats lone parents and non-resident parents fairly and in a similar way. It seems quite illogical and unjust that, where there is a paternity dispute, no maintenance assessment will be made until after the case has been heard by the courts. However, the same principle would not apply to the lone parent with care who may find the benefit reduced before appeal to the tribunal. The fact of granting an appeal takes for granted the fact that she might win the appeal. Why should she be deprived of benefit in the meantime?

I want to draw the Minister's attention to the way in which that issue is handled in the Australian maintenance system which the Government have used as a model for the system that underlies this Bill. In Australia the benefit penalty is not brought to bear until after the appeal process is completed. In 1988-89 there were just eight cancellations of benefit and in 1989-90 there were 35. That seems a much fairer system.

There is also a parallel within our legislation. Since April of this year, any unemployed person receiving benefit and challenging an application for voluntary unemployment deduction made by the state on the ground that he or she is capable of work continues to be paid at the normal level until after the appeal. Why are we harsher on children and lone parents when that system applies the unemployed? Within the Bill there is a proposal that no maintenance assessment will be made in cases involving disputed paternity until paternity is proven.

It is important that any new system that could threaten the economic well-being of a family should be seen to be fair. We believe that there is a strong case for testing decisions on appeal, before they are carried out, on the grounds of natural justice. There is an inconsistency in the way in which we deal with many aspects of benefit. I can envisage a situation in which many mothers and their children will suffer in the short term who, in the longer term, will not have the penalty clause applied. It is essential that no reduction should take place when there is uncertainty about the mother's ability to co-operate.

I hope that the Minister will respond positively to those points. In addition, we should bear in mind the fact that one of the main purposes of the Bill is to save the Treasury money. Child support officers will therefore be working within strict targets for levels of maintenance collection. The resulting harm to lone parents and especially their children cannot possibly be justified in those circumstances. Lone parents have told me in my advice surgeries that they have already been told that they will lose benefit if they do not name the father—and that happened even before this Bill entered Committee. That problem is not confined to my area. Organisations such as NACAB and the Child Poverty Action Group have gathered substantial evidence from many parts of the country to show what is happening.

Amendment No. 4 proposes to ensure that a benefit penalty cannot be repeated simply because a parent with care moves from one benefit to another—for example, if a mother moves from income support to family credit or disability working allowance. It also covers circumstances in which a parent with care may have a break in a benefit claim and then moves back on to the same benefit.

In Committee the Secretary of State said that there was no intention of reapplying a further period of deduction to the same claim for the same benefit. However, that still leaves open the possibility of a repeat penalty in the kind of cases that I have just outlined. I thought that the Government wanted to encourage lone parents to seek work. Applying a second benefit penalty for parents with care, the majority of whom will be lone parents trying to move to work and on to family credit or disability working allowance, can hardly be described as providing an incentive for that lone parent to return to work.

Research carried out by the DSS has shown that lone parents as a group often go into and out of work possibly more often than others and that is a result of their dual role as carers and workers. We are therefore talking about a significant number of people who could be affected by repeat penalties at the very time when they are trying desperately to achieve some measure of progress towards independence. As the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West said, the pay packet is a key to economic independence. Many young mothers are striving for that independence. As a result, many of them may feel a disincentive to look for work that involves 16 hours or more a week.

I now give the House a couple of examples that have come to the attention of citizens' advice bureaux. In Derbyshire, a client who is divorced had a court order for the payment of £60 a week for her two sons. The husband paid irregularly. In the weeks when he defaulted, she received income support. When he paid, she was 10p over the limit. As a result, she was yo-yoing on and off income support. I ask the House to imagine what that meant in terms of budgeting and managing her family income. In Yorkshire, a client's family credit book had been delayed. She contacted the family credit unit, which said that she should have been notified and that she should put in a fresh claim and that it would be backdated. In the meantime, of course, she fell behind with all her bills.

7 pm

As the House knows, Opposition Members are concerned about the damaging effect that the legislation will have on children who are caught up in the process. This is not a Child Support Bill; it is a Treasury support

Bill. There is no incentive for a woman to name the father of her child. In fact, many who receive maintenance will lose their passported benefits. A repeat penalty will significantly worsen the effects of a benefit reduction. A parent with care who has already suffered an 18-month benefit penalty will have little money to meet her children's needs. I cannot see any justification for repeating the penalty just because she has had a break in a claim or has moved into work of 16 hours or more a week. That is a real worry. I ask the Minister to confirm that that is not the Government's intention and that he takes on board my criticisms of the application of the Bill, particularly the penalty clauses.

Mr. Jack: I could never accuse the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) of being uncharitable, but, in her comments about our intentions in respect of the Bill, she has perhaps done something that she did not intend to do. Ever since the Bill was introduced, we have made it abundantly clear that the interests of children—hence the name of our White Paper—come first. That means that we see in the measure the pre-eminence of the child. It is sad that the hon. Lady has not reflected on the fact that the Bill sorts out the most unsatisfactory present situation in which maintenance is a concern or, more important, is not even paid.

I can give the hon. Lady an assurance in respect of sensitivity. We share her anxiety on that matter, but I am disappointed—I can understand why she has her views—that she does not reflect on the fact that the Government have moved greatly in terms of the original benefit sanction as proposed in the White Paper. We have moved to reflect on the sensitivity of the human situation with which we are dealing—for example, our amendment, which was accepted in Committee, about the adoption of an onus of proof determined by the words "harm and undue distress".

The hon. Lady did not give any weight to the presumption to be believed on behalf of the parent with care when she explains the sometimes difficult and sensitive human circumstances which lead her to resist co-operating with the Bill. We have given an assurance that people will be presumed to be believed, but the hon. Lady knows that part of the reason why, under the present arrangements, people are sometimes frightened to co-operate is that they do not have reassurance of the kind that we shall introduce with the Bill. I cannot allow the hon. Lady to dismiss with an easy hand the thought that our people will not be properly trained to deal with sensitive matters and to give guidance, advice and counselling, as we said in Committee they would.

Mr. Hardy: No matter what the training may be, will the Minister deny that, if maintenance equals the amount that a lady is receiving in income support, she and her child will be worse off because she will lose the passported benefits to which my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) referred? She will lose the value of the free school meal. Therefore, substantial numbers of children may have a less satisfactory diet than they currently enjoy.

Mr. Jack: If that is the hon. Gentleman's understanding of our proposals, my right hon. and hon. Friends and I have failed to get the message across, so let me try again. We are talking about a benefit sanction, which, again, we have reduced to 20 per cent. of the adult rate—it has nothing to do with the children's rate—of income support. We have softened our approach by having a cooling-off period and a period of structured reduction in benefit. The woman parent with care will still be on income support and have full access to the range of passported benefits associated with that benefit. The hon. Gentleman has not entirely caught up with our proper intent.

Mr. Allen: Will the Minister therefore take the final step in being flexible by ensuring that the penalty is not a flat rate sledgehammer which applies to all women who are fined for refusing to name the father but can be a graded approach such as that which operates in respect of other benefits?

Mr. Jack: The easiest way to deal with the problem is ultimately for the parent with care to reconsider her position—that is, precisely by giving a six-week cooling off period and a further two weeks before any benefit sanction would come into operation. We have given the parent with care the chance to end the benefit sanction with no tapers and no fancy frills if she chooses to co-operate. We believe that parents will, with the right guidance, be encouraged so to do.

I cannot accept the hon. Lady's argument that our system is draconian. She prays in aid Australia, but she has been a little selective in her information. Under the Australian system, somebody who ultimately decides not to co-operate does not have our reduction of benefit; he or she loses the lot for ever and a day. If that is the Opposition's policy, I hope that everybody has taken note of their advocacy of the Australian system and their association with something that is clearly draconian compared with our much softer and more sensitive approach.

The hon. Lady discussed the shared costs of parenting. I owe her a reply on that point. Where the absent parent looks after the child for a substantial time, and when there are special weekends or time put aside, the absent parent will retain an appropriate proportion of the maintenance available. I assure the hon. Lady that we are giving careful thought to that matter. I hope that those words reassure her.

The hon. Lady asked me about consultation on the regulations. The Bill is not, effectively, a social security provision, but, out of courtesy, we are to put our regulations before the Social Security Advisory Committee. Of course we shall consult as widely as we consulted in respect of replies to the White Paper. We want the benefit of the views of others.

The hon. Lady seems to be taking a typical Opposition approach, which is never to bring matters to a head and always to postpone them until the day after and the day after that. A decision must be made whether people regard the flow of maintenance or the child as the most important or whether they wish to stick to their principles. Our proposals give a woman the opportunity to end any sanctions straight away. We believe that, in our much softer and gentle approach, that stage should be reached rather than postponing the decision for ever and a day.

Amendment negatived.

Amendment proposed: No. 5, in page 30, line 34, at end insert—

'(12) The Secretary of State shall make regulations specifying circumstances in which the child support officer may give a reduced benefit direction—

(a) for such shorter period as may appear to him to be appropriate;

[Mr. Jack]

(b) for such small amount as is appropriate in the circumstances of the case.'.—*[Mr. Allen.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 113, Noes 268.

Division No. 223] **[7.09 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bellotti, David
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilfoyle, Peter
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McMaster, Gordon
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Hara, Edward
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Jo
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Turner, Dennis
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert N. Wareing and
Mr. Thomas McAvoy.

NOES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Sir Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm

Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Sir Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Stokes, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Trimble, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tom Sackville and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 44

FEES

Amendment made: No. 56, in page 30, line 43, at end insert—

'( ) may require any information which is needed for the purpose of determining the amount of any such fee to be furnished, in accordance with the regulations, by such person as may be prescribed;'.—*[Mr. Jack.]*

Clause 46

UNAUTHORISED DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

Amendment made: No. 57, in page 31, line 40, after 'of', insert 'the staff of'.—*[Mr. Jack.]*

Clause 47

SUPPLEMENTARY POWERS TO MAKE REGULATIONS

Amendments made: No. 58, in page 33, line 1, at end insert—

'(aa) extending the categories of case to which section 17 or 18 applies;'.

No. 59, in page 33, line 5, at end insert—

'( ) for the adjustment, for the purpose of taking account of the retrospective effect of a maintenance assessment, of amounts payable under the assessment;

( ) for the adjustment, for the purpose of taking account of over-payments or under-payments of child support maintenance, of amounts payable under a maintenance assessment;'.—*[Mr. Jack.]*

Clause 48

REGULATIONS AND ORDERS

Amendments made: No. 60, in page 33, line 22, leave out '(9)' and insert '(9) or (10)'.

No. 61, in page 33, line 23, after '41', insert '(1), 43'.—*[Mr. Jack.]*

Clause 50

INTERPRETATION

Amendments made: No. 62, in page 34, line 9, at end insert—

'"child benefit" has the same meaning as in the Child Benefit Act 1975;'.

No. 85, in page 34, leave out line 14.

No. 63, in page 34, line 26, at end insert—

'"maintenance agreement" has the meaning given in section 9(1);'.

No. 86, in page 34, leave out line 43.—*[Mr. Jack.]*

Clause 53

SHORT TITLE, COMMENCEMENT AND EXTENT, ETC

Amendments made: No. 64, in page 36, line 29, leave out 'Secretary of State' and insert 'Lord Chancellor, the Secretary of State or Lord Advocate or by any of them acting jointly.'.

No. 97, in page 36, line 31, at end insert '(including, in particular, for different cases or categories of case)'.

No. 65, in page 36, line 31, at end insert—

'(3A) An order under subsection (2) may make such supplemental, incidental or transitional provision as appears to the person making the order to be necessary or expedient in connection with the provisions brought into force by the order, including such adaptations or modifications of—

(a) the provisions so brought into force;

(b) any provisions of this Act then in force; or

(c) any provision of any other enactment,

as appear to him to be necessary or expedient.

(3B) Different provision may be made by virtue of subsection (3A) with respect to different periods.

(3C) Any provision made by virtue of subsection (3A) may, in particular, include provision for—

(a) the enforcement of a maintenance assessment (including the collection of sums payable under the assessment) as if the assessment were a court order of a prescribed kind;

(b) the registration of maintenance assessments with the appropriate court in connection with any provision of a kind mentioned in paragraph (a);

(c) the variation, on application made to a court, of the provisions of a maintenance assessment relating to the method of making payments fixed by the assessment or the intervals at which such payments are to be made;

(d) a maintenance assessment, or an order of a prescribed kind relating to one or more children, to be deemed, in prescribed circumstances, to have been validly made for all purposes or for such purposes as may be prescribed.

In paragraph (c) "court" includes a single justice.

(3D) The Lord Chancellor, the Secretary of State or the Lord Advocate may by order make such amendments or repeals in, or such modifications of, such enactments as may be specified in the order, as appear to him to be necessary or

expedient in consequence of any provision made by or under this Act (including any provision made by virtue of subsection (3A)).

(3E) This Act shall, in its application to the Isles of Scilly, have effect subject to such exceptions, adaptations and modifications as the Secretary of State may by order prescribe.'.

No. 87, in page 36, line 32, leave out 'and 34' and insert ', 34 and 45'.

No. 66, in page 36, line 32, after '34', insert 'and paragraph 3B of Schedule 5'.

No. 88, in page 36, line 33, leave out 'and 27' and insert ', 27 and *(Right of audience: Scotland)*'.—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Schedule 1

Maintenance Assessments

Amendments made: No. 67, in page 40, line 30, leave out 'sub-paragraph (1) "the' and insert 'this paragraph the "'.

No. 68, in page 42, line 19, at end insert—

'(e) where a new maintenance assessment is made with respect to any qualifying child with respect to whom the assessment in question was in force immediately before the making of the new assessment.'.

No. 69, in page 42, line 19, at end insert—

'(1A) A maintenance assessment made in response to an application under section 4 or 7 shall be cancelled by a child support officer if the person on whose application the assessment was made asks him to do so.

(1B) A maintenance assessment made in response to an application under section 6 shall be cancelled by a child support officer if—

(a) the person on whose application the assessment was made ("the applicant") asks him to do so; and

(b) he is satisfied that the applicant has ceased to fall within subsection (1) of that section.'.

No. 70, in page 42, line 25, at end insert—

'(2A) Where—

(a) at any time a maintenance assessment is in force but a child support officer would no longer have jurisdiction to make it if it were to be applied for at that time; and

(b) the assessment has not been cancelled, or has not ceased to have effect, under or by virtue of any other provision made by or under this Act,

it shall be taken to have continuing effect unless cancelled by a child support officer in accordance with such prescribed provision (including provision as to the effective date of cancellation) as the Secretary of State considers it appropriate to make.'.

No. 71, in page 42, line 29, after 'sub-paragraph', insert '(2A) or'.

No. 72, in page 42, line 31, leave out 'under this paragraph'.

No. 73, in page 42, line 41, after 'such', insert 'supplemental, incidental or'.—*[Mr. Jack.]*

Schedule 3

Child Support Appeal Tribunals

Amendments made: No. 74, in page 44, line 38, leave out 'to act as full-time chairmen'.

No. 75, in page 45, line 1, after 'appoint', insert 'regional and other'.—*[Mr. Jack.]*

Schedule 5

Consequential Amendments

Amendment made: No. 76, in page 48, line 26, at end insert—

'The House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975 (c.24)

2A.—(1) The House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975 shall be amended as follows.

(2) In Part I, (disqualifying judicial offices), the following entries shall be inserted at the appropriate places—

"Chief or other Child Support Commissioner (excluding a person appointed under paragraph 4 of Schedule 4 to the Child Support Act 1991)."

"Chief or other Child Support Commissioner for Northern Ireland (excluding a person appointed under paragraph 4 of Schedule 4 to the Child Support Act 1991)."

(3) In Part III (other disqualifying offices), the following entry shall be inserted at the appropriate place—

"Regional or other full-time chairman of a child support appeal tribunal established under section 20 of the Child Support Act 1991".

The Northern Ireland Assembly Disqualification Act 1975 (c.25)

2B.—(1) In Part I of The Northern Ireland Assembly Disqualification Act 1975 (disqualifying judicial offices), the following entries shall be inserted at the appropriate places—

"Chief or other Child Support Commissioner (excluding a person appointed under paragraph 4 of Schedule 4 to the Child Support Act 1991)."

"Chief or other Child Support Commissioner for Northern Ireland (excluding a person appointed under paragraph 4 of Schedule 4 to the Child Support Act 1991).".

No. 77, in page 48, line 34, at end insert—

'The Insolvency Act 1986 (c.45)

3B. In section 281(5)(b) of the Insolvency Act 1986 (effect of discharge of bankrupt), after "family proceedings" there shall be inserted "or under a maintenance assessment made under the Child Support Act 1991".'.

No. 91, in page 48, line 34, at end insert—

'Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 (c.66)

3A. (1) The Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 shall be amended as follows.

(2) In section 32 (vesting of estate and dealings of debtor after sequestration)—

(a) in subsection (3)—

(i) after paragraph (b) there shall be inserted—

"(c) any obligation of his to pay child support maintenance under the Child Support Act 1991,";

(ii) after "relevant obligations" where second occurring there shall be inserted "referred to in paragraphs (a) and (b) above";

(b) in subsection (5) after "Diligence" there shall be inserted "(which, for the purposes of this section, includes the making of a deduction from earnings order under the Child Support Act 1991)".

(3) In section 37 (effect of sequestration on diligence), in subsection (5A) for "or a conjoined arrestment order" there is substituted ", a conjoined arrestment order or a deduction from earnings order under the Child Support Act 1991".

(4) In section 55 (effect of discharge under section 54), in subsection (2)(d)—

(a) after "being" there shall be inserted "(i)";

(b) at the end there shall be inserted—

"or

(ii) child support maintenance within the meaning of the Child Support Act 1991 which was unpaid in respect of any period before the date of sequestration of—

(aa) any person by whom it was due to be paid; or

(bb) any employer by whom it was, or was due to be, deducted under section 30(5) of that Act.".'.

No. 92 in page 49, line 3, at end insert—

'(4A) In section 72 (effect of sequestration on diligence against earnings)—

(a) in subsection (2) after "order" there shall be inserted "or deduction from earnings order under the Child Support Act 1991";

(b) after subsection (3) there shall be inserted—

"(3A) Any sum deducted by the employer under such a deduction from earnings order made before the date of sequestration shall be paid to the Secretary of State, notwithstanding that the date of payment will be after the date of sequestration.";

(c) after subsection (4) there shall be inserted—

"(4A) A deduction from earnings order under the said Act shall not be competent after the date of sequestration to secure the payment of any amount due by the debtor under a maintenance assessment within the meaning of that Act in respect of which a claim could be made in the sequestration.".'.

No. 90, in page 49, line 20, at end insert—

'(6) In section 106 (interpretation) in the definition of "maintenance order"—

(a) the word "or" where it appears after paragraph (g), shall be omitted; and

(b) at the end there shall be inserted "or

(j) a maintenance assessment within the meaning of the Child Support Act 1991.".'.—*[Mr. Jack.]*

Order for Third Reading read—[Queen's Consent on behalf of the Crown, signified.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

7.24 pm

Mr. Allen: We are coming to the end of a fairly speedy dispatch of the Bill. It is interesting that the Government are not prepared to put forward a defence on Third Reading. Perhaps the Minister will be inspired to make a few final remarks, having taken the Bill through Committee.

We started this trek a fairly long time ago. My hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), perhaps too generously as always, welcomed the Bill in principle. Perhaps he should have been more cautious, but, as it is in his nature to be generous, he was prepared to accept that the Government's general approach was to try to do something about a very difficult problem. That attitude and that generosity continued throughout the Committee stage. However, the more that we looked at the detail and examined the Bill in Committee, the more that we found flaws in practice. That was essentially because the Bill was the product of an off-the-cuff remark by the former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher)—now dearly departed. Her reach comes back from beyond the political grave to lumber Ministers such as those on the Front Bench tonight with a sad post-Thatcherite corpse which they had to parade through Committee and establish on the statute book.

As always, and as I have been told by my more senior colleagues, one should never make law on the wing. It is always poor law. Poor law is an appropriate phrase in respect of the Bill. The key clause for which it will be remembered is what will become the infamous section 43. It made a bad Bill into a malicious Bill and a Bill which will punish individual mothers and children. That is the upshot of the parting shot of the right hon. Member for Finchley about penalising and pursuing fathers. Such statements strike an emotional chord in all of us. Fathers should live up to their responsibilities. However, in making law we must consider the effects on all children and all caring parents.

The speed with which the Bill came from the brain of the right hon. Member for Finchley to fruition—or almost to fruition—tonight has led us to a state in which we have legislated too quickly and we shall create many victims. Enforcement of maintenance orders was never going to be an easy area in which to legislate. It involves separations and deep emotional feelings such as love, hate, malice and greed. Any one of those human emotions would be enough to strike caution into legislators' hearts, but the Bill has proceeded too fast for those emotions to be considered.

Complicated issues are involved, such as why people separate and why the child lives with the caring parent rather than the absent parent. Such deeply complex motives cannot be considered in general when making law. They must be considered in the specific. That is why at the last gasp I asked the Minister to reconsider the punitive sanction that we are about to create which will be imposed on the caring parent if she refuses, undoubtedly for good reasons, to name the father.

The child support officer should have the discretion not to levy a fine of some £350 on the caring parent but to levy a different amount over a different period on a different percentage of income. We are not talking about people on substantial incomes. By definition we are talking about women with a child under the age of 11, who are lone parents and whose weekly income is £65·40. The people of whom we are speaking cannot easily pay back money they owe. That is why it is essential for child support officers to have flexibility. After all, someone else in the social security system will have to pick up the problems created by the fine imposed on the woman.

Many examples have been cited by hon. Members. Consider the plight of those on income support who are obliged to pay back money they owe. We can argue about whether they are receiving a subsistence allowance, a poverty level wage, or whatever. Deductions will already have been taken from the small sum that they receive, yet the child support officer will not have the discretion to say, "In view of the large deductions already being made, we will stretch what is owed over a longer period, so reducing the percentage that we shall take from the amount of income support so that the person involved and the child do not suffer."

That lack of flexibility exposes the myth that the Bill is designed for the welfare of the child. It cannot be in the best interests of the child and mother if large sums of income support are taken away. Hon. Members have been given details of cases from the citizens advice bureaux, the NSPCC, one-parent family organisations and other pressure groups which have worked hard to introduce sense into the Bill. They have all explained how individuals could suffer because of the way in which that sanction will apply.

It was instructive for me, a newcomer, to examine the list of potential deductions from income support. I ask

[Mr. Allen]

hon. Members to imagine the plight of a woman receiving £65·40 a week. What deductions can be made from the meagre income support that she is receiving? The repayment of social fund loans can amount to 5, 10 or even 15 per cent. of her total weekly benefit. Imagine being a single parent trying to look after a child, needing every ounce of assistance that one can get for the basic necessities of life and being charged such sums.

Up to £2 can be taken out of income support each week to clear outstanding gas bill debts. The same applies to electricity debts, with another £2 being taken each week from income support, remembering that current bills must be paid also. For community charge arrears, another possible £2 a week could be taken. Remember, we are talking of individuals in receipt of £65·40 a week.

For rent arrears, up to £2 a week might be taken. The same applies to debts for water charges, and the current bill must also be paid. For mortgage arrears, £2 a week might be taken, with the current amount covered by income support having to be paid. Let us not forget overpayments. If one thought one had been fortunate enough to get a little more out of the system, and one is required to repay overpayments, one can be charged £5·95 a week.

I am not suggesting that someone would have run up debts for each of those services. But with £65·40 a week, being in debt in only two or three of those categories would be frightening if a flat rate fine were imposed because she had refused to name the father, whom she may not have seen for years, of whom she was afraid and who she did not want anywhere near the child.

There is no need for any of that to happen. We shall be training child support officers, hopefully with the sensitivity described by the Minister, to help single parents. Why not give them—according to the Minister, they will get very good training—the discretion to say, "It is nonsense to remove £8 from this woman and child in these circumstances. While we must implement the measure, we will fix the charge at £2, £3 or £4 a week because only that sum can be borne by her."

The legislature will have another bite at the Bill. I do not know whether it will be possible to amend it in another place. Perhaps we can do something when the regulations are introduced, or perhaps we shall be able to examine the way in which voluntary deductions are made. The Minister said many times in Committee that he wished it to operate with flexibility. Let us have flexibility at the sharp end, where the mother is in trouble and is with the child support officer and could be fined up to £8 a week, with a potential fine of £350. We are talking about people who are struggling at the bottom of the heap.

The Government appear not to have listened to anybody during the passage of the Bill. I quoted in Committee from a letter that appeared in *The Times*. I will not repeat it now. It listed the most eminent people in the field—voluntary organisations and others—who had said that the scheme would not work and would be punitive. Without exception, all the voluntary organisations operating in this area have said the same. Add to that the view of their Lordships, of the all-party Select Committee on Social Security, of the Law Society and of all who have taken an interest in this matter, and it is clear that this is not the way to proceed. Without discarding the principle of the Bill, they say that clause 43 and the concept of fining a woman for refusing to name the father, probably for good reasons, is not the way to proceed. I urge the Government, even at this stage, to listen to those people. I suspect that their answer will be no.

We return to the origins of the Bill. The off-the-cuff remark by the right hon. Member for Finchley that we must pursue absent fathers was stimulated by the failure of the Department to maintain its complement of people who were pursuing maintenance. The rundown of staff in the Department, particularly of liable relative officers, was deplorable. It resulted in a problem being created to which the right hon. Member for Finchley invented a solution. Good and faithful servants are still labouring to drag that solution through the Palace of Westminster.

The Opposition will adhere to the principle that the responsibility for children rests with the parents, and their welfare will always be paramount in our consideration of these issues. The Bill accepts that principle, and in that sense we accept its main planks. But the practice through which clause 43 will operate makes a mockery of the principle that the child comes first.

In Government, we shall review the way in which the measure is working, will substitute incentives for punitive measures and will ensure that this legislation becomes what we all thought it meant when we first considered it and that the child's welfare will come first and foremost.

7.38 pm

Mr. Hardy: I share the concern of my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) about the Bill, which has many odious aspects. It seems to be another horse from the Finchley stable, similar to the one about which we heard a year or so ago when we were told of the merits in the Government's approach to sending investigators round to investigate social security fraud.

I pointed out that the cost of that exercise would not be much exceeded by the benefits that it secured. I said that the same resources devoted to the Inland Revenue to detect widespread tax evasion would yield an enormously greater harvest. I was told that there was a big difference: those who defraud social security are taking taxpayers' money, whereas tax dodgers merely try to keep their own.

The Government should understand that the Bill will involve substantial administrative costs, which could be better directed at securing a healthier and more substantial return to the taxpayer. However, I am less interested in the economics of the Bill than in its effect on children. Have the Government estimated the number of mothers, made even more desperate by this measure, who will decide to wash their hands of their children and leave them with the local authority social services department or the voluntary services? Has the Minister considered the matter in consultation with those who know about it in order to assess the additional burden that already hard-pressed local authority social services departments have to bear?

Whatever financial arrangements the Government make, children are sensitive and in thousands of cases their sensitivity willl be trampled upon by the arrangements in the clause. The Minister deliberately chose to misunderstand the point that I made during the last debate before Third Reading. I said that, in a substantial number of cases, the additional income that a woman takes in the form of maintenance from the father of her child may equal income support. She would then forfeit income

support and, in so doing, would forfeit the additonal benefits—my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North used the term "passported" benefits—that accompany income support. Her child would then lose benefits such as free meals and would run the risk of lower standards of living and nutrition.

This country is supposed to be more affluent than ever before, although many of us doubt that. Yet we tolerate people awarding themselves £300,000 or £400,000 a year, with increases of 50 per cent. or 100 per cent. over a 12-month period. It would be a disgrace to accept that it is necessary, in this year of grace, to plunge many children deeper into malnutrition. I hope that there will be a general election in October, because the values enshrined in the Bill should have no place in a civilised society.

7.45 pm

Dr. Godman: I hope that the general election will be not in October but in November, because I am going on holiday in September.

I was the only Scottish Member who actively participated in scrutinising the Bill in Committee. If hon. Members will forgive my conceit, I had a 100 per cent. attendance record. I cannot say the same for the other Scottish Member of the Committee who chose not to speak on these important matters. Whether the Opposition like it or not, the Bill will receive Royal Assent and will then form part of the growing body of legislation, on both sides of the border, which, aims to protect the interests of children. As a Back Bencher who is not a lawyer, I have sought as best as I can to protect the interests of children in Scotland. In some respects, there are growing divergences in the body of legislation to which I referred. An example is the Criminal Justice Bill which, once enacted, will give remarkable protection to children caught up in sexual abuse cases. I bitterly regret that we have no identitical legislation in Scotland. Last year, I attempted to bring Scottish law into line with the Criminal Justice Bill, but the Scottish Office Minister refused to accept my suggestions.

Scotland is drifting away in terms of people's perceptions of the union, but that is another story. It is also drifting away with regard to the Children Act 1989. In several of the Committee's sittings, reference was made to that Act as though it applied to the United Kingdom, but it is confined to the children of England and Wales. The Children Act 1975, which deals also with Scotland, is nowhere near as comprehensive as the Children Act 1989.

The Bill will affect the lives of children in Scotland. Despite my 100 per cent. attendance record and the work that I put into the Bill, I have had little effect on it. Nevertheless, the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack), has reassured me today about the need to protect children when they are caught up in those appallingly distressing and difficult circumstances. I spoke earlier about the need for a safeguarder and the Under-Secretary assured me that, in Scotland, specialist training would be given to those involved in the Child Support Agency, the headquarters of which will be located in Falkirk. On behalf of the children and mothers caught up in those circumstances, I want an assurance that the officials employed in that agency throughout the United Kingdom will be chosen extremely carefully. They must be given adequate training so that they can interview comprehensively children, and mothers who may be deeply afraid of physical retribution from estranged partners.

In Committee I gave three examples of young mothers, each with two children, who were caught up in those dreadful circumstances. They had appalling personal histories as victims of domestic violence. Because of what had happened to them in the past, the small number of women who are caught up in those tragic circumstances would hestitate long before they gave the names and addresses of their erstwhile partners. Given the fact that the Bill will be enacted very shortly, may I make a plea that those women, who number between 40 and 50 in my constituency, be treated with the utmost compassion within the framework of this disgraceful element of the Bill. I hope that when child support officers look for reasonable evidence of fear, threats and violence, they will not necessarily expect to find physical evidence of what has taken place. Instead, they should look for evidence of what may take place if they give the evidence required by the child support officer. That is why it is essential that, when selecting and training child support officers, we find the best. In some respects, we already have them in Scotland in some local Department of Social Security offices, despite my occasional complaints relating to incidents involving my constituents.

It is of paramount importance that, when the agency is set up, from top to bottom its staff are committed to the welfare of children—nothing less will do. That is what we are concerned about. The staff must also have a deep understanding of the domestic circumstances of these women caught up in dealings with the Child Support Agency and officers.

There is a growing body of law which I call child care law. Despite my earlier criticisms, we have some superb examples of that in Scotland. There is the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, which was steered through the House by the late Willie Ross and Bruce Millan, and other Acts that almost match that superb piece of child care law. The 1968 Act contains other provisions, but I am talking about its child care sections.

In some respects, the Child Support Bill is something of an aberration. It is right and proper that absent parents match and honour their obligations. I have one last plea, which I have made twice before: if a small number of men are to be imprisoned for more than six weeks, we should consider placing such miscreants in prison at the weekends. They should turn up at Barlinnie, Saughton or Perth on Friday evening after they have clocked off work or whatever they do these days, and be let out on Monday morning or Sunday evening, so that if they are in work they do not lose their employment. The small number of men who go to prison should be treated sensibly and realistically. If they go to prison, they should be put in the nick for the weekend. That is an important consideration and should be borne in mind when the Minister introduces regulations.

7.55 pm

Mr. Jack: It is always a relief to come to the end of a piece of parliamentary legislation, but this is the end of only one part of what I think will be a star-studded show, because the second part will deal with the introduction of the regulations. I hope that in the debates in Standing Committee and in the House this evening I have reassured

[Mr. Jack]

right hon. and hon. Members that the Government will continue to listen, consult and think hard about the information that we receive about such a deeply sensitive but important matter. We have acknowledged, and continue to acknowledge, that there is no monopoly of wisdom on the subject, and we are certainly always pleased to learn.

It would be churlish of me not to give one or two words of tribute, and I shall start with those involved in introducing the start of the legislation—the White Paper, "Children Come First". Sometimes, it is with trepidation that we mention the people whom we should not mention, but they know who I mean—the Department officials who have worked not only on the White Paper but on the Bill. I know that they have the profound appreciation and thanks of all the Ministers involved for the way in which they have worked, sometimes under considerable pressure, to produce what was a good Bill when it started and is now immeasurably improved as a result of our deliberations in Standing Committee and in the House. Much of this would not have happened had it not been for the fundamental belief in the policy of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security, who I am delighted to see on the Front Bench this evening.

In Standing Committee, we considered in detail many parts of the Bill. I pay tribute to the hon. Members for Eccles (Miss Lestor) and for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) for their contribution and their probing of our policy, which was important and made us think. We have shown, by the way that we have responded, that we listened. We have also listened to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), who, in a short time, has taught me more about Scotland than I thought possible. He was right to advert to his attendance record in Standing Committee. Other Opposition Members would envy the number of times that he was able to join his few other hon. Friends on the Committee.

We have heard Opposition Members comment on points of detail. If I misunderstood the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy), I apologise. I now understand the point that he was making, but it is important that he realises that, if maintenance boosts the income of a parent with care by providing additional resources—taking them from benefit—in essence, that merely restores the position that that person might formerly have enjoyed within his or her relationship. Clearly, the expenses related to the child would have been borne by the couple involved in the former relationship. If someone no longer receives income support or benefit, he or she may no longer receive some social security benefits, but the position will have returned to the status quo.

Part of the Bill's package includes amendments to family credit to assist women who wish to return to the labour market. Those benefits include many means of assisting lone parents, who will receive the same rate as two-parent families in terms of the family premium. In addition, school meals were included at the inception of the benefit. Those two examples show that the measures are not as draconian as the hon. Member for Wentworth said.

The hon. Member for Nottingham, North talked about benefit deduction. I shall seek to reassure him, if that is possible, that any reduction of benefit—I think that he was referring specifically to income support—falls within the overall limit of 15 per cent. I spent some time in Committee talking in detail about the order in which deductions would take place, and I refer the hon. Gentleman to those detailed remarks.

In his somewhat grudging concluding remarks, the hon. Member for Nottingham, North suggested that we might be on the defensive. The Government can be positive about what they genuinely believe is an extremely good, well-thought-out package. He did not mention the Bill's provisions in relation to providing maintenance for children. Only at the end of his remarks did he refer to the quintessence of the Bill—putting children first.

In terms of maintenance, the Bill has replaced uncertainty with certainty. It has a clear objective to gain maintenance for children, which is to be followed up by the Child Support Agency. We have replaced the inconsistency of the old system—I am sure that Opposition Members could not support its retention—with an element of consistency. For the first time, we shall have a stated formula and process for the recovery of maintenance for the benefit of children. I believe that we have replaced irresponsibility with responsibility.

The hon. Member for Nottingham, North failed to say that, 10 years ago, only 50 per cent. of maintenance orders were honoured. That figure has now dropped to 30 per cent. and, for those on income support, to only 23 per cent. That shows how responsibility has been shuffled away to the taxpayer, who has had to pick up the bill to the tune of £400 million. The Bill seeks to redress that imbalance.

Opposition Members continually chide the Government to improve the social security system. I am delighted to be standing at the Dispatch Box talking about increases in child benefit, as I also did some days ago. The money to pay for those provisions does not, as Opposition Members often imagine, grow on trees. It comes from the sensible allocation of resources available within the social security budget. The Bill will result in rebalancing £400 million of taxpayers' money. That is a good thing. It will assist the further development of the social security system.

The Bill brings into being a fine agency that is dedicated to the sensitive task that it must undertake. The hon. Member for Nottingham, North chided us for not listening, but a little recess reading of the White Paper will demonstrate to him how far the Government have moved to meet the representations of many highly respected voluntary bodies. We said initially that people would be allowed not to co-operate in cases of rape and incest only. However, we quickly moved to take into account domestic violence. We then went further and recognised harm and undue distress as reasons for non co-operation.

In many ways the agency is a buffer between the parent with care and the difficult world in which she lived before her relationship broke up. The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow talked about evidence. It might be difficult to produce the kind of evidence that a court of law requires, but there is a presumption on someone to be believed. That is the greatest defence available to any individual before they face the possibility of a benefit sanction. The exercise of that sanction is meant to signal that seeking to secure maintenance and benefit for one's child—exercising that responsibility—is not an optional extra. A parent with care has a responsibility to her child to secure the necessary resources so that, should that

parent return to work, those resources would represent a genuine addition to the family budget, to the benefit of the child.

The receipt of maintenance is possible through co-operation. If someone chooses not to co-operate—she may have good reason—we will have given them every option to co-operate and every chance to reconsider their position. If someone chooses that action, it means that a benefit sanction is applied, but that sanction can be stopped immediately through co-operation.

It appeared from the speech of the hon. Member for Eccles that the Opposition wanted us to have a strong association with the Australian system of social security. Under that system all benefits are removed in the event of non co-operation, yet the Opposition strongly favour the Australian system. I am sure that that has not gone unnoticed in the House and outside.

I hope that we have demonstrated our good intentions under the Bill. We shall finance the agency with the appropriate resources to do its work. It will draw on the best of information technology and on a resource structure unparalleled in terms of information to seek out the absent parent with care. Above all, the Bill will have as its motto putting children first in all that it does.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Standing Orders (Amendments)

[Relevant documents: Second Report from the Select Committee on Procedure of Session 1989-90, on The Working of the Select Committee System, House of Commons Paper No. 19-I, and the Government's response, Cm. 1532.]

8.3 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): I beg to move,

That Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) be amended by inserting at the end of line 38 the words—

'(e) proceedings on a Motion such as is referred to in paragraph (2) of Standing Order No. 104 (Nomination of select committees) for the nomination or discharge of members of select committees appointed under Standing Order No. 130 (Select committees related to government departments) which has been opposed at or after the interruption of business on a preceding day:

Provided that any questions necessary to dispose of the proceedings on such a Motion shall be put at Eleven o'clock or one hour after the commencement of those proceedings, whichever is the later.'

Mr. Speaker: I understand that it will be for the convenience of the House if we also discuss motion No. 3—

That—

Standing Order No. 122 (Committee of Public Accounts) be amended by adding at the end of the words—

'(3) The Committee shall have power to communicate to any committee appointed under Standing Order No. 130 (Select committees related to government departments) such evidence as it may have received from the National Audit Office (having been agreed between that Office and the government department or departments concerned) but which has not been reported to the House'; and

Standing Order No. 130 (Select committees related to government departments) be amended by inserting in line 33, after the word 'committee', the words 'and to the Committee of Public Accounts.'—

and motion No. 4—

That Standing Order No. 130 (Select committees related to government departments) be amended

in line 3, by inserting after the word 'departments', the word 'as';

in line 6, by inserting at the end the words '(excluding the expenditure, administration and policy of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Northern Ireland).';

in the Table by leaving out the words—

'3. Education, Science and Arts	Department of Education and Science	11	3'

and inserting the words—

'3. Education, Science and Arts	Department of Education and Science; Office of Arts and Libraries	13	3';

by leaving out the words—

'9. Home Affairs	Home Office	11	3'

and inserting the words—

[Mr. Speaker]

'9. Home Affairs	Home Office; policy, administration and expenditure of the Lord Chancellor's Departments (including the work of staff provided for the administrative work of courts and tribunals, but excluding consideration of individual cases and appointments); and administration and expenditure of the Attorney General's Office, the Treasury Solicitor's Department, the Crown Prosecution Service and the Serious Fraud Office (but excluding individual cases and appointments and advice given within government by Law Officers)';	11	3

by leaving out the words—

'10. Scottish Affairs	Scottish Office	13	5'

and inserting the words—

'10. Scottish Affairs	Scottish Office; and administration and expenditure of the Lord Advocate's Departments, together with policy functions discharged by the Lord Advocate through the Scottish Courts Administration, but excluding consideration of individual cases and appointments, advice given within government by Scottish Law Officers, and the drafting of bills';	13	5

by leaving out the words—

'14. Treasury and Civil Service	Treasury, Management and Personnel Office, Board of Inland Revenue, Board of Customs and Excise'	11	3

and inserting the words—

'14. Treasury and Civil Service	Treasury, Office of the Minister for the Civil Service (but excluding the drafting of bills by the Parliamentary Counsel Office), Board of Inland Revenue, Board of Customs and Excise';	11	3

in line 12, by inserting at the beginning the words 'The Education, Science and Arts Committee (in respect of matters relating to science and technology principally within the responsibilities of the Department of Education and Science or an associated public body)';

and by leaving out lines 15 to 20.

I have selected the amendment in the name of the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux).

Mr. Macgregor: I welcome the opportunity to lay the amendments before the House. The Select Committee on Procedure carried out a valuable and comprehensive review of the Select Committee system, which was the first parliamentary inquiry into the present system that was established in 1979.

The Government are pleased to note the general response of the Procedure Committee, which is that the system has stood up to scrutiny and is basically sound and that there is no need for major reform. There will, of course, always be a need for minor adjustments to reflect changing circumstances. We welcome and accept most of the recommendations addressed to the Government. I shall not concern myself in this speech with those recommendations addressed to Committees or to the House generally.

The Government have already acted on two recommendations. The new Health and Social Services Select Committees are up and running and we had a debate on 1 May on the parliamentary and health service commissioners.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for showing his characteristic courtesy in giving way. Has any concern been expressed about the failure of the Government to create or recreate in the House the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs?

Mr. MacGregor: I have been asked about that from time to time by hon. Members with a particular interest in the matter. I have already said that I see no prospect of making any progress on the matter in the House during the current Session for the reasons that have been well advanced in earlier debates. It is not intended that that matter should be addressed on the motions before us tonight.

I propose to act on the recommendations that the Government have accepted. I shall deal briefly with each of the motions, which the House will have already seen referred to in detail in the Select Committee report and the Government's response to it. You said, Mr. Speaker, that it would be convenient to take the three motions together, and I shall deal with them as they appear on the Order Paper.

The first motion relates to an amendment to Standing Order No. 14 concerned with the replacement of members. The Committee recommended:

"Where a motion discharging one member and/or appointing another is opposed, any subsequent proceedings on that motion at a later date should be dealt with within one hour."

The Government support that recommendation and the amendment provides for that.

The second motion relates to amendments to Standing Order No. 122 and to Standing Order No. 130. The amendments deal with the role of the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee. I should like to deal with those amendments in greater detail. The proposed amendments will enable the PAC to pass to departmental Select Committees unpublished memoranda submitted to it by the Comptroller and Auditor General and the National Audit Office which have been agreed by Departments.

It is appropriate for the PAC to control the passing of such information. The amendments will also allow the departmental Committees to pass papers to the PAC. It is not appropriate to set out every detail of the way in which that will work under the Standing Orders. The Government's response pointed out that it was essentially for the House to decide how it should deal with any NAO report. The Government agree with the Procedure Committee's view that only a few carefully chosen cases should be handled by the departmental Select Committees following agreement with the NAO and the PAC. I am glad to note that the Chairman of the PAC, the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), is in his place as he and I have discussed this proposal in some detail.

The Government agree completely that the PAC should not scrutinise policy matters. The PAC, as recognised in Standing Order No. 122, has a unique role in examining Departments on their accounts and value for money. I pay tribute to the work of the PAC in that respect and to its current Chairman.

The departmental Select Committees can look more widely at policy, but, insofar as much of their work relates to administration and expenditure, they would be assisted by NAO reports. They already have the right to take up published material.

The Procedure Committee was careful to state the caveats under which it saw assistance being given to Select Committees by the NAO. I have discussed that matter with my hon. Friend the Chairman of the Procedure Committee and, as I have said on a number of occasions, I am grateful to him and his Committee for the work that they have done.

The Government's response has set out understandings that would prevent NAO reports from being discussed in an uncontrolled way or the NAO being drawn into policy. That is an important point with which I know the Chairman of the PAC is concerned. Our response makes it clear that the NAO would not give substantive oral evidence beyond any necessary explanation of its reports.

The Procedure Committee proposed, and the Government accepted, subject to the procedures mentioned, that there should be liaison between the Chairman of the Liaison Committee, the Chairman of the PAC and the Comptroller and Auditor General to see how NAO resources could help the departmental Committees without prejudicing the main thrust of the work of the NAO for the PAC.

The arrangements should not be interpreted as giving the departmental Select Committees any powers over the NAO. As the Procedure Committee recognised, under the National Audit Act 1983, the Comptroller and Auditor General has complete discretion in carrying out his functions. He is not under any obligation to take account of suggestions from departmental Select Committees when determining his programme of studies as he is with suggestions from the PAC. I hope and believe that, with the good will of all sides, these arrangements can be made to work.

As for Standing Order No. 130 and the third group of amendments, this contains tidying-up arrangements for Departments, covered in the table in Standing Order No. 130(2). There are two aspects to which I wish to draw particular attention. The first is the scrutiny of the Law Officers' Departments. The suggestion that there should be some form of scrutiny of these Departments is not new. It was put forward by the Procedure Committee in 1977-78, but it was not accepted on the ground that it could threaten the independence of the judiciary. The current Procedure Committee proposed that all matters that lay within the responsibilities of the various Law Officers, but excluding consideration of the merits of individual cases, should come under the scrutiny of the Home Affairs or Scottish Affairs Committees, as appropriate. The Government were sympathetic to the thought behind the proposal but were unable to go as far as the Procedure Committee would have liked, for several reasons. I shall refer only to a few of them.

Although the Lord Chancellor's Department provides the staff and the administration for the courts service, the courts themselves are not part of the Department. The wording of the amendment is identical to the extension of the Public Accounts Committee's jurisdiction in the same area under the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990. I hope that that will be acceptable.

Also, the exclusion of individual judicial appointments reflects the personal responsibility of the Lord Chancellor and the Lord Advocate for these matters, but the Committees will be free to examine the appointments system as a whole. It is important, too, that the independence of the various prosecuting authorities from political influence should be reflected. The Committees will be excluded, therefore, from examining prosecution policy. I believe however, that what we are proposing in the amendments represents a considerable step forward. It means that a significant area of government hitherto unavailable for Committee scrutiny can now be examined. I hope, therefore, that the House will accept the proposal.

Dr. Godman: The right hon. Gentleman referred to the Scottish Select Committee. What is the point of amending Standing Order No. 130 to make changes to the Scottish Select Committee if the Government, with their Back Benchers, refuse to set up such a Committee?

Mr. MacGregor: If eventually we are able to make progress on that matter, we shall be able to accept the Procedure Committee's recommendation.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Am I to take it, therefore, that the exclusion in line 6—

[Rev. Martin Smyth]

"'(excluding the expenditure, administration and policy of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Northern Ireland),'"—

is because that will be referred to the Home Affairs Committee? Alternatively, is there to be no scrutiny? If a Northern Ireland Select Committee is to be set up, am I to take it that that matter could be referred to the Committee or, due to the fact that the courts service is part of the Lord Chancellor's Department, would it still be dealt with in the Home Affairs Committee?

Mr. MacGregor: To answer the hon. Gentleman's second point first, that would not be the case. As for his main point—why the Director of Public Prosecutions is excluded—there are a number of considerations, one of which is that no request was made for Select Committee scrutiny of the Director of Public Prosecutions in Northern Ireland. That is why the terms of reference do not include him. There is no Crown prosecution service as such in Northern Ireland. That is an important point in relation to scrutiny because, unlike his counterpart in England and Wales who heads a staff of some 5,500 in the Crown prosecution service, the responsibilities of the Director of Public Prosecutions in Northern Ireland in relation to administration and expenditure, which is what we are talking about, are very small. That is the reason for his exclusion.

Another aspect of this group of amendments to Standing Order No. 130 relates to the Science and Technology Sub-Committee. The Procedure Committee recommended either a Joint Committee with the House of Lords, or reconsideration of an earlier request by the Education Committee for two additional members and the power to appoint a Sub-Committee. The Government were prepared to accept the second recommendation. The Standing Order now provides for it.

I hope that I have adequately explained the Standing Orders changes. To a large extent, they implement the Procedure Committee's recommendations. Accordingly, I recommend them to the House.

8.14 pm

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): The Opposition accept the proposed amendments. We know that a great deal of discussion took place, not least with my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. My right hon. Friend was as concerned as we were that the Comptroller and Auditor General should not become involved in political matters as the Comptroller's job is to report to the Public Accounts Committee in an unfettered way about Government expenditure and he ought not to be involved in the political hurly-burly in which Members of Parliament obviously and rightly are involved. We feel, therefore, that the Procedure Committee's recommendations are sensible. They tighten and strengthen the position. We therefore welcome this development.

I understand the anxiety of my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) about the Scottish Select Committee, and we are extremely disappointed that it has not been set up. The Leader of the House is aware that we shall continue to press that issue. My hon. Friends north of the border have strong feelings about it. That point has been made again this evening.

The Leader of the House has carefully explained these sensible proposals to the House, and I therefore ask my hon. Friends to accept them.

8.16 pm

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): The Leader of the House paid tribute at the beginning of his speech to the efficiency of the Chairman of the Procedure Committee and to its members. He suggested how easy it is to establish yet another Select Committee. Those of us who watched the smooth division of the old Health and Social Services Select Committee give the Chairman of the Select Committee on Procedure full marks for the efficient way in which that operation was carried out, in co-operation with the Leader of the House and his predecessor.

In my reply to the Chairman of the Select Committee on Procedure dated 8 February 1990 I expressed satisfaction with the existing coverage of Northern Ireland by the various Select Committees, such as Agriculture, Health, Social Security, Energy and Trade and Industry —just as happens for Scotland. In the second paragraph of my letter I said:

"There ought to be a Northern Ireland Select Committee dealing with those matters for which the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is responsible, but for which there is no counterpart in Great Britain, e.g. implementation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement 1985, and the political direction of security."

That alone is a very heavy responsibility.

In another letter to the Chairman of the Select Committee on Procedure, dated 22 May 1990, I said:

"Thank you for your letter of 15 May about the proposal for a Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs. Such a body would be a great asset to the people of Northern Ireland, extending as it would to their affairs the same scrutiny as is provided for the rest of the United Kingdom. In our view, the establishment of a Northern Ireland Select Committee should not be delayed for the invalid reason that some day a structure of Government may be invented for Northern Ireland."

My case was powerfully supported by the Select Committee in its second report, particularly in paragraphs 272 to 278:

"Accordingly, whilst we do not believe that the uncertainties over the future administration of the Province can be allowed to preclude indefinitely the establishment of proper arrangements for the scrutiny by the House of the Northern Ireland Department, we accept that this would not be a sensible moment to recommend the establishment of a Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs. Nevertheless, we consider that the Government cannot postpone dealing with this matter for very much longer and we will keep the position under review."

Then there is the key sentence:

"We may well wish to return to it once the outcome of the current talks is clear."

We have now reached that point. That obstacle was removed by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in his statement to the House on 3 July, when he said:

"I concluded that the talks should therefore be brought to an end. I have also been in touch with the Irish Government to recount my conclusion."—[*Official Report*, 3 July 1991; Vol. 194, c. 319.]

It is therefore not a matter of opinion, or of what this or that newspaper says. We respect the Secretary of State's decision, which was made for reasons best known to him and which he announced to the four party leaders in private.

Regardless of the fact that the talks have been brought to an end by Her Majesty's Government, it must be recognised that, even if the talks had succeeded, there would still have been an unanswerable case for a Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs because there would remain a wide range of responsibilities which would never, in any circumstances, be devolved to any Northern Ireland Assembly or Government. The responsibilities that will remain with any Secretary of State for Northern Ireland bite deeply into the financial subvention voted by Parliament. As the House will be aware, and as you wisely remind us, Mr. Speaker, those vast sums are not debatable in the debates on Northern Ireland appropriation. However, Parliament has a duty to scrutinise that expenditure and the policies that govern it. That is a reason why there must be a Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs. So long as there is not, the Northern Ireland Office is the only major Department of State not required to give an account of its stewardship.

I notice that in some of the submissions to the Select Committee on Procedure there were vague hints that the agreement of all parties in Northern Ireland would be desirable before any such step could be taken. A curious feature of the governance of Northern Ireland is that, although all-party agreement seems to be a pre-requisite for some policies, on the many occasions when the Northern Ireland parties in the House are united in opposition to important policies and proposals, the Northern Ireland Office employs a three-line Whip to crush the opposition of all 16 Northern Ireland Members of Parliament speaking with one voice and voting in the same Lobby. On the issue of a Select Committee to provide effective scrutiny, how can any party or any individual Member of Parliament justify opposing such a reasonable step? Such a step could not possibly disadvantage any Northern Ireland citizen, but could do only good.

The sensitive subject of a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs has already been touched upon. The Select Committee on Scottish Affairs was first set up in 1979 and the then Leader of the House, now Lord St. John of Fawsley, referred to talks that he had arranged with the political parties in Scotland to discuss improvements in the government of Scotland, unrelated to the Select Committee. On 31 October 1979 he said:

"I was further pressed in June to agree that the establishment of a Committee on Scottish affairs should not await the outcome of these talks. The motions are intended to meet what I believe to be the wishes of the House in the meantime. They therefore provide for a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs with similar membership and orders of reference to those of the other Committees which the House has already agreed should be established."—[*Official Report*, 31 October 1979; Vol. 972, c. 1282.]

I note that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has been consulted by the Select Committee on Procedure. He conceded in principle that Northern Ireland should have a Select Committee, but he was not exactly enthusiastic, and I do not blame him. What head of Department would be joyful at being told that he is to have a Select Committee imposed upon him? Did not all the heads of Department in 1979 fight like tigers against the St. John-Stevas plan? I am not suggesting that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is any different from the other heads of Department. What Department in its right mind would embrace the prospect of being sent for? The Secretary of State for Wales told the House yesterday, uncomplainingly, of his experience early yesterday when, to use his words, he had to endure a three-hour interrogation by the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs. He seemed to enjoy it.

It would be doing an injustice to the present Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and his ministerial colleagues if I were to imply that for merely personal reasons they would seek to obstruct what is now the widely held view of the Procedure Committee and the widely-recognised view on both sides of the House that there is a need for such a Select Committee. I think that Ministers at the Northern Ireland Office would share the view expressed by a former distinguished Member of this House, Sir David Renton, who said, in February 1979:

"Any Minister or future Minister who is worth his salt should welcome the chance to co-operate with a small group of hon. Members who are taking a critical but constructive interest in the work of his Department."—[*Official Report*, 19 February 1979; Vol. 963, c. 51.]

I have sufficient faith in the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and his fellow Ministers to rest my case on Sir David's words.

8.28 pm

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): I start by doing something that I think that all hon. Members would wish to do and that is to congratulate the Leader of the House on bringing these motions before us as quickly and efficiently as he has done, not just once but on three occasions in this Session. I hope that he will continue that record and we thank and applaud him for it.

I shall discuss four different topics. The first concerns the recommendation of the Procedure Committee and the addition to Standing Order No. 122 which could allow departmental Select Committees to use the manpower of the National Audit Office in any consideration by the NAO that relates to an inquiry being undertaken by a Select Committee. I stress the fact—many hon. Members might not realise this—that the Auditor General is an Officer of the House. He is not an external civil servant. It seems right that the Chairman of a departmental Select Committee, with his staff, in co-operation with the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, should check whether work being done by the Auditor General's Department is relevant to any inquiry being undertaken by that departmental Select Committee. I stress, as did the Leader of the House, that our recommendations were not intended to undermine or reduce the powers of the Public Accounts Committee. It would be a great mistake if anyone suggested that, and I want that to be clearly understood.

Secondly, we accept immediately that it would be wrong of any departmental Select Committee to try to make the Auditor General a political animal, although the judgments made by departmental Select Committees might be such.

Decisions must be taken purely on the basis of factual information that the Auditor General might have of a report on which a departmental Select Committee is working. To ensure that that was the case, we recommended—as does the Standing Order—that the Public Accounts Committee should have a veto. Only with the co-operation of the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee—I see no reason why that co-operation would not be given readily—can that come about.

We therefore recommended to the Chairmen of the departmental Select Committees that at the start of any

[Sir Peter Emery]

inquiry—and preferably at the beginning of the year—they should be able to consult the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee and the Auditor General to see whether their programmes or any ideas that had been raised were relevant to any inquiry that the Auditor General might consider undertaking. There should be no influence on the Auditor General. He makes his own decisions and the Public Accounts Committee knows only too well what he thinks needs to be examined. His independence is in no way to be limited or altered. Therefore, I hope that in the light of our statements the Chairmen of the departmental Select Committees will be able to operate what I believe could be a helpful—not revolutionary—addition to the work of our departmental Select Committees.

I refer to Standing Order No. 130. I know from conversations with the Chairman of the Select Committee on Home Affairs that he welcomes the amendments that have been proposed. We understand why one of our suggestions has not been carried out and, although we did not say so, I do not think that it was the intention of the Procedure Committee that appointments should be investigated. It was perhaps an error that we did not make that clear, but certainly it would be nonsensical and it was not our intention.

There are two other issues relating to departmental Select Committees. My Committee is sorry that there is not a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. Earlier this week I was invited to give evidence to the Lords Select Committee on Procedure. I was asked whether in the absence of a Scottish departmental Select Committee it would be helpful if their Lordships considered undertaking the work. I replied that it was not for me to make such a judgment but that it might be a way out of an impasse. It is certainly an issue that is being considered in another place, although it was not my suggestion.

Dr. Godman: In the deeply disturbing absence of a Scottish Select Committee, someone such as myself would look with some sympathy on that temporary solution to an appalling problem.

Sir Peter Emery: The suggestion was made to me using the word "temporary", so perhaps that suggestion might be a helpful way out of an impasse.

On Northern Ireland, I understand the views expressed by the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux). This is one time when we can do a little debating between speeches. I understand his concern and I do not think that there is any hon. Member who would not do so. The Procedure Committee was not more specific because we believed that it would have been wrong if a recommendation made by us acted in any way against the possibility of a settlement to the discussions which were then taking place.

Mr. Molyneaux: They have ended.

Sir Peter Emery: The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley says that they have now come to an end, but there has not been enough time for us to reconsider the issue.

Rev. Martin Smyth *rose*——

Sir Peter Emery: I shall give way in a moment.

The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley is wrong to say that no Secretary of State would welcome the setting up of a Select Committee to investigate his Department. All the evidence suggested that there was initially some objection, but the Ministers who gave evidence said without exception that such Committees were helpful and useful and that, they would not want to abandon them. I believe that in due course all the activities of Departments responsible to the Crown need to be examined by departmental Select Committees.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I take the hon. Gentleman's point, but does he accept that for 20 years we have missed such scrutiny and that, even before the abrogation of the Northern Ireland Parliament, it would have been beneficial to the House had there been such a Committee? I appreciate that in those days there was no such Committee, but if there is a Northern Ireland Assembly in future there will be a need for scrutiny by the House of the affairs of the Northern Ireland Office to deal with aspects of government and business there. Does he accept that it is wrong that a Northern Ireland Committee is not included on the list of Select Committees? Perhaps one reason why such a Committee is listed for Scotland and yet does not exist is that at least one party in Scotland does not want to be a party to it. However, that is no reason why the Northern Ireland Committee should not be listed as a Select Committee.

Sir Peter Emery: I understand what the hon. Gentleman says and I am sure that his comments will have been noted by the Leader of the House. I must make two points. First, it has not been 20 years—it would have been set up only in 1980, which is only 11 years. Secondly, I repeat what the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley said. He made it clear that aspects of health, agriculture and trade and industry in Northern Ireland are dealt with by the respective Select Committees. I know that, having served on the Select Committee on Trade and Industry. It is not the case that Northern Ireland receives no consideration, but I accept that it does not have its own departmental Select Committee.

I deal now with the Education, Science and Arts Sub-Committee. I welcome the fact that that Committee is to be ordered to consider science and technology in a way that it has not previously done. There have been two reports on science and technology among all the reports emanating from that Committee. I hope that the Leader of the House and the usual channels, in conjunction with the Committee of Selection, will ensure that the two additional members of the Committee are, if not scientists, people with a particular interest in science and technology and that they will specialise in those subjects in their work in the Committee.

I am sorry that the Government have not seen fit to establish a joint science and technology committee in partnership with the House of Lords, which would, I think, have been a better solution. The two new members need to be specialists in science and technology, rather than educationists. Most members of the main Committee will be interested only in education matters.

Finally, let me mention something that does not appear on the Order Paper, which has been described as a matter for the Committee of Selection. I refer to the appointment of departmental Select Committees at the start of a new parliamentary Session. It is absurd that that should be

delayed by eight, 10 or 12 weeks. Our Clerks are present, and have nothing to do; all the necessary structure is there. It is not good enough to argue that it is not always certain that Committee members will be able to serve for the whole year. I realise that the Labour party may elect its members to certain positions, and that it may not be known whether those people will be free to serve on a Committee; but we are not children. Members who assume other offices can be replaced.

I have only one criticism of what has been said by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House. It is not fair to suggest that matters should be left to the Selection Committee, which will be keen to co-operate with the usual channels and others. I appeal to my right hon. Friend and to the two Chief Whips—one of whom I see on the Opposition Front Bench, distinguished as ever—to try to ensure that the Committees are set up as early as possible after the opening of a new Session. Their membership can be changed thereafter if necessary, but let us get on and start the work rather than delaying for week after week.

Let me again congratulate my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House on presenting the motions so promptly.

8.42 pm

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): I welcome the considered fashion in which the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) presented the Procedure Committee's attitude to the Public Accounts Committee. I also thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) for his contribution.

It is some 130 years since the Public Accounts Committee was set up and the precursor of the National Audit Office—the Exchequer and Audit Department—was established. It was a peculiar decision to invest an individual with almost unfettered power to discover what was going on in Government Departments; only that hallowed period of 130 years has enabled the arrangement to continue. We are dealing with a rare instrument, and one that has been of enormous value. I know of no other legislative body that allows such an operation, although some Commonwealth Parliaments have similar arrangements. This delicate issue is what concerns me most.

The Comptroller and Auditor General brings reports to us, we look at them, and he distils the contents for us. In order not to compromise him, we deliberately exclude matters involving policy. We see him at least twice a week and, if we pressed him unduly, we could find out quite a bit more. We cannot exclude the reports themselves, however. We look at them in terms of value for money, which no other body can do.

We see permanent secretaries and other top civil servants again and again. We are able to assess them and correct their mistakes, and we can compare what they do with what they said that they were going to do. This year, we are producing 45 reports. No one else could summon up the same expertise without going about the process in the same way.

We are all politicians, and we know that a politician's main interest is in influencing policy and ensuring that it meets the needs of the moment, as he sees them. It is, of course, the easiest thing in the world to press someone who has as much access to information as the Comptroller and Auditor General. As the hon. Member for Honiton pointed out, the Comptroller and Auditor General is an Officer of the House, following an initiative on the part of my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett). Unfortunately, my hon. Friend is ill, but he would have been delighted to participate in today's debate. He feels strongly that the crucial role of the Comptroller and Auditor General must not be impugned in any way.

The Comptroller and Auditor General has information that a number of Select Committee members would like to use for political purposes. Here we come to the heart of the problem. The National Audit Act 1983 states:

> "The Comptroller and Auditor General shall have a right of access at all reasonable times to all such documents as he may reasonably require".

If a Minister or his civil servants know that the information will go to a Select Committee that will take evidence from that Minister, "reasonably require" may start to have a different connotation. That would be of enormous disadvantage to the House, which must endeavour to control expenditure, obtain value for money and ensure that the economy, efficiency and effectiveness whose maintenance is the PAC's chief task remain unfettered.

I do not believe that work can be expanded, even in a small way, without some cost being incurred. The cost of the National Audit Office is tightly controlled by the Public Accounts Commission, whose chairman also feels strongly about the role of the Comptroller and Auditor General, but any expansion will have cost implications. It is not simply a question of transferring information.

Sir Peter Emery: I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman does not wish to mislead the House in regard to the Procedure Committee. It was never envisaged, however, that the Comptroller and Auditor General should appear before any departmental Select Committee; the Committees were intended only to examine the papers. We never intended the Comptroller and Auditor General to be cross-questioned by, for instance, members of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, and I do not think that that should happen.

Mr. Sheldon: I am delighted to hear it. That is enormously important. I was also pleased by what the hon. Gentleman said about the discretion of the Comptroller and Auditor General remaining untouched. On many occasions, a PAC Chairman might think of suggesting that a certain examination should be conducted, or even pressing for such an examination.

Committee members can, of course, make suggestions: the National Audit Act allows that. But it is vital that the Comptroller and Auditor General continues to have that unfettered right. His post was set up largely to deal with fraud and corruption. Many other countries ask how we are able to appoint someone like the Comptroller and Auditor General. I tell them that we have high standards in the civil service, and that everything stops in the face of the need to deal with fraud and corruption. Luckily we do not have much of it. Not much of it comes to us, so it does not take up a great deal of our time. When I hear about the experiences of representatives of many other countries, I can only express my pleasure and satisfaction that we do not share them.

The members of the PAC are unanimous on the need to maintain the role of the Comptroller and Auditor General. The Chairman of the PAC, the hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern), and my hon. Friend the Member for

[Mr. Sheldon]

Norwich, South feel strongly about that. The comments of the hon. Member for Honiton pleased me, for he clarified several matters. I hope that we shall be able to deal with the proposed amendments with good sense and in a reasonable way.

8.50 pm

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): First, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) on the comprehensive report that his Committee, the Procedure Committee, has produced on the work of the Select Committee system. The report is kind to the system and to those who operate within it. It describes the arrangements as "worth while", a "success", "valuable" and "cost effective". I share the view that the reforms of a decade or so ago have been of immense value to the House in restoring something of the balance between the Executive and the House.

The reforms have certainly increased the level of ministerial accountability. We all know that it is not always easy to pin down a Minister when he is replying to a debate. Perhaps it is even more difficult to pin him down when he is answering parliamentary questions when, despite all your efforts, Mr. Speaker, one inevitably moves from one subject to another rather quickly. That is vastly different from a Minister's experience when appearing for two hours or more before a Select Committee, the proceedings of which are conducted on an all-party basis. On such an occasion the Minister concerned can be held to account much more specifically. The system has undoubtedly been a success.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House on responding to some of the recommendations of the Procedure Committee and in putting before the House the amendments that we are considering.

At the end of his remarks, my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton talked about the nomination of the Select Committees in a new Parliament. That is a matter of the gravest concern, because at the start of a new Parliament there is no one in a position to speak on behalf of the Select Committees because they have not been appointed. About a year is available between now and the next Parliament, and I hope that during that time we shall consider whether there is a formal way in which we could impose a time limit —perhaps by way of Standing Order—to ensure that Select Committees are set up within a reasonable time, and certainly within a much shorter time than that which passed at the beginning of the present Parliament.

I welcome especially the amendment designed to increase the scope of the Select Committee on Home Affairs in terms of the Law Officers. I see that the Chairman of that Select Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler), is in his place.

I shall concentrate on the matters raised by the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon). It is always a pleasure to be able to take up his remarks. I have lost count of the occasions when I have been called after him or he after me. On this occasion we are in broad agreement. It is my strong impression, however, that the fears that he expressed, when put in the context of the rigorous provisions that my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton and my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House have suggested, could be unfounded. As for any inhibition on the information that the Comptroller and Auditor General might feel in obtaining information from Government Departments, if the Government were less forthcoming in providing information to him as a result of any changes that are made, I agree that that would be extremely serious. We must recognise, however, that the control of the information will still be with the Public Accounts Committee, which will decide whether to hand over information to another Committee. In the same way, another Committee would have control if information were passed in the other direction.

It is recommended in the report of the Procedure Committee that the chairmen of the PAC and of the Liaison Committee should enter into discussions about the precise mechanism whereby a co-operative approach might be used, especially in terms of overlap. The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne and I, with the Chairmen of whichever departmental Committees might be involved, have for some years been anxious to avoid the problem of overlap. It places a severe burden on a Department if that Department finds itself having to provide information and evidence to a departmental Committee when at the same time it is providing information to the PAC. That, of course, is not desirable.

On the other hand, we need to consider the timing problem. It is recommended that the timetable of the PAC should be interlinked with that of departmental Committees. One of the problems is that the work of the PAC is often planned far in advance, whereas that of departmental Committees—in examining policy—may be carried out on the spur of the moment. For example, my Committee, the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service, is looking into something that a few weeks ago it had no idea that it would be investigating. If the PAC is already working on a particular subject, that is a problem. I am sure that the difficulty can be avoided in the future, as it has been in the past. I welcome the recommendation set out in the report.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will recognise that it is not the PAC which makes the decision at the outset. In effect, the National Audit Office will say, "We think that there is a subject here which should be investigated as a result of something that we have discovered within a Department." It then takes, typically, two or three months to ascertain whether there is enough in the subject for a report. Having decided that there is—if there is not, it will be dropped—the process can take six to 12 months. That is the problem. By the time the Select Committee starts to think about a subject, either it is not to be proceeded with or preparation has been made for some considerable time. When the position is, "We are interested in this but you are already doing it and we would like to take over", there is the problem that I have already mentioned of value for money.

Mr. Higgins: The right hon. Gentleman describes precisely the situation that we experience from time to time. In the past we have succeeded, one way or another, in reaching a satisfactory outcome. I hope that that will still be possible as a result of future consultations. However, as the right hon. Gentleman pointed out, that problem is not easy to overcome.

Part of the problem arises because both the PAC and the departmental Committees are involved in financial

aspects. The Committees must consider the policy, administration, and expenditure of the Departments that they monitor. The Government are right not to accept the Procedure Committee's recommendation to use estimate days for broader discussion of the reports of individual Committees. Estimate days are a successful innovation, but they need to focus on expenditure. As the Government have turned down that proposition, I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will carefully consider making available specific time for debates on the Committees' other reports. From time to time, my right hon. Friend is able to do that, apart from regular events such as our debates on the Budget or on defence. However, there is currently no fixed allocation of time to enable the broader aspects of reports to be debated.

The question of duplication that the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne mentioned can also be overcome. I understand his concern about policy, and I listened with interest when it was said that it is not the intention that departmental Committees will take oral evidence from the Comptroller and Auditor General. If a technical point needs clarifying, that could adequately be done by correspondence. In any event, I have sufficient faith—if that is the right word—in the Comptroller and Auditor General to believe that if he were challenged on a matter of policy, he would say, "That matter is not for me—you must pursue it elsewhere".

The overall impact of the innovation will be that departmental Committees will have better access to information than before. It may be that they will use the basic data in the course of investigating policy, but that is very different from seeking to raise policy matters with the Comptroller and Auditor General. The innovations are sensible and well balanced, and will lead to better scrutiny of Government than we would achieve without them. The dangers are not such that we ought to do other than to adopt the recommendations of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House.

9 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I am only too happy to confess to being a keen advocate of Select Committees—I am currently a member of the Select Committee on European Legislation—and thank the Leader of the House for providing this opportunity to debate the subject.

I associate myself with the sensible observations made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme). I want to tell the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) how much I appreciated his sensitive and sympathetic remarks about the need for a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. I may say in return that it is essential that such a Committee be established to scrutinise the Executive decision making that takes place in Northern Ireland—not that I am volunteering for membership of such a Committee. However, I sincerely hope that that objective is realised in the near future.

I was intrigued by the recounting by the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) of a fascinating suggestion put to him for establishing a Lords Committee on Scottish affairs. Are we brought to this? We are presented with the prospect of a Lords Committee taking itself off to Scotland to scrutinise the Scottish Office and the Lord Advocate's office, which are both mentioned in the motions.

Where would those venerable inquisitors begin their work? Would they seek to examine the present parlous state of the Scottish fishing industry? I remind right hon. and hon. Members from south of the border—though my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) needs no such reminding—that the management of the fishing industry north of the border is a matter for the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department. So would those venerable gentlemen head off instead for Lanarkshire, to investigate the Scottish steel industry? What would that Committee be named? Would it be called the Scottish Lords Committee? I do not mean to belittle or ridicule the idea, because there are a number of formidable Scottish intellects in another place, as the hon. Member for Honiton well knows, and I have great respect for the House of Lords Select Committee on European Legislation. If a Scottish Lords Committee were to produce reports of the calibre of that Committee, I would accept that temporary arrangement.

Many people in Scotland would be more sympathetic to that kind of Select Committee than to a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs comprising Members of this House. Perhaps the Scottish people are a little jaundiced by the constant squabbling among Scottish Members. Some people living in Scotland would willingly accept such a temporary arrangement, and I have no doubt that those venerable Members would produce perceptive and, I am utterly convinced, consensual reports. The concept is intriguing, and I am sure that it will be given currency in the absence of a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs.

In motion No. 4, there is specific reference to the Scottish Office and the

"administration and expenditure of the Lords Advocate's Departments, together with policy functions discharged by the Lord Advocate".

We continue to come up against what some would call the steadfast refusal, but which I call the disgraceful refusal, of Conservative Members to serve on such a Committee. That Select Committee could be very important.

We must remember that the Scottish Office and the Scottish Law Officers are responsible for a formidably wide range of policy decisions and functions. I was a member of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs in the last Parliament and I believe that we are straying grievously by not having a Scottish Select Committee. I believe that that Committee could investigate, inter alia, the failure of the Lord Advocate's office in respect of child care law.

Earlier the Child Support Bill received its Third Reading. That Bill embraces the whole of the United Kingdom. However, there is a growing discrepancy between English child care law and Scots child care law. I believe that, in terms of its principles, theories, policies, procedures and practices, Scots law has an astonishingly elegant architecture. However, where children are concerned, it is beginning to reveal shaky foundations.

I supported the English Criminal Justice Bill, which contains provisions for the protection of children in sexual and child abuse cases where they have to give evidence in courts of law. We do not have that kind of legislation in Scotland. A Scottish Select Committee could cross-examine the Lord Advocate to determine why such exceptionally fine legislation is passed for English children while Scottish law lags behind. Similarly, that Committee could examine the policy decision making of the Lord

[Dr. Norman A. Godman]

Advocate's office in terms of the office's failure to produce an Act akin to the Children Act 1989, which again is peculiar to England and Wales.

The failure to establish a Scottish Select Committee has denied us the right to examine the management of the Scottish fisheries by the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department. Many people in Scotland will tell hon. Members that that important indigenous industry is crying out for the analysis to which it would be subjected by a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, staffed as it would or could be by specialist advisers.

I recall that, as long ago as 1979, a Scottish Select Committee went to Aberdeen—I think that it was its very first investigation in that Parliament; I was not here at that time, of course—to examine elements of the fishing industry in relation to the White Fish Authority levy. It was a very important occasion for Aberdeen, the coming to town of the Scottish Select Committee, chaired as it was then by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar). Another member of it was a fellow called Mr. Iain Sproat, who I believe hopes to come back to this place.

In the absence of a Scottish Select Committee, even though Scottish Office Ministers may be cross-examined at the Dispatch Box and by the Scottish Grand Committee —there have been seven sittings of that Committee in the past three weeks—the House of Commons is a forum for hon. Members to cross-examine Ministers in a remarkably comprehensive way. I have sat in the Public Gallery when other Select Committees have been conducting their inquisitions. Hon. Members on both sides of the House seem to have superb forensic skills such as we expect of QCs, particularly those who work the criminal circuit in England and Scotland, when cross-examining Ministers, officials or leaders of industrial organisations. We in Scotland are denied access to that essential parliamentary function. That explains why I have so much sympathy with my hon. Friends from Northern Ireland.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that it is much better for hon. Members who live in the community and who know the nuances in the community, in probing officials and others, to get to the heart of the matter?

Dr. Godman: The hon. Gentleman makes a telling point. One can imagine the members of a Select Committee on Northern Ireland cross-examining the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry or industrial leaders in Northern Ireland in a Committee Room upstairs. Because of their comprehensive knowledge of that beleagured Province, they could readily weed out the dross or the public relations gloss on presentations of evidence. Given the appalling circumstances that Northern Ireland hon. Members and their constituentss face, it reflects very badly on the Government and the House of Commons that they are denied such an important Select Committee.

In the scandalous absence of a Scottish Select Committee, I would readily agree to the temporary arrangement in the other place. More important, I would readily agree to the inclusion of English hon. Members, who may not have local knowledge, sitting on a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. I would even accept a token Nationalist on such a Committee, but that is really another matter—*[Laughter.]* This is a serious point—we should have a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. Despite the fact that I am sitting within two yards of the Chairman of the Select Committee on European Legislation, my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), I would readily quit that Committee to take up membership of a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. We need such a Committee in Scotland. Our constituents—the people of Scotland—have the right to be given the services of a Select Committee, made up of their own Back-Benchers.

9.14 pm

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): I apologise for not being in the Chamber when the debate started, but I had not been aware that the motions would be taken together.

I rise to speak in favour of the amendment tabled by the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) because for many years I have held the view that Northern Ireland should have a Select Committee. I am therefore glad to have the opportunity to debate that subject today. I would hold that view whether or not such things as the talks that have been taking place in Belfast were to have reached a successful conclusion. To suggest, as my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) did, that somehow the talks in Belfast might have made the emphasis on Parliament less important to the Province is perhaps to miss the point. The fact is that Northern Ireland does not enjoy the same parliamentary representation as other regions of the United Kingdom, nor does it have, within its own local government structure, the same democratic institutions that we take for granted. Ever since direct rule was imposed from London, I for one have been trying to see whether it is possible to give Northern Ireland the representation that is taken for granted by our other regions.

We must therefore consider the whole way in which Northern Ireland is governed through direct rule. We must recognise the fact that its legislation is not handled in the same way as the many Bills affecting other parts of the United Kingdom. The best that Northern Ireland can hope for is an Order in Council, with one and a half hours of debate but without any ability for hon. Members representing Northern Ireland to amend that Order in Council. None of us should feel content with that, or believe that we can truly say that we have one of the best parliamentary democracies in the world while we know that that situation exists. What is more, I find it ridiculous that a Northern Ireland Member of Parliament can move an amendment to United Kingdom legislation, but cannot do the same for legislation which affects his own Province —the place where he lives and where those whom he represents have their homes. I trawl that example to show some of the imperfections and inequalities from which the people of Northern Ireland suffer and of which their parliamentary representatives are also the victims.

I sometimes wonder how I would know how to do my job properly if I were a Member of Parliament representing a Northern Ireland constituency. I do not know how I would avoid feeling frustrated or ineffectual. I would think to myself, "I go to Westminster where, every three weeks, we have Question Time with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, so I may have a chance to ask

a question then, although when I look at the Order Paper and see Members of Parliament from other parts of the United Kingdom filling it up with their questions, I cannot be so sure of that."

I have already discussed the position of the Northern Ireland Member in relation to legislation affecting the Province. Apart from that, what can he do? He can send letters to Ministers and hope to make his voice heard perhaps outside this place, but he cannot really feel that he is able to probe and scrutinise the Executive as each of us can otherwise do. Surely no one would disagree that one of the primary tasks of any Back-Bench Member of Parliament is to exercise the ability to scrutinise the Executive, to probe what the Government are doing, to seek answers to questions and, generally, to let air into those issues about which people may be asking questions, but where answers are not forthcoming.

The case for some form of committee of scrutiny on Northern Ireland seems to be an absolute case which hardly needs arguing. Indeed, it must have been in the mind of the present Lord St. John of Fawsley when he moved the motion in the House of Commons on 25 June 1979 which so clearly stated in its first paragraph:

"Select Committees shall be appointed to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the principal government departments set out in paragraph (2) of this Order and associated public bodies, and similar matters within the responsibilities of the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Northern Ireland."

That was what he asked the House to approve and what the House approved. Yet having approved it, we seem to have chosen to forget it and find every possible argument for not doing anything about implementing the wishes of the House.

Tonight my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has an opportunity to give us some assurance or promise that he will consider the matter with the greatest care and in the light of some of the arguments that I have attempted to deploy. Of course, he may say to me, "Do not forget that Northern Ireland has debates on prevention of terrorism measures and appropriations—we do not have the same thing for English Members." But such debates are a poor substitute for the ability that Northern Irish Members should have to scrutinise the Northern Ireland Office and how it works, as well as various Government institutions within the Province which affect their lives and those of their constituents. I believe that a Select Committee would help to redress the imbalance.

I remind my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House that not many years ago we were told that 12 Members of Parliament were all that Northern Ireland would ever have in Westminster and that if it had more all sorts of ructions might follow. We were told that the Irish might block legislation, and so on. Fortunately, as a result of the Speaker's Conference, a decision was made to increase that representation to what it should be, and none of us would argue that having 16 Northern Irish Members of Parliament has done any harm to the House. Indeed, it has given greater balance to the parliamentary representation of the Province than it ever had before. If that can be a success, why not a Select Committee?

I notice that the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley suggests in his amendment that the Select Committee should have 16 members, which would take in all the Northern Ireland Members who are sent to this place, bar the one who will never come. I am not sure that I entirely agree with the right hon. Gentleman on the 16, nor am I absolutely sure that it would be in the best interests of Northern Ireland if the Northern Ireland Select Committee were composed only of Northern Ireland Members. I am not sure that a leavening of some of the Members of Parliament who come from other parts of the United Kingdom but take an interest in the affairs of Northern Ireland might not help to make the Committee effective.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I appreciate the hon. Member giving way and the emphasis that he is making. It is not intended that the 16 should include all the Northern Ireland Members. The figure of 16 is intended to give a balance of the parties in Northern Ireland and the parties in the House. We accept the hon. Gentleman's point. The 16 does not refer to 16 Northern Ireland Members. It is intended to create a balance from Northern Ireland, mixed with a balance of the representation in the House.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: I am grateful for that assurance. It is most helpful and constructive.

It was probably in your hearing last week, Mr. Speaker, when one of my hon. Friends described the legislative and government structure in Northern Ireland as a constitutional slump. I am sorry that those words were spoken, but unfortunately they have a ring of truth about them. Northern Ireland currently enjoys colonial status—let none of us pretend otherwise. Its local government powers are unbelievably limited and it has no county councils or regional councils. Even the talks which might have led to a devolved administration, and which I hope will resume before long, are at present completely stymied.

Northern Ireland is therefore left with direct rule. I hope that I have shown that, because it is left with direct rule, it deserves the right of scrutiny and questioning of the Executive who seek to govern its affairs.

9.25 pm

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): I wish at the outset to thank my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) for the way in which he chairs the Select Committee on Procedure, for the attention that he has given to the issue under discussion and for his general wisdom and guidance.

I also personally appreciate the stewardship of my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), who has the awesome duty of presiding over the Liaison Committee of Chairmen. There is no more rigorous duty than that when Chairmen are concerned to defend the interests and, inevitably, the expenditure of the members of their Committees. Chairmen are especially grateful to my right hon. Friend for his guidance of our affairs.

On the amendment to Standing Order No. 130, as Chairman of the Select Committee on Home Affairs, I take this opportunity to welcome the proposed extension of the Committee's terms of reference to include the policy, administration and expenditure of the Lord Chancellor's Department, and the administration and expenditure of the Attorney-General's Office, the Crown prosecution service, the Treasury Solicitor's Department and the Serious Fraud Office.

Over 11,000 people are employed by the Lord Chancellor's Department alone, and its planned outturn for 1991-92 is £1·14 billion. It is right that the spending of that money and the administration of that Department should be subject to the scrutiny of a Select Committee.

[Sir John Wheeler]

The idea of extending the remit of the Select Committee on Home Affairs has been current for some time. I recommended it in my memorandum to the Select Committee on Procedure and I am delighted that it was one of its recommendations to the House. The Committee has already done some work in that area. For example, last Session we undertook a major inquiry into the Crown prosecution service in which we examined its achievements and the potential for future improvements in performance. The Lord Chancellor's Department has also participated in our inquiries into remands in custody, criminal records, the immigration and nationality department and Home Office expenditure.

The broadening of the Committee's remit to include fields so closely related to the work of the Home Office will permit a thorough examination of the criminal justice system. I look forward to that prospect and am confident that we will be able to make some contribution to the fair and efficient administration of the law.

It may be helpful if I remind the House, since the establishment of the departmental Select Committees, of the number of inquiries to which the Lord Chancellor's Department has given evidence to the Select Committee on Home Affairs. The five occasions were remands and custody in Session 1983-84; Home Office expenditure, 1988-89; criminal records, 1989-90; Crown prosecution service, 1989-90; and administrative delays in the immigration and nationality department, 1989-90.

The former Lord Chancellor, Lord Hailsham, gave evidence before the Committee on one occasion, and the present Lord Chancellor has expressed his wholehearted support for the proposals and work of the Select Committee and his desire to co-operate with it.

The amendment of the Standing Order is an important development in the work of the Select Committees. It is an appropriate amendment which I am sure the House will welcome.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): I entirely agree that some of the functions of the Lord Chancellor's Office should come under scrutiny. However, those functions extend not merely to England and Wales but to Northern Ireland. His functions in respect of Northern Ireland, which are equivalent to those that come under the scrutiny of the Home Affairs Committee, are being left out. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is anomalous that the functions of the Lord Chancellor's Department with respect to England, Wales and Scotland should come under scrutiny, while those with respect to Northern Ireland do not?

Sir John Wheeler: The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point and what he says is correct. However, the House is, inevitably, still evolving the role and scope of the Select Committees and has been doing so for many years. Tonight's debate and proposals are a manifest example of that extension of the Select Committees' duties, which we welcome. The Home Affairs Committee also has responsibilities that intrude into the Province of Northern Ireland. In a recent Committee inquiry, we visited Northern Ireland to contribute to the better administration of the Province and the interests of the United Kingdom as a whole. Therefore, I accept the hon. Gentleman's point and we may soon see the Select Committees' role extending to meet his objectives.

9.30 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I apologise profusely to the House for failing to attend for the first three quarters of an hour, but I was otherwise busily engaged.

I, too, pay tribute to the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), who has chaired the Procedure Committee so ably and always made a point of consulting widely in the Committee before putting any matters to it. I have been a member of that Committee for seven years, although I have been unable to attend it very often because it overlaps with the Public Accounts Committee.

At the back of the Procedure Committee's report for 1989-90 one sees that I moved a string of 10 amendments on the Committee's recommendations on the relationships between the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee and between the National Audit Office and other Select Committees. The amendments show that I wished fiercely to defend the interests of the Public Accounts Committee. I took that position having made several visits to the United States of America, where I was able closely to scrutinise the affairs of the General Accounting Office. I was left with the feeling that, because of a lack of a single strictly accountable committee within Congress, the GAO's efforts were almost disorganised and its role was often to serve only as a researcher to those congressmen and senators who could put pressure on it to carry out value-for-money projects and other work in areas in which they had a particular interest or which affected their congressional districts. The American experience has always worried me and I do not want it to arise in the United Kingdom.

Despite the fact that I vigorously moved those amendments, I understand the great concern that exists in other Select Committees about their limited access to information within our system. One of the amendments that I moved relates to that issue. It said:

"Amendment proposed to leave out paragraph 267, and insert the words: 'We believe that Select Committees are entitled to greater co-operation with government departments in terms of access to information. The thrust of evidence given to PAC'"—

it was actually to the Procedure Committee—

"'by a number of witnesses suggests that the NAO is perceived as a means for securing a greater amount of information of higher quality and value to Committees. It is our view that, recognising this requirement, Parliament should consider the introduction of Freedom of Information legislation. It is our view that, in conditions of greater freedom in the provision of information held by government, arguments as to access through the NAO would be unlikely to arise in the way they have during the course of this enquiry.'."

I moved that amendment because I believe that there is a problem in terms of access to information held in Government Departments. If I were a member of the Select Committee on Defence, I would understand what was being sought, but instead of using the National Audit Office as a vehicle to secure access to the information, alternative arrangements should be made to ensure that access.

The Departments involved should become more flexible in terms of what information they are prepared to provide direct to Select Committees or we shall have to legislate in the House by way of freedom of information legislation,

giving organisations and individuals a right of access similar to that which exists in the United States. I have heard about a number of cases where information about the United Kingdom, which was being denied by Government Departments and Ministers in this country, has been made available in the library of Congress. On one occasion, I rang up a congressional colleague of mine in America to secure information about the United Kingdom defence policy and was given that information, even though I had been unable to get it in the United Kingdom, using all the procedures available to me as a Member of Parliament. Those procedures include written answers, oral answers and briefings from the House of Commons Library, which is often able to penetrate subjects when Members cannot.

I wish to stress that we should not use the National Audit Office, but ensure that we have legislation on the statute book to deal with the event of Departments being unwilling to be more flexible. That is the way forward. If there were greater provision of information to Members of Parliament and the wider public, arguments such as we have heard would not have arisen. The Select Committee on Defence and, if I remember rightly, the Select Committee on Transport expressed some fears. Such concerns would not arise in the future if we had the relevant legislation to deal with the problem.

Although it is not in order for us to propose legislation during a debate such as this evening's, I hope that even this Government—even at this late stage—will make promising noises about freedom of information. The next Labour Government are clearly committed to that principle.

9.37 pm

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): I apologise to the House for not being present when the motions were moved. Like other hon. Members, I had not realised that all three were to be taken together. That in itself illustrates a point that I wish to make about Northern Ireland.

In the context of the Select Committee system, if there is one part of the United Kingdom that needs parliamentary control, parliamentary discussion, parliamentary debate and investigation into what is going on, it is Northern Ireland. However, our Select Committee system, with its defects—I do not think that it has many virtues and its weaknesses have, perhaps, not been sufficiently emphasised in the debate—is designed to increase the control over the Executive by Parliament, particularly by this place.

The fact that we existed with a sort of ad hoc Select Committee system before 1979 was unsatisfactory for all of us. We constantly wanted to appoint Select Committees to do this, that and the other until the key was found by Lord St. John of Fawsley, who proposed that there should be a rationalisation of the system, with a Select Committee to oversee the work of every Government Department. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland was mentioned as being responsible for one such Department. Clearly it was originally envisaged that Northern Ireland would not be exempt from the Select Committee system, but what has happened?

In Northern Ireland there are probably more Ministers—a record number of representatives of the Crown and of the Front Bench—per head of the population than anywhere else in the United Kingdom. Northern Ireland has a large civil service corresponding to the size of the population, but it has no proper system of local government. One should have thought that there was a vast vacuum of power. As my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) suggested, that vacuum has been filled by a colonial system. Because of that vacuum the parliamentary representatives of Northern Ireland and all of us who are interested in Northern Ireland have a right to be represented in a specialist committee that takes a day-to-day interest in the Province.

Where is the parliamentary input into the constitutional arrangements for the supervision of Northern Ireland through the system of Select Committees? Where is the control over the Executive in Northern Ireland? The hon. Members who represent Northern Ireland make a valiant effort, but they have to work on the basis of one and a half hours only being supplied at the end of business on orders that cannot be amended. They must also rely on other ad hoc Committees on specific subjects.

That state of affairs would be totally inadequate for a normal part of the United Kingdom with normal circumstances and conditions, but we are talking about a war-torn part of the United Kingdom. Therefore, it is the one part that, above all, needs as much democracy and open discussion of its affairs as possible.

We badly need a Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs. It could be provided with Members from all parts of the House. It would not suffer the fate of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs because there are certainly plenty of Conservative Members who would like to participate in a Select Committee on Northern Ireland. They would like to develop a specialist knowledge and expertise of the Province so as to deal not only with a fascinating, charming and important part of the United Kingdom, but with an extremely difficult constitutional and political problem. I have been interested in the subject for nearly 20 years and I have grown to learn that it is a fascinating study.

Why do we not have a Select Committee for Northern Ireland? I was disappointed at the report of the Select Committee on Procedure. Although I pay tribute to the Chairman of that Committee, I was disappointed in its report because it seems that it has gone for the excuse of expediency. The report stated:

> "The possible establishment of a Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs, whilst attractive in principle, could cause difficulties for the initiative launched by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, which is designed to achieve inter-party agreement on the possible future arrangements for government of the Province. As a responsible Committee of the House, we are bound to take seriously this advice about a matter of such extreme sensitivity."

That is an argument of expediency. It is suggested that because this is such a difficult, sensitive subject, which causes a great deal of political controversy, a Select Committee should not be appointed to inquire into it. Does the suggestion that it is because of a current initiative—how many initiatives have there been in Northern Ireland since its constitution was abrogated 20 or so years ago, with scarcely a year passing without some sort of political initiative?—mean that the Select Committee will never come back to it and say that it backs the idea of a Northern Ireland Select Committee? Such a Committee is needed, whatever stage may have been reached with regard to any political initiative.

The political initiative to which the Committee refers has come to an end. No doubt there will be another. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P.

[Mr. Ivor Stanbrook]

Emery) and his Committee will not say, when the new initiative starts, "We still cannot recommend a Select Committee because," as they say in paragraph 277 of the report, it is a matter of such extreme sensitivity.

Sir Peter Emery *rose*——

Mr. Stanbrook: I am glad that I have provoked my hon. Friend into wanting to intervene.

Sir Peter Emery: I am sorry that my hon. Friend was not here when I made my speech. Had he been here, he would have realised that most of what he has said is irrelevant and unnecessary.

Mr. Stanbrook: I am speaking to the Select Committee's report which will no doubt be read by all those hon. Members who happen not to have shared the experience of the few of us who are in the House. I have already explained why I was unable to be here earlier in the proceedings.

It is a very big mistake not to have a Northern Ireland Select Committee. If it is not a question of the inter-party talks—many people never really believed that the inter-party talks would be successful, under present conditions—is it because of fear of disturbing the political equilibrium as regards the Irish Republic and other outside interests? Is it thought that those interests are so great that we do not want, for diplomatic reasons, to interfere with or upset them? That, too, would be a very great mistake. It would be on a par with the biggest mistake of all, made by the Conservative Government who came to power in 1979, in concluding the Anglo-Irish Agreement that conceded sovereignty.

We talk so much nowadays about not giving away sovereignty to the European Community, but we positively conceded sovereignty over Northern Ireland to the Irish Republic by the Anglo-Irish Agreement. That, possibly, is at the root of the hesitation over dealing with the Province as an integral part of the United Kingdom —as it should be and as it is constitutionally. It should be dealt with by the House within the Select Committee system.

9.47 pm

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) and to my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) for their kind remarks. I have always been a supporter of the Select Committee system. I was its advocate before 1979 and I have supported it ever since. I am glad, therefore, to be able to comment on it this evening.

Most hon. Members referred to issues relating to the Public Accounts Committee and the National Audit Office. I fully understand the points made by the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon). I understand his concerns and hope that I have taken them all into account. I say that as a former member, some years ago now, of the Public Accounts Committee. I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), to whose work as Chairman of the Liaison Committee I also pay tribute, that the fears which have been expressed about this modest step are unfounded.

My hon. Friend the Member for Honiton made the point clearly that nothing here will weaken or undermine the position of the Public Accounts Committee, and I am glad to repeat it. I stressed that also in my opening speech. There is nothing here to turn the Comptroller and Auditor General into a political animal. The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne has strong feelings about that, and I agree entirely with him that the task of the Public Accounts Committee should remain unfettered.

My hon. Friend the Member for Honiton made a particular point about the cost implications for the National Audit Office. He and I have discussed this matter. It is a matter for the Public Accounts Committee, whose Chairman is in the Chamber, and I believe that the Public Accounts Committee will watch that aspect carefully because in my view it is not what the Procedure Committee intended when it made its recommendation. I see no reason why that should occur because we are talking about work that the National Audit Office has already done, so I hope that any attempt to use this recommendation to increase staff and expenditure will be resisted.

I have heard nothing in the debate to suggest that there is any disagreement between us. I hope that the House will agree with the concluding comments of the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne that with good sense we can deal with this in a reasonable way. I agree with that, and I hope that we can move forward on that basis.

The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) and my hon. Friends the Members for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) and for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) talked about the amendment proposing a Select Committee for Northern Ireland Affairs. I well understand the concerns that the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley has expressed and I know that he is keen that such a Select Committee should be established. As has been mentioned, the Procedure Committee agreed in principle that there should be such a Committee, but that now would not be a sensible moment to recommend its establishment.

Mr. Molyneaux: The Committee's recommendation was talking not about how but about the time of the report. I accept the Committee's thinking that that was not an appropriate moment to establish a Select Committee, but we are now talking about now and not then.

Mr. MacGregor: I was coming to that. The Committee said in its report that then was not a sensible time to establish a Select Committee.

In making its recommendation, the Procedure Committee took account of the discussions that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland had been conducting over the future arrangements for the government of Northern Ireland and the views expressed by the hon. Members for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) and for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) in letters to the Committee which were published. The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley referred to the recent talks. He knows that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made it clear that he will be exploring the possibility of securing a basis for fresh talks at some time after the holiday period if the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland say that that is what they want.

The Government's view remains the same as that of the Procedure Committee—that now is not the time to set up such a Select Committee. However, I assure the right hon.

Member for Lagan Valley that the matter can be reviewed again at appropriate times, and that I shall be prepared to do that.

I note what my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton said about the extra two members of the Select Committee on Education and Science being scientists. I am not sure that we can guarantee that that will occur, but my hon. Friend's point has been noted.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) referred to potential duplication and overlap between the work done for the Public Accounts Committee and for individual Select Committees. I am grateful for his understanding of the pressures on Departments. Although it was recognised in the debate that there are sometimes difficulties, I am sure that the sensitive way in which this has been handled in the past will continue to ensure that, so far as possible, extra burdens on Departments and duplication and overlap can be avoided. The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) will know that, since we first debated the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs when I became Leader of the House, the Scottish Grand Committee has met on a number of occasions. I believe that it met this morning to discuss housing in Scotland. That development has occurred in the past few months and has enabled further consideration of Scottish matters, but I see no prospect of a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs being set up in this Parliament.

My hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) described the motion as a further step in evolving the role and scope of the Select Committees, and I believe that that is the right way to describe it.

Sir Peter Emery: May I remind my right hon. Friend about the reappointment of Select Committees at the start of a new Parliament? That aspect must not be swept under the carpet.

Mr. MacGregor: I have noted what my hon. Friend said, as did the Opposition Chief Whip, but that is not a matter on which we can put forward a Standing Order this evening.

In the spirit of the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North, I commend the motion to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) be amended by inserting at the end of line 38 the words—

'(e) proceedings on a Motion such as is referred to in paragraph (2) of Standing Order No. 104 (Nomination of select committees) for the nomination or discharge of members of select committees appointed under Standing Order No. 130 (Select committees related to government departments) which has been opposed at or after the interruption of business on a preceding day;

Provided that any questions necessary to dispose of the proceedings on such a Motion shall be put at Eleven o'clock or one hour after the commencement of those proceedings, whichever is the later.'

COMMUNICATION OF EVIDENCE, &c.

Ordered,

That—

Standing Order No. 122 (Committee of Public Accounts) be amended by adding at the end the words—

'(3) The Committee shall have power to communicate to any committee appointed under Standing Order No. 130 (Select committees related to government departments) such evidence as it may have received from the National Audit Office (having been agreed between that Office and the government department or departments concerned) but which has not been reported to the House'; and

Standing Order No. 130 (Select committees related to government departments) be amended by inserting in line 33, after the word 'committee', the words 'and to the Committee of Public Accounts.'.—*[Mr. MacGregor.]*

SELECT COMMITTEES RELATING TO GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS

Ordered,

That Standing Order No. 130 (Select committees related to government departments) be amended

in line 3, by inserting after the word 'departments', the word 'as';

in line 6, by inserting at the end the words '(excluding the expenditure, administration and policy of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Northern Ireland).';

in the Table by leaving out the words—

'3. Education, Science and Arts	Department of Education and Science	11	3'

and inserting the words—

'3. Education, Science and Arts	Department of Education and Science; Office of Arts and Libraries	13	3';

by leaving out the words—

'9. Home Affairs	Home Office	11	3'

and inserting the words—

'9. Home Affairs	Home Office; policy, administration and expenditure of the Lord Chancellor's Departments (including the work of staff provided for the administrative work of courts and tribunals, but excluding consideration of individual cases and appointments); and administration and expenditure of the Attorney General's Office, the Treasury Solicitor's Department, the Crown Prosecution Service and the Serious Fraud Office (but excluding individual cases and appointments and advice given within government by Law Officers)';	11	3

by leaving out the words—

'10. Scottish Affairs	Scottish Office	13	5'

and inserting the words—

'10. Scottish Affairs	Scottish Office; and administration and expenditure of the Lord Advocate's Departments, together with policy functions discharged by the Lord Advocate through the Scottish Courts Administration, but excluding consideration of individual cases and appointments, advice given within government by Scottish Law Officers, and the drafting of bills';	13	5

by leaving out the words—

'14. Treasury and Civil Service	Treasury, Management and Personnel Office, Board of Inland Revenue, Board of Customs and Excise'	11	3

and inserting the words—

'14. Treasury and Civil Service	Treasury, Office of the Minister for the Civil Service (but excluding the drafting of bills by the Parliamentary Counsel Office), Board of Inland Revenue, Board of Customs and Excise';	11	3

in line 12, by inserting at the beginning the words 'The Education, Science and Arts Committee (in respect of matters relating to science and technology principally within the responsibilities of the Department of Education and Science or an associated public body)';

and by leaving out lines 15 to 20.—*[Mr. MacGregor.]*

House of Commons Services

9.56 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): I beg to move,

That, with effect from the beginning of the next Session of Parliament, the following amendments to Standing Orders be made:

(1) Standing Order No. 104 (Nomination of select committees) be amended in line 12, after the word 'departments)', by inserting the words 'or under Standing Order No. 125 (Domestic Committees),'.

(2) Standing Order No. 125 (Select Committee on House of Commons (Services)) be repealed and the following Standing Orders be made—

Domestic Committees

125—(1) There shall be four Select Committees to consider the services provided for the House in regard to the following matters:

1. Accommodation and Works
2. Administration
3. Catering
4. Information

(2) Each committee appointed under this order shall consist of seven Members, and the quorum shall be three.

(3) Each committee appointed under this order shall have the assistance of the Officers of the House appropriate to the matters under consideration.

(4) Each committee appointed under this order shall have power—

(a) to send for persons, papers and records, to sit notwithstanding any adjournment of the House, to adjourn from place to place, and to report from time to time;

(b) to appoint specialist advisers either to supply information which is not readily available or to elucidate matters of complexity within the committee's order of reference;

(c) to communicate to any other such committee, or to the Finance and Services Committee appointed under Standing Order No. 125A, or to the Broadcasting Committee appointed under Standing Order No. 125B, or to the House of Commons Commission, its evidence and any other documents relating to matters of common interest; and

(d) to meet concurrently with any other such committee, or with the Finance and Services Committee, or with the Broadcasting Committee, for the purpose of deliberating or taking evidence.

(5) Each committee appointed under this order shall have leave to meet concurrently with any committee of the Lords on House of Lords Offices or any sub-committee of

that committee, for the purpose of deliberating or taking evidence, and to communicate to any such committee or sub-committee its evidence or any other documents relating to matters of common interest.

(6) Each committee appointed under this order shall have power to make recommendations to the House of Commons Commission or to Mr. Speaker; but any such recommendation whose implementation would incur additional expenditure from the Votes for House of Commons (Administration) or (Works) shall also be considered by the Finance and Services Committee.

(7) Each Committee appointed under this Order shall have power to make rules and give directions to Officers of the House in respect only of such administrative matters as may from time to time be determined by Mr. Speaker or by the House of Commons Commission.

Finance and Services Committee

125A—(1) There shall be a Select Committee, to be called the Finance and Services Committee, to consider expenditure on and the administration of services for the House and—

(a) with the assistance of the Board of Management, to prepare the Estimates for the Votes for House of Commons (Administration) and (Works) for submission to the House of Commons Commission;

(b) to monitor the financial performance of the Departments of the House; and

(c) to report to the House of Commons Commission or Mr. Speaker on the financial and administrative implications of recommendations made to them by any of the Committees appointed under Standing Orders No. 125 (Domestic Committees) or No. 125B (Select Committee on Broadcasting).

(2) The Committee shall consist of not more than eight Members, and the quorum shall be three.

(3) The Committee shall be assisted by the Accounting Officer and by other Officers of the House appropriate to the matters under consideration.

(4) The Committee shall have power—

(a) to send for persons, papers and records, to sit notwithstanding any adjournment of the House, to adjourn from place to place, and to report from time to time;

(b) to communicate to any committee appointed under Standing Orders No. 125 (Domestic Committees) and No. 125B (Select Committee on Broadcasting), or to the House of Commons Commission, its evidence or any other documents relating to matters of common interest; and

(c) to meet concurrently with any committee appointed under Standing Orders No. 125 (Domestic Committees) or No. 125B (Select Committee on Broadcasting), for the purpose of deliberating or taking evidence.

(5) The Committee shall have leave to meet concurrently with any committee of the Lords on House of Lords Offices or any sub-committee of that committee, for the purpose of deliberating or taking evidence, and to communicate to any such committee or sub-committee its evidence or any other documents relating to matters of common interest.

(6) Unless the House otherwise orders, all Members nominated to the committee shall continue to be members of the committee for the remainder of the Parliament.

The House will know that the Ibbs report, the recommendations of which are closely followed in the motion, emphasised the need for clearer lines of responsibility throughout the House's services. The House of Commons Commission and, in some instances, you, Mr. Speaker, alone are at the apex of the system, but the Commission needs advice on policies from bodies composed of hon. Members. That will be provided by the four new domestic Committees which will make recommendations directly to the Commission and to the Speaker as appropriate.

Administration will be vested in the heads of Departments who must be allowed to take responsibility for the day-to-day management of services. Recommendations from the domestic Committees which go to the Commission will usually have financial implications. Under the present system it is no one's job to make a close assessment of the costs of implementation and to set orders of priority. I believe that that is a great weakness in the present system. Under the Ibbs proposals, the Commission will remain the supreme financial authority, but advice on such matters will be available from the new Finance and Services Committee, and I believe that that is also a major improvement.

The division of responsibility is reasonably clear from the proposed titles of the Committees and is as close as possible to a logical division of the domestic affairs of the House. Few of the issues are entirely free standing, however, and for that reason the new Standing Orders empower the Committees to meet jointly.

I am pleased to tell the House that extremely good progress has been made in implementing the proposals of the Ibbs report. The House will be aware that the two Directors of Finance Administration and of Works have been appointed and will shortly assume their responsibilities. I hope that the whole House will agree that there is now every reason to press on with establishing these important new Committees. I commend the motion to the House.

9.58 pm

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): On behalf of the Opposition, I welcome the motion. As Chairman of the Administration and Accommodation Sub-Committee 1, like many hon. Members, am aware that the system needs to be tightened. The route to decision making, and not least to finance, should be sharpened. I hope that the Ibbs proposals will take us some way to a more efficient management of our own affairs within the Palace of Westminster. They go a considerable way in that direction —some of my colleagues would have preferred an even more direct route. They represent a positive and useful step, and I support the motion on behalf of the Opposition.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Now that the Services Committee has ended its life, perhaps it would be an appropriate moment for me to express my appreciation for the advice it has given me since I became Speaker of the House.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON BROADCASTING

Resolved,

That, with effect from the beginning of the next Session of Parliament, the following Standing Order be made:

Select Committee on Broadcasting

125B—(1) There shall be a Select Committee with power to give directions and to perform other duties, relating to the broadcasting of proceedings of the House and matters ancillary thereto.

(2) The Committee shall consist of eleven Members, and the quorum shall be three.

(3) The Committee shall have powers—

(a) to send for persons, papers and records; to sit notwithstanding any adjournment of the House; to adjourn from place to place; and to report from time to time;

(b) to appoint specialist advisers either to supply information which is not readily available or to elucidate matters of complexity within the Committee's order of reference;

(c) to communicate to any Committee appointed under Standing Order No. 125 (Domestic Committees), or to the Finance and Services Committee appointed under Standing Order No. 125A, or to the House of Commons Commission, its evidence and any other documents relating to matters of common interest; and

(d) to meet concurrently with any Committee appointed under Standing Order No. 125 (Domestic Committees), or with the Finance and Services Committee, for the purposes of deliberating or taking evidence.

(4) The Committee shall have leave to meet concurrently with any Committee of the Lords on Broadcasting, for the purpose of deliberating or taking evidence, and to communicate to any such Committee its evidence or any other documents relating to matters of common interest.

(5) The Committee shall have power to make recommendations to the House of Commons Commission or to Mr. Speaker; but, any such recommendation whose implementation would incur additional expenditure from the Votes for House of Commons (Administration) or (Works) shall also be considered by the Finance and Services Committee.

(6) The Committee shall have power to make rules and give directions to Officers of the House in respect only of such administrative matters as may from time to time be determined by Mr. Speaker or by the House of Commons Commission.

(7) Unless the House otherwise orders, all Members nominated to the Committee shall continue to be members of the Committee for the remainder of the Parliament.

That the Order of 25th October 1990, relating to Broadcasting and having the effect of a temporary Standing Order, shall lapse upon the coming into force of this Standing Order.—*[Mr. MacGregor.]*

Statutory Instruments, &c

Mr. Speaker: It may be for the convenience of the House if I put motions Nos. 7 to 13 together.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.

Atomic Energy and Radioactive Substances

That the draft United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (Limit on Borrowing) Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 17th June, be approved.

Representation of the People

That the draft European Parliamentary Elections (Northern Ireland) (Amendment) Regulations 1991, which were laid before this House on 25th June, be approved.

That the draft Representation of the People (Northern Ireland) (Variation of Specified Documents and Amendment) Regulations 1991, which were laid before the House on 25th June, be approved.

Northern Ireland

That the draft Local Elections (Northern Ireland) (Amendment) Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 25th June, be approved.

That the Draft Genetically Modified Organisms (Northern Ireland) Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 4th July, be approved.

Dentists

That the draft Dental Auxiliaries (Amendment) Regulations 1991, which were laid before this House on 27th June, be approved.

That the draft Dentists Act 1984 (Dental Auxiliaries) Amendment Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 21st June, be approved.*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Question agreed to.

Parliamentary Pensions

9.59 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): I beg to move,

That this House endorses the proposals for changes in Members' pension contributions and scheme benefits to achieve reductions in the Member contributions from 9 per cent. to 6 per cent. and improvements in the ill health provisions of the Parliamentary Pension Scheme, thereby implementing the recommendations in the Top Salaries Review Body Report on the Parliamentary Pensions Scheme presented on Friday 28th June (Cm. 1576).

As the House knows, the Government Actuary's latest report on the parliamentary contributory pension fund, the Top Salaries Review Body report and the Government's response were all published on 28 June. The Government accepted all but one of the TSRB's 10 recommendations. On behalf of the whole House, let me pay a warm tribute to all the members of the TSRB, especially those on the sub-committee, who did a great deal of detailed and worth while work in producing the report so speedily. We are in their debt.

Of the TSRB recommendations——

It being Ten o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *interrupted the proceedings.*

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, Parliamentary Pensions may be proceeded with, though opposed, until half-past Eleven o'clock or the end of a period of one and a half hours after it has been entered upon, whichever is the later.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Mr. MacGregor: Of the TSRB recommendations that we have accepted, three require amendment to the scheme. As the House knows, we now have power to do that by regulation under the Parliamentary and Other Pensions Act 1987, without having to use primary legislation.

As required under the Parliamentary Pensions Acts, I have consulted the trustees of the scheme on the proposed changes. I should add that we have undertaken to mirror, where possible, the changes that we are making in the basic scheme in the supplementary ministerial scheme. I shall explain the implications of that under each heading.

Two of the changes—the reduction in the Member contribution and the ill-health enhancement—are provided for in the draft regulations covered by the motion. Copies of the draft regulations themselves have been available in the Vote Office. I am pleased to be able to say that the regulations have been agreed by the trustees. The third change requiring amendment to the scheme is the TSRB's recommendation 9, to guarantee that a full pension should continue to be paid for five years after retirement if a Member of Parliament dies in that period. That is more complex and, with the agreement of the trustees, we are holding it over until later. I shall say more about this shortly, but I assure the House that I firmly intend to deal with the matter at the appropriate time—that is, when we have worked out exactly how we shall implement it.

I remind the House that we have been determined that the move to amend the scheme by regulations under the 1987 Act—which are subject to the negative resolution procedure—should not mean that the House loses the opportunity to discuss proposals to change the scheme and, if appropriate, agree amendments to those proposals. That is why, in line with the commitment given by the Paymaster General in 1987, the regulations are available to the House in draft, with an opportunity for hon. Members to comment before those regulations are laid in their final form. We followed exactly that procedure in January this year, when we debated regulations to increase the widow's pension.

As for the recommendations which we accepted but which did not require regulations, let me draw attention particularly to recommendation 3, which requires the trustees to be asked to review the scheme from time to time when the Government Actuary's triennial report is presented. I believe that that recommendation is sensible, and I was happy to accept it.

Let me now deal with the regulations themselves. The centrepiece of the TSRB recommendations is a cut in the Member contribution from 9 per cent. to 6 per cent. I know that there has been a strong feeling in the House —which I share—that Members are paying too much, and I am pleased to accept the TSRB's view that the contribution should be cut. I believe that much of the pressure for the so-called balance of contributions last year reflected concern about that point. The cut in Member contribution puts that argument in a new light, especially since the TSRB has rejected—rightly, in my view—the case for moving to a fixed-ratio system. I hope that the House will share my view that we can now put that argument behind us, and concentrate on the reduction to 6 per cent.

I shall not dwell on the TSRB's arguments for the cut, which are spelt out very well in its report. I emphasise, however, that the TSRB took the view that, as only 4 per cent. of occupational pension schemes have an employee contribution in excess of 7 per cent., the Member contribution in the PCPF was seriously out of line with practice elsewhere in the public and private sectors. That is what led it to recommend the reduction in the Members' rate. I emphasise that there is no special treatment for Members. Indeed the position is quite the opposite for we have been paying a higher contribution than the vast majority of other occupational pensioners. Given the surplus, there is no need to continue to do so. The TSRB report makes it clear that we should come into line with other occupational pensioners and that we have every justification for so doing.

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): The point should be made loud and clear that we are asking for nothing more than that which exists already in the public and private sectors. We do not want any special privileges, but we want to be treated equally with others.

Mr. MacGregor: I very much agree with the right hon. Gentleman. Quite a considerable surplus has been built up, as I have said, and no doubt that is partly as a result of high contributions. I believe that the case for making the proposed change is clear.

Regulations 2 and 3 implement the cut in contribution, which applies to both the basic and supplementary schemes. The cut takes effect from next April to fit in with the new valuation period.

I should say a word about how the cut in contribution fits in with the new Government Actuary's Department valuation, on which the TSRB recommendations are based, and the overall costs of the scheme. As the GAD report brings out, because the fund remains in surplus the actual Exchequer contribution would have been 2·8 per cent. until the year 2000, when it would have risen to the long-run standard rate of 14 per cent. I shall not weary the

[Mr. MacGregor]

House with the complexities of the difference between the two because it is an arcane pension fund matter which I think most of those who are in the Chamber understand. The point is that the contribution would have risen to the long-run rate, the rate that would have been reflected over a longer period had the surplus not existed.

Had the Exchequer contribution been 2·8 per cent. until the year 2000, I think that I can predict the response from colleagues on both sides of the House, especially as we are so much out of line with other occupational schemes. That is why I was so keen for the TSRB to take the GAD report into account in its own report. The cut in Member contribution which it recommended, and which the Government accepted, significantly alters the overall position because it correspondingly increases the implied Exchequer contribution by 3 per cent. The improvements in the death and ill-health benefits, which we are also implementing, will increase the long-run total cost of the scheme by a further 1 per cent., to 24 per cent. of salary. As the benefit improvements are made without changing the Member contribution, the Exchequer contribution will also rise by a further 1 per cent. As a result, the long-term cost payable by the Exchequer—leaving aside surpluses or deficits—will now be 18 per cent., against a Member contribution of 6 per cent., but the actual Exchequer contribution, taking the present surplus into account, will be 6·8 per cent.

In carrying out its review, the TSRB examined the benefit structure of the scheme. We have been persuaded by its case that it is right on welfare grounds to make some minor but nonetheless important changes to ill-health enhancement. The existing arrangements are complex and the proposed changes simplify matters considerably.

The essential TSRB recommendation is that, for the calculation of ill-health retirement pensions and spouses' pensions in the event of the death of a Member in service, years of potential pensionable employment to age 65 should be credited to replace the existing less favourable enhancement rules. This would correct the inadequacy of the existing low level of pensions for young Members faced with retirement due to ill health or, if they die, for their surviving spouses. In addition to improving the existing provision greatly, because of the simplified basis of calculation Members and their spouses would know in advance what their entitlement would be in the event of ill health, retirement or death. I am sure that I do not have to underline the importance of that, when during this Parliament we have seen a number of tragic cases of colleagues who died young. Accordingly, regulation 5 implements the granting of full potential pensionable employment to age 65, to replace the existing complex enhancement rules for the calculation of ill-health retirement pensions and of spouses' pensions when Members of Parliament die in service. Ill-health enhancement is not available under the supplementary scheme, and regulation 5, therefore, applies only to the basic scheme.

The House will know that the TSRB considered the position of former Members of Parliament who die within a few years of starting to draw their parliamentary pensions. Some 76 per cent. of schemes other than our own have some form of five-year guarantee that the scheme Member's pension will be available to the spouse in the event of death. We accepted that recommendation, which will ensure that, at relatively low cost, beneficiaries receive value for contributions paid.

Unfortunately, that recommendation is difficult to implement even-handedly. I discussed the position with the trustees and we identified a number of cases where, depending on the drafting of the regulations, closely parallel circumstances might result in very different treatment. We reached the conclusion that we should not rush into implementing that particular recommendation, and the trustees and I agreed that we should ask officials to establish arrangements which will not lead to such anomalies but which will meet the recommendation.

I am happy to give a definite commitment to introduce at a later date regulations to implement that recommendation in a way that is acceptable to the trustees and to the House. Those regulations will also be put before the House for discussion in draft, in accordance with the procedure to be followed under the 1987 Act, which we are adopting tonight.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): The provision for doubling the widow's death benefit was backdated because the Government were unable to introduce the regulations at the right time. Will the ill-health regulations to which my right hon. Friend just referred be made retrospective to today's date or to the date when the current regulations go through?

Mr. MacGregor: If my hon. Friend is referring to the death guarantee regulation, I shall seek to ensure that which he suggests.

I should explain why we have not decided to agree to the TSRB recommendation backdating the faster rate of accrual. I know that it is argued that the TSRB had offered its recommendations as a package, but against that I have to take account of the fact that our regulations must achieve a fair balance between the Member of Parliament and the taxpayer. More importantly, I believe that within the scheme we now have the balance between benefits and contributions right.

I must start by saying something about the use of surpluses. I believe that it is wrong to start from the point that the surplus should be run down in the fastest possible time, especially since it is important not to exaggerate its size. Although it may look large, we must remember that the GAD valuation makes it clear that the surplus is well within Inland Revenue limits.

At the same time, we are using some of the surplus. The reduction in the contribution to 6 per cent. not only gives a better balance between the Member of Parliament and the Exchequer; it in itself will act to reduce the surplus, but in a prudent way. I do not believe that it would be right to go further. Taking account of the benefit improvements last March and the minor new improvements now, additional to the 6 per cent. reduction, the total additional cost to the scheme will be 4 per cent. Members of the scheme are not being asked to pay any of that now. If we appropriate the surplus today, we shall bring forward the day when Members will have to bear the cost of the improvements. I do not believe that we should do that.

None the less, I considered very carefully the TSRB proposal that the accrual rate for service before July 1983 should be converted from one sixtieth to one fiftieth for serving Members of Parliament, but I do not believe that it made a strong case for doing so. I am struck also by the

fact that the TSRB did not point to other schemes, public or private, which have adopted that approach on accrual. If we adopted that retrospective change—which is what it would be—we should be under strong pressure to make similar changes to other public service schemes and the repercussions could be very expensive. I do not believe that it is possible to justify going back almost two full Parliaments to undo a decision made eight years ago, and never questioned in the interim. Moreover, it is a particularly unnecessary change as provision already exists for Members to purchase added years at the improved rate of accrual. Those who have chosen not to upgrade their pension have obviously felt that they had good reason for not doing so. Of course, many of our colleagues did upgrade their pensions. I believe that the choice should continue to be left to the individual Member. The trustees are keenly aware of that and, apart from anything else, given that many Members have taken the opportunity to convert their service at 40 per cent. of the true cost, augmentation such as the TSRB suggests might not be practicable.

That is our one point of difference. In general, I hope that the House will agree that the Government's response to the TSRB recommendations has been positive. I believe that they are totally justified and I repeat our warm thanks to the members of the TSRB for their report, for the report's great thoroughness and for the speed with which they brought it forward. I commend the motion to the House.

10.15 pm

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): I associate myself with the comments of the Leader of the House about the TSRB report and the thoroughness with which it examined these matters. We referred them back to the TSRB as a result of pressure from hon. Members who felt that an injustice had been committed with regard to the percentage that we pay and because we wanted the TSRB to consider once again the position of widows and ill health. We also wanted to raise with the TSRB whether we should pay sixtieths, fortieths or fiftieths.

We welcome the reduction from 9 per cent. to 6 per cent. of salary. As I said in my intervention in the speech of the Leader of the House, that is fully justified and does not place Members of Parliament in a special category. We are now being treated the same as the public and private sectors. That point struck home when we gave evidence to the TSRB. Obviously the TSRB did its homework, and when it examined pension schemes generally it discovered that we were being treated unfavourably and that we had been asked to make contributions which were totally unjustified. That change is very welcome and I am sure that hon. Members will benefit from it.

I welcome recommendations Nos. 8 and 9 from the TSRB about the enhancement rules for ill health and retirement pensions and for spouses' pensions when Members die in service. I also welcome the comments of the Leader of the House about that, and about the fact that regulations will have to be drafted and presented to the House. He gave a clear undertaking to do that, as he did in respect of the recommendation for former Members who die during the first five years of retirement that an Member's pension should continue to be paid to a surviving spouse for the remainder of the five years after retirement. That matches normal practice. As the Leader of the House said, 76 per cent. of pension schemes have such a provision.

As the Leader of the House said, there have been unfortunate circumstances in the past two years when younger Members have died leaving families and people with responsibilities. We have improved the death grant. Changes have been made which are small but positive alterations that we all welcome.

I now refer to the recommendation on the existing accrual rates of fiftieths and whether they should be applied to all currently sitting Members in respect of their future entitlement, with appropriate change for those who have voluntarily been making up the shortfall as outlined in detail in paragraph 40 of the TSRB report. I listened carefully to what the Leader of the House said, but that is a unanimous recommendation from the TSRB. In another paragraph, it states that it saw no reason to reduce the rate from fiftieths to fortieths, for example, but it recognised that, by implication if nothing else, our rate of sixtieths was an injustice, particularly bearing in mind the average length of time for which many hon. Members are in the House, as opposed to spending a lifetime in commerce, business or industry. That recommendation is positive and sound. Perhaps the Leader of the House, having heard what has been said, will at least consider the matter again. Obviously, he cannot make a decision this evening, but that recommendation warrants consideration.

The money exists. Perhaps another way of using it could be found. If the right hon. Gentleman does not feel that it is right to pay back on the fiftieths and accrual rate, perhaps it could be done either by enhancing the pension or doing something extra for widows. The TSRB states that that would cost about £3 million, but that £3 million is available without any extra stress being imposed upon the fund.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): With all his experience and knowledge of the pension scheme, will the right hon. Gentleman disclose the current balance of the parliamentary pension fund? What figure are we talking about?

Mr. Orme: I do not have the exact figure in front of me, but we are talking of a considerable amount—perhaps £70 million or £80 million. I am not sure of the total, but it varies, as the hon. Gentleman will recognise—and it varied on stock exchange black Monday, which had an unfortunate effect. I cannot give the figure now, but I will certainly ensure that the hon. Gentleman receives it. Perhaps the Leader of the House has the figure.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): The right hon. Gentleman will find that the current surplus is £7·3 million, which is substantial.

Mr. Orme: I understand that £7·3 million is the figure.

I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House will press those points on the Leader of the House. That issue aside, however, the proposals are satisfactory and in line with natural justice, they are not out of line with anything within the public or private sectors, and I welcome them.

10.23 pm

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): As the House knows, I intervene in the debate as chairman of the managing trustees of the parliamentary contributory

[Mr. Alfred Morris]

pension fund. This is the third debate that we have had on pensions in the last 18 months. Earlier debates were about improvements we were seeking and the mounting criticism there has been of the gross imbalance between the Member's and Exchequer contributions to the fund. My fellow trustees and I have taken the lead in securing many improvements to the pension scheme over recent years, most recently the increase in the widow's pension from one half to five eighths of the Member's entitlement. It was pressure from the trustees that led to the TSRB's latest review of the scheme, the outcome of which was reported to the House in the right hon. Gentleman's reply to my parliamentary question of 28 June. The trustees want me to place on record tonight their appreciation of both the thoroughness of the TSRB's review and the speed with which it reported. While we wanted the review board's recommendations to go further, we welcome the improvements its report will secure.

It may be helpful for me briefly to compare the recomendations with the thinking of the trustees on the issues with which the TSRB's report deals. In recommendation 1, the TSRB says that the balance of cost method should be retained for determining the relationship between the Member's and Exchequer contributions to the fund. In their submission to the review board, the trustees had repeated their previous requests for a fixed relationship between the Member's and Exchequer contributions and suggested a ratio of 3:5. The TSRB's examination of this issue is covered by paragraphs 11 to 23 of its report. Naturally, the trustees regret that their renewed request for a fixed relationship was unacceptable to the review board.

Recommendations 2 and 3 say that the Government Actuary should continue to be responsible for reviewing the financial position of the fund and for recommending the balance of cost contribution required from the Exchequer, and also that the TSRB should review the pension scheme on a regular basis at the time of the Government Actuary Department's triennial review. The review board has noted and accepted the points made by the trustees about the Actuary's dual role. While we do not dispute the objectivity of his advice, we are concerned that he has two functions and about the dangers of trying to serve two masters. It is now proposed that the TSRB should play a more active role, one that would assuage our concern, and the trustees welcome these recommendations.

Recommendation 4 is that the Member's contribution rate should be reduced from 9 per cent. to 6 per cent. of salary from next April. The trustees have pressed strongly and repeatedly over a long period for a reduction in the Member's contribution rate and, as I have said, we also sought a fixed relationship between the Member's and Exchequer contributions. The trustees are, of course, very pleased that the contribution paid by Members will now be set at a much more realistic level.

Recommendation 5 is that the accrual rate——

Mr. Ray Powell: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way because this is an important point. Why have the trustees recommended that the reduction in the percentage that we pay into the pension scheme should be implemented in April, not immediately?

Mr. Morris: It is not our recommendation that the reduction should take effect from next April; that is the recommendation from the TSRB. For our part as trustees, as the hon. Members for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) and for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg), who work with me as trustees, will confirm, we have wanted a reduction in the Member's contribution for a very long time. We have argued that the contribution of 9 per cent. has had no relationship to the financial needs of the fund. The result has been that the Exchequer contribution has gone down to a point where, in contrast to other schemes, we have been paying twice as much as the Treasury. We wanted a reduction long before now. The House should recall, and the Leader of the House will know, that the TSRB itself has said more than once that the 9 per cent. contribution is far too high.

I turn to recommendation 5, namely, that the accrual rate should remain at a fiftieth of final salary for each year of service. The trustees requested the TSRB, in reviewing the accrual rate, to take into account the relatively short time span of the average parliamentary career. In response, the review board has noted that improved "portability" of pensions now allows Members to bring pension rights into the parliamentary scheme and argues that this development, together with the existing rate of accrual, should enable Members of Parliament to acquire good overall pensions. Nevertheless, the feeling persists, on both sides of the House, that a faster accrual rate would be well justified for an occupation in which the average length of service is so short.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Can my hon. Friend tell the House from his experience as chairman what proportion of Members, especially those joining the fund, are able to bring the whole of their contributions —not only theirs but those of their employer—into the scheme? I should have thought that the phrase "improved portability" might be slightly optimistic.

Mr. Morris: Details of our practice over the years can be made available to my hon. Friend. When I entered the scheme, I brought from the electricity supply industry my total entitlement as of that time. It bought a number of years in the parliamentary scheme. My hon. Friend raises an important point. We will certainly provide him with any more detail he may wish to secure.

Recommendation 6 proposes that the existing accrual rate of fiftieths should be applied to all service for currently sitting MPs, with appropriate augmentation for those who have been making up the shortfall voluntarily. The Leader of the House stated in his parliamentary reply to me on 28 June, at column 565, that the Government do not propose to accept this recommendation, to which I shall return shortly.

Recommendation 7 is one which the trustees find extremely disappointing. The TSRB proposes that pensions for widows and other surviving spouses should not be improved further from five eighths to two thirds of the Member's pension. The trustees have been pressing for a two thirds widow's pension and are not persuaded that this is unjustified. We note the TSRB's point that 80 per cent. of other schemes allow for only one half spouse's pension, but feel that our scheme, to which Members have been paying a contribution of 9 per cent. since 1983—very

much higher than the employee's contribution in the vast majority of other schemes—could have afforded a two thirds widow's pension.

I turn now to recommendation 8. This proposes the grant in full of all the years of potential pensionable employment to the age of 65 to replace the existing enhancement rules for ill-health pensions and for spouses' pensions when MPs die in service. The trustees asked for a minimum level of widow's pension in these cases and are grateful for the considerable improvements the TSRB has proposed.

Recommendation 9 is about former MPs who die during the first five years of retirement. The TSRB proposes that a Member's pension should continue to be paid to the surviving spouse for the remainder of the five years after retirement, followed by dependant's entitlement. The trustees have noted, as the right hon. Gentleman has also seen, that this could produce some anomalies in apparently similar cases, and we agree that further discussion is necessary about this proposal. We are grateful to the Lord President for his firm commitment to the trustees and to the House tonight to bring forward regulations to implement this recommendation at the earliest possible date. As the right hon. Gentleman said, recommendation 10 proposes that the changes should also apply to the supplementary scheme for Ministers and office-holders.

The trustees welcomed the speed with which the right hon. Gentleman responded for the Government to the TSRB's recommendations, but were not wholly satisfied with their response. We were concerned about the loss to Members of the Government's rejection of the TSRB's proposal, in recommendation 6, that the existing accrual rate of fiftieths should apply to all service for currently sitting MPs. While we understood the Government's reluctance to accept the retrospective aspect of the recommendation, the trustees saw the TSRB's report as an affordable package of improvements and were concerned that the rejection of this recommendation left some £3 million of the surplus in the fund unused.

We made strong representations to the Leader of the House for use of the £3 million for other improvements to the scheme, one of which would have allowed Members to enhance widows' pensions from five eighths to two thirds. We are very conscious of the strain parliamentary life places on Members' families and of the widely held view in the House that the claims of surviving widows of Members must be a very high priority. It was for this reason that the trustees felt justified in pressing the Leader of the House to use the £3 million we are losing from the TSRB's package on improving the lot of widows.

We were turned down, but still feel strongly that it is quite wrong for Members and/or their dependants to lose £3 million from a package, seen as affordable by the TSRB, simply because of the Government's inability to accept one of the recommendations and their unwillingness to agree to suggested alternative ways of spending the money.

The central and indisputable fact here is that Members will lose £3 million to which independent arbitrators think they are entitled. We must, therefore, very soon find some way of addressing this wrong. If the Government are saying that they can think of no way of spending the £3 million now missing from the review board's package —which, I repeat, the TSRB saw as affordable—Ministers are saying, by implication, that the scheme is incapable of improvement. That clearly is an indefensible posture, and I urge the right hon. Gentleman now to agree that Members must be given the full value of the TSRB's package if the scheme is to become more comparable with better schemes elsewhere.

The suggestions made by the trustees for further improvements to the scheme have all been rejected by the Leader of the House, but we want him to agree tonight that, in consultation with us, he will look urgently for costed improvements that we can all approve and, by preference, steps to ease the problems of widows and other dependants.

I and my fellow trustees will continue to strive for improvements to the pension scheme. All of my colleagues work hard and with genuine commitment to the interests of their fellow Members and dependants alike. We have achieved much over recent years, for which the right hon. Gentleman can take some credit, but there is still much more to do if we are to make the benefits of our scheme anything like comparable with those in other Parliaments, not to mention many other pension schemes in Britain today.

I conclude by paying tribute to Jim Dobson, who retired last month as our secretary after long and highly distinguished service in the Fees Office, to his successor Tony Lewis and to all who work with him and us in the service of Members and their dependants. Their work goes far beyond the calls of duty, and they deserve the very warm appreciation of the House as a whole.

10.40 pm

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): The right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) chairs the managing trustees very ably, and we have made an enormous amount of progress in the past few years. I also pay tribute to the Leader of the House for what he has done. I have been a trustee since 1983 and we have made substantially more advances in the past 12 months than we did in the previous period. I believe in making progress stage by stage, and the review body and the Government's response have, as the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe said, made substantial advances.

The right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) rightly said that the reduction in Members' contributions was a matter of equity. As there are a substantial number of non-contributory pension schemes, taking into account the reduction to 6 per cent. we still pay more than many other people. It is a chicken-and-egg situation. Because the trustees, through careful management, built up a substantial surplus in the fund, the Government Actuary decided that the Government's contribution could be reduced. Had we been less skilful and built up a smaller surplus, the Treasury might not have been placed in that position. So there was no advantage to the trustees or the House to manage the affairs of the parliamentary pension fund as effectively as we did.

I thought that it might be interesting to compare our pension scheme with others, so I checked out some journalists' pension schemes. Most of them are contributory and contributions range from 6 per cent. to 7 per cent. The BBC has a contributory scheme to which the contribution is 6 per cent. to 7 per cent. None of the schemes has a 9 per cent. contribution, so our proposed reduction to 6 per cent. cannot be deemed out of line.

[Sir Geoffrey Finsberg]

Queries were raised when, a few months ago following a review, the widows' benefit was increased to two years' salary. I notice that the average scheme in the media industry provides rights for widows or widowers, after a death in service, at a level of three times the deceased person's salary. The best schemes provide for a level of four times the salary. We should occasionally put those issues in the balance. It will be interesting to see whether they are mentioned.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): Can my hon. Friend also tell us what salaries are paid to the media and what level of pension is therefore enjoyed by journalists when they retire?

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: That would be interesting, but I did not have time to make that comparison. However, had I done so I do not think that it would have been unfavourable toward Members of Parliament—*[Interruption.]* I shall not enter into the many tax-free expenses that have existed in so-called Fleet street practices for many years.

On balance, the proposal is very reasonable. Naturally, we should like more, but that will always be the case when one is looking after the interests of other people. However, one must concede, that everything cannot be done at once. We have a major instalment.

I took comfort from recommendation 3, which calls on the review body to look at the scheme on a regular basis at the time of the Government Actuary's triennial valuations. That means that the points put forward by the chairman of the trustees can be reconsidered in the context of the next review. By then, who knows, the Committee, under the chairmanship of my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), may have made some revolutionary proposals. For example, it may have proposed that the House sits for two days a week or for 42 weeks a year. If one links the salary with that, it may make a difference to pensions. I do not think that we are losing anything by not opting for the total package now. It would have been welcomed, but all of us are realistic.

We must thank my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House not merely for the action that he has taken, but for the speed with which he has done so. I also welcome what he said tonight about retrospection in the regulation when he is able to get the parliamentary draftsmen to work out the complicated regulation needed for the five-year period.

10.45 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The speech of the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) underlines the fact that the proposals bring us close to achieving the sort of contributory scheme that many hon. Members would have experienced had they not had the good fortune to be here.

I add my thanks to the trustees, the Fees Office staff who have contributed to our deliberations, and my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme), who has gathered information from colleagues. I was glad to assist him in giving evidence to the Top Salaries Review Body. I was not an advocate of the fixed ratio, but thought that the ratio should be equitable. It is clear from the recommendations that we have broadly achieved that.

However, a few more improvements should be made. The theme of my contribution relates to the basis for further change which has not yet been discussed.

First, I shall correct what might otherwise be considered a misleading intervention which I made during the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris). Paragraph 36 of the report refers to "improved portability". Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe, I was lucky enough to come to the House with full transfer rights. I was aware then that many hon. Members were not so fortunate. I assumed that the same position more or less existed today. I checked with the Fees Office officials and was happy to find out that legislation—which no doubt passed through the House, so I should have known about it—has made virtually equivalent transfer possible since 1988. Therefore, the Top Salaries Review Body is correct to say that there is improved portability.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): It is true that portability has been allowed for some years. Am I not right in thinking that, when the hon. Gentleman and some of his colleagues were allowed to transport their pension rights to the parliamentary scheme, they did so on the old basis, which was not particularly generous? Since 1988 and the introduction of full transferability, the position is altogether different. The point that the TSRB is making—that more and more people are able to transfer their pensions from their occupational schemes—is not good in respect of those hon. Members who have been in the House for some time. That point applies in a useful way only to those hon. Members who were elected after 1988.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, as one of the trustees, for explaining that. It adds weight to the case for at least some degree of retrospection, to which reference has been made.

The criterion of the operation should be whether there is any perceived disadvantage to anyone seeking to become a Member of Parliament. It is possible that a prospective Member could perceive that he or she would suffer a disadvantage in terms of pension rights on his election. He or she may be willing to take the risk, and many of us probably would have done. It is more important to determine whether taking aboard any risk would constitute a risk for a Member's family and dependants. That is where improvements are necessary.

It is important to consider paragraphs 41 and 42, which contain recommendation 7. They state that the present pension of the surviving spouse should stay at five eighths of the Member's salary rather than be increased to two thirds of it. It also notes that 80 per cent. of occupational pensions offer the remaining spouse only half the original pension. However, as the hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) said, it is not a sum of money that is being referred to, but two thirds, five eighths or a half of the Member's pension. That pension, particularly for older Members, might be rather less than it otherwise would have been for reasons already given. If so, the pension for the widows, and, possibly, the dependants, will be less.

The report states that the scheme will be subject to review. When we come to consider the total operation of the scheme, the trustees, the Government of the day and the TSRB—it might reconsider the scheme on the triennial valuation—must ask what disadvantage exists not only for the prospective Member but for the families and dependants who do so much to sustain our work. If there is a deficiency in our scheme in comparison with most other schemes—I espy that there probably still is—it should be made good.

10.50 pm

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): We have come a long way in the past two years when we consider that the contribution rate of Members was 9 per cent. and that of the Government was 4·5 per cent. As a trustee, I pay my tribute to the chairman of the trustees who has led us so well. I also pay tribute to the Fees Office on the advice that we have received from it.

Sometimes, when one considers the power available to the Treasury to advise my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House in comparison with the power that the Fees Office gives to the trustees, it is clear that the battle is unequal—like David and Goliath. However, we have received excellent advice from the Fees Office and long may we continue to do so.

The reduction in Members' contributions from 9 per cent. to 6 per cent. is the major triumph of the review which the TRSB has set out in such detail and with such careful consideration. That is especially significant when one considers that, had there been no change, the Government's contribution would have gone down from 4·5 per cent. to 2·8 per cent. That would have been extraordinary and the trustees would have found it difficult to commend it. The change in contribution has been a major triumph.

I understand the view of the TSRB on the accrual rate. I think that one fiftieth is a reasonable proportion, but I do not accept, for the reasons that I gave to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), the argument about portability. The argument about hon. Members being able to transport their previous occupational pensions into the parliamentary scheme is not a good one. Most people come here when they have already served between 15 and 20 years, perhaps longer, in an outside occupation. It is only recently that the transfer rights have been valuable. The transfers to which the hon. Member for Newham, South referred were useful, but they were not as good as the existing rights. I do not believe that the TSRB was right in that context.

The argument about the value of the fund today and what should be done with it remains. As the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) said, we have had a balanced review and a balanced award. It was intended that the fund should be used to pay out special benefits to those who had previously bought in extra years so that they received some compensation for doing so.

I understand and accept the view of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House that that would have made it retrospective and therefore undesirable. It is a good point. Nevertheless, as the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) said, it means that the fund is £3 million in surplus more than it otherwise would have been.

I thought I heard my right hon. Friend, when reading from his Treasury brief, use words such as, "It would be wrong to run down the pension scheme too quickly, and we must not spend all the money at once"—as though it had not been the recommendation of the Top Salaries Review Body that the £3 million should be spent on compensating those who had already bought previous years. I know that my right hon. Friend is a man of great native Scottish caution and that, as a general rule, we should not spend all the money at once, but that money was earmarked for this purpose.

I thought I heard my right hon. Friend also say, although my ears must have deceived me, that having reached that stage, which would be most undesirable, members of the fund might have to pay more. I have news for my right hon. Friend. It is not the members of the fund who might have to pay more; the Treasury, on the balance of contribution argument, would have to pay more. It was a Treasury brief. My right hon. Friend—most untypically for him—did not pick up that point as quickly as he should have done.

The £3 million still exists. The right hon. Member for Wythenshawe, the chairman of the trustees, was correct to point that out. The question is, what should be done? May I remind the House of the reason why the added years were there in the first place. Members were given the right to buy added years at a subsidised rate. As one of those who benefited, I can tell him that there is no particular joy to be gained from parting with money, only to find that everybody gets the same, anyway, and that all that money has now been wasted. But that is bye the bye. The question is, what can reasonably be done with the extra £3 million?

On the widows' benefit, the trustees felt very strongly that, good though the increase in widows' benefit to five eighths was, there was a strong case for increasing it to two thirds. That is partly because of the argument that I used when I intervened during the speech of the hon. Member for Newham, South—that portability is not a good argument and that it applies to only a few hon. Members who have been able to transfer their old occupational pensions in a realistic and beneficial way to the parliamentary scheme.

It should be possible—I put it no higher than that—for hon. Members to contribute, in the way that they did to added years, and make an additional provision that would amount to a two thirds pension for widows or widowers. That was the reason why we were allowed to buy added years in the first place. It would be a contributory scheme. If those who contributed to the added years scheme were offered compensation by the TSRB, they should be allowed to buy improved benefits for widows or widowers. There would be no question of a straight gift being made. Contributions would still be made by those hon. Members. It would be a reasonable benefit to offer.

If that does not happen, unless the TSRB makes further recommendations about benefits during the next three years, the Treasury's contribution will be reduced by exactly that sum or more, because the £3 million will have been intelligently invested and by then will be worth a great deal more. That money should be used in that way.

I have been very critical—I hope not unkindly so—of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House. However, I commend his extraordinary ability in getting this through the Treasury. How that was done I do not know. It has been tried on previous occasions, with no luck. I can only imagine that he employed his great gifts of intelligence, charm and knowledge to get the better of the Treasury. Again I commend him on it.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the three hon. Members who are now standing that the debate ends at 11.30 pm and that time should be left for the Leader of the House to reply.

10.59 pm

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): The debate is obviously of great interest to all of us because we are Members. What is discussed and approved affects us as much as it affects our families. I should like to bring another aspect to the attention of the Leader of the House which we have a duty to consider, although it may present problems.

Like my hon. Friends the Members for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) and for Ogmore (Mr. Powell), I am a trustee of the parliamentary Labour party benevolent fund. There one sees at first hand the problems faced by former Members. We have a 96-year-old former Member who was a senior Minister but, sadly, left the House many years ago when there were no pension arrangements. We have an 85-year-old former Member who was in the House for seven years but has no pension from it. There are also the widows of former Members, many in their 90s. The small sums that the parliamentary Labour party is able to give them through contributions—which are very small—are of great help to them.

We have a duty to look after the interests of former Members. Those of us who have been Members for a while will have seen salaries and pensions improve considerably, but some former Members were here when salaries were low and pensions non-existent. They face enormous hardships. Ex-Members and their widows gave great service to the House over the years.

Colleagues have paid warm tribute to the Fees Office, and I join in that. Over the years, I have consulted the Fees Office about ways in which we can help ex-Members and it has always been generous in its advice and in the time that it has given.

I have given the background to this matter because of what could happen to any Member, no matter what his party or on what side of the Chamber he sits. As we have heard, recently several young Members have died, many of whom had young children—it would be inappropriate for me to mention those Members' names, but hon. Members know to whom I refer.

The hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) and others referred to the £3 million surplus. Because of the contacts that my hon. Friends the Members for Ogmore and for Ashfield and I have had with the widows of young Members who died recently leaving young children, we know of their worries about their future. Obviously, substantial improvements have occurred, but we all know from our own lives of the costs borne by women with young children. Given the sums available, I ask the Leader of the House to examine ways in which we can give some security—it does not have to be total security—to the wives of ex-Members.

In talking about money, nothing is clear cut—many situations cause problems. We know the reluctance of any Government to become involved in retrospective legislation, but those of us who are privileged to be Members of the House, and whose futures when we have ceased to be Members are reasonably well safeguarded, have a duty to remember our colleagues who served in the House when conditions were not so good. I accept that there will always be problems, but I beg the Leader of the House—I join in the tributes that have been paid to him—to consider the cases of the wives of some young ex-Members who have, sadly, left us in recent years. I also ask him to give his attention to the cases to which I have referred. I shall be delighted to provide him with the necessary documentation if he wishes.

We have a duty to look after not only ourselves, but colleagues who were our friends. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the great strength of this place is that no matter what one's party, one builds lasting friendships here. I know Conservative colleagues who have faced the same problems as Labour ex-Members. It is our duty to look after their interests. Even though they have left us, their families and relatives are still here.

11.5 pm

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): I shall also heed what you said about speaking briefly, Mr. Speaker. I echo every word of what the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) said and I look forward to hearing the contribution of the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes). My hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) sensibly said that we cannot expect to have in one go everything that we believe to be right, and it would make sense to take what is being offered tonight.

It is worth echoing what was said in previous debates. For at least 12 years, the Treasury's contribution to the pension scheme was substantially higher than that made by hon. Members. Although that position has been reversed, we should acknowledge the fact that from 1972 to 1984 the taxpayer made a substantially greater contribution than we did. That does not detract from our responsibility to the dependants of those who were unable to serve in the House for a sufficiently long time, or sufficiently recently, to gain the extra advantages for which we are paying. I speak with a certain disinterest as I hope to survive my wife and to get the benefits of being a widower—it may be rare for a Tory Member of Parliament to say such a thing, but I wanted to share that thought.

What I said in a previous debate was right. Most Members of the House are not especially interested in a reduction in their contributions from 9 per cent. to 6 per cent. if the 3 per cent. differential could be used more effectively. That issue has been considered by the Top Salaries Review Body and by the Government, and I pay tribute to the Government, to their advisers and to the board.

Following what my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) said, hon. Members' attention should be drawn—preferably as soon as they are elected—to the opportunities for additional voluntary contributions, whether for themselves or for survivors' benefits for widows or children. Hon. Members should also be informed of other ways in which we can sacrifice a part of our present salary so that various contingencies can be met at a higher rate. That is one of the issues with which the civil service has dealt ever more satisfactorily since the end of the war, and it should be brought to the attention of hon. Members.

I agree that we have a responsibility to those people who were Members of the House some time ago, who were paid at lower rates and whose responsibilities were perhaps greater than ours. I do not think that the scheme should necessarily deal with those people—although I should like to see it do so—but perhaps we could adopt the suggestion made by the hon. Member for Tooting whereby those involved in the benevolent funds of the Labour and Tory

[Mr. Peter Bottomley]

parties, and of the minority parties if they have them, could get together with my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to consider how to use the surplus or find another way to ensure that we voluntarily give something to help those older and poorer than we are.

11.9 pm

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): I think that the pensions section of the Fees Office does a first-class job on our behalf, and always has. I am pleased that my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) mentioned Jim Dobson, the Accountant; no doubt his successor will do a first-class job, just as he did.

I also thank all the trustees for the work that they have done on behalf of hon. Members—and for themselves as well, for they, too, will enjoy the pensions. I wish to compliment the Leader of the House: we got nowhere before he became Leader. I have already complimented him privately, and now I want to do so publicly. He, too, has done a first-class job, although I think that he slipped up tonight. I ask him to think about what has been said by, for instance, my right hon. Friends the Members for Wythenshawe and for Salford, East (Mr. Orme), and the hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern), who made an important point. It is obvious that the help for widows is coming from the trustees themselves.

Let me tell the Leader of the House that hon. Members from all parties regularly put their heads together in the Tea Room and on the Terrace and discuss what can be done about the unfair treatment of widows. A first-class suggestion, involving £3 million, has been made tonight and the Leader of the House should seriously consider it. I was a little upset when the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) mentioned the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), who is to chair the Select Committee considering the House's working hours. He said that the Committee might recommend that the House sit for only two days a week. That would be awful: it would mean that we would see you only twice a week, Mr. Speaker, and I am not having that. There is no way that I would agree to that sort of thing. I want to see you five days a week, because I think that you do a first-class job as well. I remember things that have happened over the years, Mr. Speaker, and I think that you do a good job outside the House, never mind inside it. I think you know what I am referring to.

The hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate mentioned the schemes that operate outside. They are far better than ours; they are non-contributory, for a start. The hon. Gentleman also mentioned journalists. From time to time, journalists accuse hon. Members of not turning up in the Chamber. We need only look up at the Press Gallery to see how many journalists are present tonight. They are either tucked up in bed, or sat around the table having a damned good dinner and a bottle of wine. They attack us sometimes, but it is my turn now: I have an opportunity to have a go at them. I think that they are unfair at times.

Let me come back to the Leader of the House. I think that the Top Salaries Review Body did a first-class job on behalf of Members. It looked at the position fairly and squarely and then made certain recommendations. I am a little surprised that the Leader of the House is rejecting one of those recommendations. I think that he is wrong to do so, and I think that he will understand why, given some of the speeches that have been made.

Let me ask the Leader of the House a question: can he tell me what contribution employers are making in all the private schemes outside that are better than ours—and there are many? There is no doubt that the right hon. Gentleman has done a good job on the Treasury: he kicked them around a bit and he has got what he wanted on behalf of Members—and himself; he, too, will benefit. But I think that he will find that employees outside are paying a lot more than employers, although in many instances it is the other way round. Members' contributions have been unfair for a long time, but it has been recommended that they should be reduced. That recommendation is fair, and so is the argument that has been advanced this evening by right hon. and hon. Members about widows and the £3 million that is available. I have made a contribution to that £3 million, and I should like to see it directed to widows. That is where I stand and that is where most of us stand. The Leader of the House should take that on board.

11.15 pm

Mr. MacGregor: The most controversial remark in the debate was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley), who had the temerity to say that he anticipated outliving the Minister for Health. Apart from that, we have had a good-humoured, sensible and level-headed debate. Mark you, Mr. Speaker, I think that the remark of my hon. Friend about the Minister for Health was good humoured.

I pay tribute to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) and to the trustees for the work that they do. I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for paying tribute to Jim Dobson and the others in the Fees Office, including Tony Lewis, who have worked on all matters that we have discussed. I support that tribute, but I think that the trustees deserve great credit for advocating changes, some of which are before us this evening.

I am grateful to my hon. Friends the Members for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) and for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) for their kind remarks, as I am to the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes). I think that the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe was somewhat unkind when he said that Ministers were saying that the scheme was incapable of improvement. We are seeing many improvements being made to the scheme this evening and clearly the Government have accepted them. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman did not mean exactly what he appeared to say. I hope that he will recognise that the Government have been positive in their response.

Mr. Alfred Morris: I was saying that the implication is that the scheme is incapable of further improvement. The TSRB put forward a package, £3 million of which will now be missing. There are improvements that we could suggest. I hope that there will be agreement between both sides of the House that we should at least consider positively spending that money to improve the lot of widows.

Mr. MacGregor: No one has ever suggested that the scheme is incapable of further improvement, but I turn directly to the point that the right hon. Gentleman has raised, which I think is the main one this evening.

I must say to my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham that his remarks about accruals were not quite accurate. We must accept that the £3 million surplus to which the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe referred is not necessarily there for all time. The right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) said that we have a surplus because we have had, thanks to the Government, an effective improvement in the nation's prosperity, which has been reflected in surpluses in pension funds. Those are the results of improvements in the stock market and elsewhere. There is no guarantee, however, that the improvements will continue for ever or, indeed, throughout the 1990s. We should not regard the £3 million as money that is logged up that can be spent now in the expectation that there will not be changes in future.

We should take a prudent view of the surpluses, not least because the long-term cost as assessed by the Government Actuary, leaving aside surpluses and deficits, will now be 18 per cent. for the Treasury as against 6 per cent. for Members. There may therefore be an argument at some stage, if we find that we move into deficit and at the same time we have greatly increased benefits, that Members should contribute more as well.

I have advanced two other arguments. One is that the proposal that is based on accruals involves an element of retrospection. The second is that there would be repercussive effects on other public sector schemes in terms of accruals. Those arguments apply as well as the one about surpluses. Those are all points that we took into account when the Government changed only one of the recommendations.

Sir Peter Hordern: I appreciate my right hon. Friend's point concerning retrospection, but the TSRB recommended that the £3 million should be spent now, in the way that it proposed. Obviously we are not going to accept that. That £3 million would not have been available at all if the TSRB had its way—and there can be no question but that it is now available. Can my right hon. Friend confirm the extent of the Government's contribution? As I understand it from paragraph 50, with the £3 million—that is to say, with the retrospective element—the Government's contribution would have been 8·8 per cent.

Mr. MacGregor: The Government's contribution is now 6·8 per cent. However, we must be free to accept or reject TSRB recommendations—although it is clear that we have largely responded in favour of them. The TSRB recommended against increasing widows' pension from five eighths to two thirds, and we must take that into account when considering some of the other pressures for changes to widows' benefits that have been exerted in the House tonight.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate and to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) for pointing out that our acceptance of the TSRB's recommendation for a three-yearly review means that we will have a regular opportunity to review the scheme, in line with the Government Actuary's triennial review. I hope that the House considers as helpful that regular opportunity to consider whether further improvements should be made. That was an important recommendation to accept and represents a further advance on the Government's position, because that aspect was left open in 1987.

The right hon. Member for Salford, East asked me to take away and to consider the Government's response on accruals and on doing something extra for widows. I will do so, but the arguments in respect of accruals are powerful, and there are two difficulties in respect of improving widows' benefits. They would be retrospective, and the TSRB recommended against an increase on the ground that the benefits are now quite reasonable.

I take the point made by the hon. Member for Newham, South that a number of occupational schemes offer better benefits, particularly in relation to the amount of service that Members of Parliament can sometimes put in, and which is of benefit to their pension scheme—and that, in our scheme, the proportion that applies to the widow's pension may not result in a vast sum of money. We must bear that point in mind for the future, and no doubt it is one that will be argued again to the TSRB.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the Leader of the House for accepting my point, which accords with others about widows' benefits made by my right hon. and hon. Friends. Would not it be useful to review the actual amounts of money received by widows, relative to other people's needs, and the increased percentage liability on the fund that an increase to two thirds would make?

Mr. MacGregor: Those points could be looked at again—certainly in the context of the three-year review.

I believe that right hon. and hon. Members agree that the proposals that we have made in the light of the TSRB's recommendations are a further advance—and that the reduction in the contribution from 9 per cent. to 6 per cent. is a considerable advance, and entirely justified. I will take away to consider the views that have been expressed—but without commitment, because there are strong arguments against them. I reiterate our thanks to the TSRB for the firmness and speed with which it acted. I commend the motion to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House endorses the proposals for changes in Members' pension contribution and scheme benefits to achieve reductions in the Member contributions from 9 per cent. to 6 per cent. and improvements in the ill health provisions of the Parliamentary Pension Scheme, thereby implementing the recommendations in the Top Salaries Review Body Report on the Parliamentary Pensions Scheme presented on Friday 28th June (Cm. 1576).

Brigade of Gurkhas

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

11.24 pm

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): It is symptomatic of our treatment of defence matters in this place that the future of some of the finest soldiers ever to serve the British Crown should be debated late at night when all but a handful of hon. Members have gone home. However, the hour and the manner of the debate belie the real concern of right hon. and hon. Members of whom no fewer than 153 have signed early-day motion 921 about the future of the brigade of Gurkhas. It states:

"That this House believes that the Gurkhas have a unique record of service in the British Army and loyalty to the British Crown, that their qualities of adaptability and devotion to duty will still be required in the defence of Britain's interests in an uncertain world in the future; and calls on Her Majesty's Government to confirm that the Gurkha Brigade will continue to have a worthwhile and viable future in the British Army as previously declared by the Right honourable Member for Ayr, the former Secretary of State for Defence on 22nd May 1989."

At least three more hon. Members signed that early-day motion today, but their names will not be printed to the motion until next Thursday after my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence is expected to have made his statement to the House on the reorganisation of regimental structure in the Army.

The Government would be wrong to underestimate the strong feelings in the House that the Royal Brigade of Gurkhas should be retained within the British Army and that assurances about the brigade's future given as recently as May 1989 by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger), the former Secretary of State for Defence, should be honoured.

During the Ministry of Defence's current review of the size and shape of the British Army no unit other than the Gurkhas has inspired an early-day motion in its name. My hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) has argued the case for the Parachute Regiment, and rightly so. My hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Boscawen) has argued the case for the Household Division and for the Army as a whole, and rightly so; and the former Army Minister, my hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart, in debate and on paper has warned of the serious potential for overstretch, particularly of infantry, if the proposed reductions in battalions go ahead. He has emphasised the key potential role of the Gurkhas especially for international peace-keeping outside the NATO area.

Since Sir John Nott and Sir James Scott-Hopkins left this place, I know of no Member who has served in a Gurkha battalion. I participated in a parachute course with the Gurkhas 30 years ago at Abingdon. The impression that they made on me then has never left me and it was renewed when I went with the Select Committee on Defence to visit them in Nepal in 1989.

The Gurkhas have no constituency Members—unlike the Royal Hampshire Regiment and the Green Howards. However, it is noteworthy that the simplistic argument that each Gurkha battalion retained means one additional British battalion disbanded has, from the evidence of the amendment to that effect to early-day motion 921, few adherents. There are but four names in support of those three amendments and there are good reasons for that.

The Gurkhas uniquely derive their status in the British Army by international treaty. Gurkhas were first recruited to the service of the British East India Company by virtue of the treaty of Segauli, which ended the British-Nepalese war in 1816 and which also declared perpetual friendship between Britain and Nepal. Following the partition of the subcontinent on Indian and Pakistani independence on 15 August 1947, a tripartite agreement was signed between the Governments of India, Nepal and the United Kingdom whereby six Gurkha regiments were incorporated in the Indian army and four transferred to the British army. Paragraph 4(6) of the agreement stated:

"The Government of Nepal have agreed that Her Majesty's Government in the UK may employ Gurkha officers and soldiers up to the number required to maintain eight battalions or their equivalent at peacetime strength, on mutually satisfactory terms and conditions of service. The two Governments will consult together on the question of recruiting Gurkha troops in excess of this strength."

The then Secretary of State for Defence, in his statement on the tripartite agreement to this House on 1 December 1947, concluded:

"For our part . . . we have no doubt that, as between friends, its provisions will be loyally observed and can be smoothly carried into effect."—*[Official Report,* 1 December 1947; Vol. 445, c. 36.]

In other words, unlike other regiments in the British Army which, if disbanded, can be reformed at the will of the British Government, if the Gurkhas are disbanded, the Government of Nepal might feel that a solemn agreement between friends had been abrogated and that Gurkha loyalty had been repaid with British indifference and then, possibly in some future emergency or war, British pleas for the recruitment of Gurkha troops to serve our Crown once more could fall on deaf ears in Kathmandu.

In world war one, 200,000 Gurkhas served on Britain's behalf, and in world war two, a quarter of a million. There is hardly any corner of a foreign field of battle where British troops have been engaged these past 176 years which has not also been watered by Gurkha blood. Although eligible for the Victoria Cross only since the first world war, 13 Gurkha soldiers and 13 officers attached to the Gurkhas have won VCs. The most recent award was in 1965 during the Indonesian confrontation. Field Marshal Lord Slim memorably summarised their qualities. He said:

"The Almighty created in the Gurkha an ideal rifleman, brave, tough, patient, adaptable, skilled in field craft, intensely proud of his military record and unswerving loyalty. Add to that his honesty in word and deed, his parade perfection, and his unquenchable cheerfulness, then service with Gurkhas is for any soldier an immense satisfaction."

The Gurkhas will be the last to wish to retain their place in the British Army on grounds of sentiment or emotion. Gratitude alone carries few arguments in Whitehall. Although the traditions born of personal example, loyalty and devotion to duty inspire excellence in the profession of arms, the duller dross of the ledger book and the weighing of human worth according to administrative convenience and cost effectiveness will be the order of the day when decisions on regiments' futures are made.

On that mundane balance sheet, the Gurkhas have irrefutable advantages, even for the most drily dispassionate Ministry of Defence official. Three of the five Gurkha infantry battalions are currently in Hong Kong, where they serve unaccompanied tours with an extra rifle

company per battalion over the normal complement for United Kingdom battalions. That is because of their role on anti-illegal immigration duties.

The "Options for Change" regimental amalgamations and disbandments are to be completed by mid-1995. However, the People's Republic of China is not due to assume control of Hong Kong until two years later, on 1 July 1997. It is possible that, as that dreadful date approaches, security in the colony will become very difficult indeed. Other milestones along the long recessional of British power and sovereignty around the globe—partition in India in 1947 and the withdrawal from Aden in 1967—have been marked with bloodshed and strife. It would be wise to retain the full complement of experienced Gurkha troops in place in Hong Kong, with their supporting engineer, signals and transport elements, until the Union Jack goes down.

A Gurkha battalion in Brunei is stationed in the Sultanate under an agreement with the Sultan, which was renewed for five years by Her Majesty's Government in 1988, whereby the sultan bears the full cost of the battalion. The British-run jungle warfare school at Seria provides invaluable training, and it is hard to foresee its perpetuation if the British Gurkha battalion left Brunei.

Finally, the battalion that is stationed in the United Kingdom is part of 5 Airborne brigade, which has just the kind of highly mobile and flexible role that Her Majesty's Government are trying to promote in the British Army in the future. Gurkhas take to parachuting like ducks to water. The battalion that is based in the United Kingdom is also available for unaccompanied tours in the Falklands and Belize, thus reducing the overstretch imposed on United Kingdom-recruited battalions.

In short, Her Majesty's Government should unequivocally confirm the statement made to the House by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr when he was Secretary of State for Defence on 22 May 1989. He said:

"Although the Hong Kong commitment will have ceased, we should plan on a future for the Gurkhas after 1997 based on a viable brigade structure. At present, we see this force being a balance of four Gurkha infantry battalions, squadrons of the Queen's Gurkha Engineers, the Queen's Gurkha Signals and the Gurkha Transport Regiment, together with the necessary infrastructure. It would comprise about 4,000 personnel. I would expect the future Gurkha force to have roles that lie within the main stream of the Army's defence commitments, including, as now, a substantial Gurkha presence in the United Kingdom."—[*Official Report*, 22 May 1989; Vol. 153, c. 683.]

It is noteworthy that, in their official response, Cm. 700, to the Select Committee on Defence's admirably scholarly 1989 report on the future of the Gurkhas, Her Majesty's Government endorsed the Committee's recommendations virtually in their entirety, the most noteworthy endorsement being

"that any future for the Gurkhas has to be based on a viable Brigade structure. Thus the Government's plans for a future Gurkha force envisage a balance of infantry battalions, squadrons of The Queen's Gurkha Engineers, Queen's Gurkha Signals and Gurkha Transport Regiment. There is also a minimum size of force below which it is difficult to operate practicable manning arrangements; provide a base which is sufficiently broad to support the range of skills and trades required; and obtain a cost-effective return on the investment in the infrastructure needed to support the Gurkhas and the lines of communication in Nepal . . . The Government agrees with the Defence Committee that the Gurkhas represent good value for money and the Government's plans for a viable future Brigade structure will ensure that they continue to do so."

If Her Majesty's Government's existing publicly announced decisions for the future of the Gurkhas are maintained, let no one say that the Gurkhas will not be bearing their full share of the cuts. Their strength is now just over 8,000; if Her Majesty's Government's existing plans are implemented, their number will be halved within six or seven years.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr said about the infantry in the Army debate on 1 July,

"It is vital that the 36 battalions—or whatever the new number will be—are at full strength. The only way to achieve that is to go for the areas that, year in, year out, have the best recruitment and retention levels. I could defend that position anywhere".—[*Official Report*, 1 July 1991; Vol. 194, c. 74.]

As it happens, the Gurkhas have the best recruitment and retention record of the whole British Army. In recent years, they have always been fully recruited. Gurkhas serve on average for at least 15 years, whereas British soldiers serve on average for only five years. As the establishment of a Gurkha battalion is 927, against 630 for a British battalion—if it is fully recruited—the cost per man per year is about one third less for a Gurkha battalion.

Furthermore, Gurkha pay and pensions are on Indian army scales under the tripartite agreement. In 1989, the annual cost of Gurkha pensions was about £5·6 million a year for 20,000 pensioners, or £280 per annum per pensioner. The annual cost of British Army pensions was about £500 million a year for about 135,000 pensioners —on average £3,700 per annum per pensioner. The remittances from serving soldiers and Gurkha pensions amount to about two and a half times the official annual aid of Her Majesty's Government to Nepal. The skills, training and personal qualities which British Gurkha soldiers bring to their home villages and beautiful native land is an incomparable asset to one of the poorest countries in the world, a nation which has a treaty of friendship in perpetuity with Britain and whose people merit our loyal adherence to public assurances already given, the most important of which is that the British Brigade of Gurkhas should have a worth while and viable future in the British Army.

11.39 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) on securing this debate. I know that the future of the Gurkhas is a subject of keen interest at the present time to a number of right hon and hon. Members of this House and, indeed, to many members of the general public. My hon. Friend has previously shown commendable interest in the future of the Gurkhas, most notably as a member of the Select Committee on Defence when he, as he said, took evidence on the future of the Brigade of Gurkhas in 1988-89. He recalled the statement in May 1989 by the then Secretary of State for Defence announcing the proposal to retain 4,000 Gurkhas after 1997. My right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) did, however, make clear the uncertainties inherent in looking that far ahead, and in particular cited changes in the international scene and the size of the Army as a whole. It is, of course, improvements in east-west relations that have led to the "Options for Change" exercise and the need to review the size and structure of the future Army.

Interest is particularly high at present, as the future of the Gurkhas cannot be divorced from that of the Army as

[Mr. Archie Hamilton]

a whole. It is worth emphasising that the Gurkhas are an integral part of the British Army. Although the majority of the soldiers and some of the officers in the brigade are foreign nationals, they take an oath of allegiance to the Queen and serve alongside their British counterparts.

My hon. Friend will recognise that the period of change and uncertainty represents a particularly difficult time for the Army. As I have said previously in the House, no area of the Army is exempt from consideration under "Options for Change". As my hon. Friend will be aware, consultations within the Army are now taking place and proposals are being put to Ministers. I am aware that there has been a certain amount of speculation in the media and in the House about the future of the Brigade of Gurkhas. I do not intend to use my speech today to add to that speculation. No final decisions have been made about the future of individual units and, as my hon. Friend will know and appreciate, there is little that I can say in advance of the announcement that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State hopes to make next week.

With regard to the origins of Gurkha service, the Gurka takes his name from the small principality of Gorkha whose king in the mid-eighteenth century conquered most of what is now known as Nepal. The king and his successors grew so powerful that they overran the whole of the hill country from the Kashmir border to east of Bhutan. Finally, the many deep incursions into the territories of the Honourable East India Company were halted by the declaration of war by the Governor-General in 1814. The war was fought using irregular local forces against the Nepalese until we reached a settlement in 1816 which allowed the Nepalese soldiers to enter British service, and thus the first three regiments of Gurkhas were raised. For more than 100 years the Gurkhas were an integral part of the British Indian Army. At that stage, the Indian Army contained a large number of regiments renowned for their fighting abilities, such as the Sikhs and Pathans, and the Gurkhas were not singled out for any special status until relatively recent times.

The loyalty of the Gurkha troops, which my hon. Friend mentioned, is renowned. During the Indian mutiny of 1857 the Gurkhas remained constant in their allegiance, even when the majority of the Bengal army in which they were serving rebelled. The first Victoria Cross awarded to the Gurkhas was during that campaign, and was awarded in 1858 to a British officer serving in what became the First Gurkha Rifles.

Until the first world war, the Gurkhas served in almost all the campaigns in India and on its frontiers. The first world war brought the first change to that situation, with the contingents of Gurkhas despatched to fight in many theatres of war. The main campaigns in which they fought were in the middle east—Palestine and Mesopotamia—where they won a number of battle honours, but they also won battle honours for Suvla Bay and Gallipoli, and fought on the western front in 1914 and 1915. It is difficult for us to imagine how the appalling conditions in the trenches must have affected hill tribesmen from the remote and underdeveloped mountainous country of Nepal. The battle honours of the 2nd King Edward VII Own Gurkha Rifles include La Bassée 1914, Festubert 1914-15, Givenchy 1914, and Loos.

The contribution of the Indian Army during those years was enormous. Some 33 battalions of Gurkhas were raised, and 200,000 Nepalese men served in the Indian Army, suffering about 20,000 casualties. That was the first period during which the Gurkhas came to wide notice for their exploits outside India and its environs.

Between the wars, the Gurkhas reverted to 10 regiments, serving in India and fighting many actions on the frontiers. Again, the Gurkhas have to be seen in the context of their role as a part of the armies in India, rather than in the context of the British Army in which they perform so well today.

The second world war again saw a major expansion of the Gurkhas. More than 175,000 men served in more than 40 battalions, and suffered some 24,000 casualties. They fought with distinction in all the main theatres of war, and acquired battle honours including Tobruk, El Alamein and Tunis during the North African campaign and for the Gothic Line and Cassino in Italy.

The Gurkhas will be mainly remembered, however, for their contributions in Burma. Their battle honours for those campaigns include all the actions which are most vividly remembered—Imphal, Mandalay, Rangoon Road and with the Chindits. The Gurkhas earned 12 Victoria Crosses during the second world war.

The partition of India in 1947 led to the break-up of the armies which had been stationed there under the Raj. It was decided to retain four regiments of Gurkhas, who would become part of the British Army, and the six remaining Gurkha regiments would become part of the independent Indian Army; individuals were given the choice of force with which they wished to remain. It was thus that, in 1948, the Gurkhas for the first time became fully part of the British Army.

The four British regiments have remained the same ever since—the 2nd, 6th, 7th and 10th Gurkha Rifles. The 2nd Gurkha Rifles has, since 1902, been known as King Edward VII Own. In 1949 the 10th Gurkha Rifles became the Princess Mary's Own, and in 1959 the 6th and 7th became Queen Elizabeth's Own and the Duke of Edinburgh's Own. In 1977, during the Queen's silver jubilee year, Her Majesty honoured three units of the Brigade of Gurkhas. The Gurkha Engineers and Gurkha Signals received royal titles and Prince Charles was appointed colonel-in-chief of the 2nd King Edward VII Own Gurkha Rifles. The adoption of those titles reflected both the incorporation of the Gurkhas in the British Army and the high regard in which they were rightly held by the British public.

The 1950s saw the Gurkhas take on roles other than their traditional infantry role. They formed the Queen's Gurkha Engineers, the Queen's Gurkha Signals, the Gurkha Army Service Corps—the forerunners of the Gurkha Transport Regiment—and, temporarily, the Gurkha Military Police. There is currently one regiment of each of those specialisms, other than the Military Police, and a total of five battalions of infantry. Thus, the present organisation of the Gurkhas largely reflects the roles established in the 1950s, at which time their numbers reached a post-war peak of some 15,000.

To bring this brief resumé of the history of the Gurkhas up to date, I must mention their gallant service in Malaya and Borneo. It was in Borneo that the Gurkhas were awarded the most recent of their 26 Victoria Crosses—to Lance Corporal Rambahadur Limba, later commissioned as a Queen's Gurkha officer. The 7th Duke of Edinburgh's

Own saw service in the Falkland Islands in 1982 and, most recently, the Gurkha Transport Regiment provided drivers for an ambulance unit in the Gulf.

The current deployment of the Gurkhas remains concentrated in the Far East, with three battalions stationed in Hong Kong and one, by agreement with the Sultan, in Brunei. In October, 7 Gurkha Rifles will undertake a six-month roulement tour in Belize, and they have in the past provided elements of the garrison in the Falkland Islands.

What is less often appreciated is the extent to which Gurkhas serve in Britain. One battalion, currently the 7th Duke of Edinburgh's Own Gurkha Rifles, is based at Queen Elizabeth barracks in Church Crookham, Hampshire, and is a part of 5 Airborne Brigade. From time to time, this battalion has been called upon to undertake ceremonial duties at Buckingham Palace and the Tower of London. In addition, the Gurkhas provide demonstration companies for the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst and at Brecon for the School of Infantry. A Queen's Gurkha Signal Squadron forms part of a signal regiment at Blandford in Dorset, and an independent squadron of the Queen's Gurkha Engineers is based at Chatham.

This is a welcome opportunity for me to inform the House that a squadron of the Gurkha Transport Regiment deployed earlier this month to the British contingent of the United Nations force in Cyprus.

It can therefore be seen that Gurkhas now serve in a wide range of roles and in a number of locations, and that highlights the Army's confidence in the abilities of the Gurkhas. But that should not be taken to mean that the differences between Gurkhas and British troops can be glossed over.

From the start, the very system of recruitment sets the Gurkhas apart, with "recruiters" going round the valleys to gather potential recruits for selection. Soldiers of the Brigade of Gurkhas are recruited from areas that cover only a small fraction of the country and lie, in the main, between 5,000 and 8,000 ft above sea level. Recruits into the Army come from four main areas. Those from the west are Gurungs and Magars, and those from the east are Limbus and Rais. The section of the population from which the Brigade of Gurkhas recruits forms only around 6 per cent. of the total population of Nepal—19 million. British officers on posting to the Brigade of Gurkhas learn to speak Nepali—or Gurkhali, as the Army refers to it.

Recruiting for the brigade takes place once a year when ex-servicemen appointed for each area bring a pre-determined number of potential recruits to the central points in the hills where ex-Ghurkha officers carry out the final selection.

Competition to be selected is enormous and there are up to 300 applicants for each recruitment vacancy. The 2nd and 6th Gurkha Rifles recruit in the west among the Magars and Gurungs, the 7th and 10th Gurkha Rifles recruit in the east among the Limbus and Rais, and Engineers, Signals and Transporters come from both sides. Those selected are then sent to the training depot at Sek Kong in Hong Kong for training. That training takes some nine months, three times as long as for a British recruit. During that time, the emphasis is on weapon training, shooting, drill, physical training and the rudimentaries of tactics and fieldcraft. They are also taught arithmetics and map reading, and a key component of their training is the learning of English, a subject that continues throughout the soldier's career. But Nepalese recruits also have to learn about a whole panoply of elements of life in a modern industrialised society.

Almost without exception, those selected to serve in the Gurkhas are committed to making a full career in the Army, where many British infantry soldiers will serve only three or four years. Traditionally, the Gurkha expects to be able to serve for 15 years so as to leave the Army with a pension. Since 1989, we have made it clear that that expectation cannot be guaranteed, although it remains an aspiration. That has not deterred applicants, who continue to flock to join the British Army Gurkha regiments, as they similarly join the Gurkha regiments within the Indian army.

The pattern of service that has prevailed in recent years has meant that a Gurkha would be expected to serve mainly in Hong Kong, but with tours in Brunei and the United Kingdom, and possibly shorter tours elsewhere. That pattern is set to change. We expect to reduce the garrison in Hong Kong over the years until the United Kingdom's final withdrawal in 1997, and current planning assumes that the Hong Kong garrison will reduce by one battalion in 1992. I hope that we shall be in a position to announce the future of that battalion next week.

I should like to close this Adjournment debate by assuring all those who have taken such a keen interest in the future of the Gurkhas that we have taken into account all the concerns that have been expressed to us. Those include the long and devoted history of service by the Gurkhas to the British Crown, the ready availability of recruits and the contribution that serving and retired Gurkhas can make to the economy of Nepal, as well as the more problematic points that I reviewed a few minutes ago.

Decisions about the Gurkhas will be taken within the framework of the Army as a whole. Such decisions are never easy to make, whether they affect British or Gurkha units, and I am sure that when the announcement is made hon. Members will give equally careful consideration to its content as have the Army and the Ministry of Defence in its preparation.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at five minutes to Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 19 July 1991

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Schools

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: On this matter?

Mr. Skinner: It is on business. Have you received information that there will be a Government statement today on the Bank of Credit and Commerce International debacle and the subsequent Government cover-up and all the fraud that is involved? It is high time that somebody came to the Dispatch Box—probably all three or four Ministers who are involved, to explain precisely what happened to the letters that were bandied about from one Minister to another. It is time that there was a public inquiry to clear up this matter.

Mr. Speaker: I remind the hon. Gentleman, if he does not already know, that the Prime Minister will be at the Dispatch Box to make a statement at 11 o'clock. In addition, on Monday there will be a debate on the Consolidated Fund in which the hon. Gentleman might be able to participate.

9.37 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Michael Fallon): The full title of our debate is "Wider Choice and Higher Standards in Schools". Those are the first two aims of our education policy and they are closely linked. Wider choice lies at the heart of all our reforms over the past 12 years—that is, the right of parents to choose between different schools and different types of schools. We have begun to end the drab uniformity of council monopoly, under which the only choice was that of the education director.

Future historians will find it extraordinary that parents could be ordered to send their children to schools that they did not choose, not because those schools were the best, but because they were less full and less successful than the schools that the parents wanted. We have widened choice in five ways. First, we have widened it through the assisted places scheme. More than 50,000 pupils have benefited in the 10 years that the scheme has been running and 27,000 will have places for the coming academic year.

On Wednesday, the House debated the assisted places scheme, which costs about £70 million. That is little different from the cost of educating the same number of pupils in the state sector. What is different is that parents have been able to choose and that, under the scheme, less well-off parents have been enabled to choose the very best independent schools.

Secondly, we have widened choice through city technology colleges. The unfulfilled promise of the great Butler Act was its failure to create technical schools of a calibre and reputation to match our great grammar schools. Even the good technical schools that existed were rubbed out by the Crosland comprehensivisation of the mid-1960s. It has taken a Conservative Government to restore great technical colleges in this country and to place them in industrial areas where skills are needed most.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): The House and parents will welcome my hon. Friend's comments about extending parental choice, which shows that the Government are prepared to trust parents with their children's education. At some stage, will the Government look at the catchment areas for city technology colleges, perhaps with a view to bringing them into line with local education authority areas, rather than having them arbitrarily set and stuck on a map by some faceless official? What we have done to local government we have not done to city technology colleges, in the sense that some parents from the poorer areas of my constituency cannot have their children considered for city technology places because they live outside an arbitrarily drawn boundary. I understand that the Government were trying get rid of such boundaries.

Mr. Fallon: I am sorry to hear my hon. Friend's comments, and I shall certainly look at his point about the extent of the catchment area.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Fallon: Perhaps I could say more about city technology colleges before giving way.

In four years, 13 city technology colleges have been set up, leading the way in curriculum and school management, and educating more than 8,000 pupils. Every one of those 13 CTCs is over-subscribed. At Haberdashers' there were 800 applications for 180 places. At Harris CTC, a recent open evening was attended by 2,000 parents of prospective pupils. Police had to close roads because of the congestion.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): Why has the Harris school been funded on the basis of 1,100 children on the roll, when fewer than 800 children attend it?

Mr. Fallon: The hon. Gentleman ought to look a little more deeply into what he reads about the costs of CTCs. The unit costs that have been published in *The Guardian* wholly fail to take account of the fact that these schools, although over-subscribed, are not yet operating at full capacity. As the pupils work their way through, unit costs will fall, but it is inevitable that they are higher at the beginning.

Mr. Fatchett: The Minister explains the costs by saying that the Harris CTC is a new school. The argument from the Department of Education and Science is that other new schools are funded in the same way. Under the local management of schools formula, is any other maintained school funded in exactly the same way as Harris?

Mr. Fallon: I am trying to get into the hon. Gentleman's mind—it is proving difficult—the fact that the CTC, although over-subscribed in its initial entry, is not operating at full capacity. There are bound to be front-loaded unit costs that are different from those pertaining elsewhere.

[Mr. Fallon]

These schools are popular not only with parents but with teachers. At Bradford, where 12 posts were available, more than 1,000 teachers expressed interest in them. In short, these are the schools of the future. They have a different ethos, which includes a longer working day, often until 5 pm. At Macmillan CTC in Teesside, which I visited recently, parents told me that they could not get their children home in the evening. The House need not take my word for that. Two thirds of the intake at Emmanuel college in Gateshead comes from deprived or very deprived backgrounds. An article in *The Times* on 8 July said:

"Truancy, a growing concern in many schools, is rare at Emmanuel, and discipline has posed few problems. There have been no expulsions or suspensions. Attendance at extra-curricular activities is good and 90 pupils are learning to play musical instruments."

However, although that college is popular with parents, it is not popular with the local education authority. Gateshead council has denied Emmanuel college the use of neighbouring playing fields. The chairman of the education committee, Councillor Brazendale, said of the college:

"We don't want it in Gateshead. The sooner we can get rid of it the better."

Emmanuel, like other CTCs, has suffered a campaign of intimidation and non-co-operation. This is so much so that, to quote *The Times:*

"One father dropping off his daughter sums up the sentiments of many: 'I am delighted with the school. They are returning to the days of discipline without going over the top'. He insisted on anonymity 'You see, I work for the local authority,' he said."

That is the kind of fear that Labour local authorities inspire in those who express a preference for CTCs. What a way to treat a school.

I must report to the House no progress in the saddest case of all, that of 11-year-old Paul Campbell, who plays for Middlesbrough Town football club youth team. When he starts as a pupil at Teesside CTC in September, he will be barred from that team because Cleveland sports council, to which every other school on Teesside, including independent schools, is affiliated, will not affiliate the CTC. My hon. Friends the Members for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) and for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) have raised this with the Minister for Sport. The English Schools Football Association is considering the case.

Even if the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) does not agree with our policies on CTCs—I understand that he does not—and even if he does not yet appreciate how popular they are with parents, I hope that he will give an undertaking that this kind of petty and vindictive harassment of children for political reasons will cease forthwith; or must he really take out this kind of mean-minded ideology on an 11-year-old footballer? I await his undertaking.

Mr. Fatchett: As always, the Minister is not up to date with his briefing material. The Cleveland sports council is not controlled by the Cleveland education authority. I was in Cleveland three weeks ago. I made it clear, publicly, on local radio and in newspapers, that we see no point in excluding any youngster, from any school, from playing with the under-11s or any other football team. If the boy has the ability, he should be selected. That view is also held by my colleagues on the Cleveland Labour group. The problem is persuading the Cleveland sports council, which is not controlled by the Labour party or the county council. We are using our influence, and if the Minister had been up to date, he would know that the message that we have given is clear. We choose on ability, not on the school that the youngster attends.

Mr. Fallon: The message that the House is getting from that report is that the hon. Gentleman has been to Teesside and failed to make progress. The Cleveland sports council may not be controlled by the local authority, but the local authority has representatives on it. We shall not be satisfied until that kind of petty intimidation comes to an end.

Mr. Fatchett *rose*——

Mr. Fallon: I will give way if the hon. Gentleman will give an undertaking that he will go to Teesside and make some progress on this case, with his friends.

Mr. Fatchett: I shall explain this once again to the Minister. It may have come to his attention that he is, for the time being, the Minister, and I am still a Front-Bench spokesman for the Opposition. It will not long remain that way: there will be a change soon. The point about the Cleveland sports council, which the Minister has accepted, is that it is not a local government body. It is made up of teachers representing school sports. They cannot be ordered by the county council or the parliamentary Labour party. We shall use what influence we have, just as the Minister for Sport has tried to use influence and, I hope, the junior Minister in the Department of Education and Science has tried to use his influence. That is all that we have available to us.

I have made our position clear. I hope that it will be understood in Cleveland, but, in the end, it is up to the individual teachers. I hope that they will take the point that we have made clearly. It is stupid for the Minister to try to score cheap political points. We should be concerned about giving that youngster, if he has the ability, the opportunity to play for his football team.

Mr. Fallon: I can only say in answer to that that I have here the transcript of some comments by the chairman of the Cleveland education committee on 9 July, speaking on BBC Radio Cleveland. He said:

"As far as Derek Fatchett's comments go, I have made it clear to Derek that his comments are regarded by people responsible locally as ill-advised. He came to this subject knowing very little of the background and the detail and paying scant regard to the concern and the anger felt in the teaching profession locally."

I advise the hon. Gentleman to reflect a little further.

Mr. Martin M. Brando-Bravo (Nottingham, South): I would hate the House and the public to think that this is a one-off situation affecting Cleveland. My hon. Friend will know, because there is a catalogue of information on this, that we have just the same problems in Nottingham, where the Nottinghamshire Labour-controlled local education authority has had a running battle with the magnificent CTC ever since its conception. It did not even want to provide a schools crossing warden. Children were denied a place in county orchestras. It still does not allow schools in the public sector to hire playing fields. There is a running battle of hatred between the education authority and anything that it does not control.

Mr. Fallon: Yes. That is not an atypical case, and that is perhaps the most alarming feature of all. I should think that every CTC could produce similar examples. As local Labour politicians are directly involved, I would have hoped for a strong commitment by the Labour party to do something about it.

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): The Minister has suggested that there is hostility between all Labour authorities and their local CTCs. There is a CTC in my constituency, and there would be justification for hostility. There has been co-operation between Lewisham council and Haberdashers' CTC, but we find that, under the Government's direct threat of poll tax capping, the education authority had to take £5 million out of its budget before it began this financial year, that the CTC alone has been promised £5 million by the Government for its first year, and that it is asking for a further £1 million. The Minister must understand why bitterness and resentment arise. I do not endorse any of the things that he has described, but he must understand why some of us feel that resourcing is at the heart of higher standards, and that higher standards are not being offered through the Government to Lewisham's LEA, although the Government are seeking to offer them to CTCs. That is an elitist policy which angers us.

Mr. Fallon: I welcome the fact that there is not overt hostility in the hon. Lady's area. I must tell her that one reason why Lewisham had to make economies of £5 million in its budget this year was the complete mismanagement of its spending last year. It was not until the introduction of local management of schools that councils such as Lewisham, and many others, had to cut their budgets and find out what they were spending.

Ms. Ruddock: I intervene again only because the Minister's information about Lewisham is incorrect. The £5 million is part of a £13 million cut from the budget before the beginning of the financial year on the direct instructions of the Department of the Environment because of the threat of poll tax capping. The Minister stands corrected.

Mr. Fallon: The plain fact is that Lewisham mismanaged its budget last year.

The third area in which we have extended choice is that of grant-maintained schools.

Mr. David Bellotti (Eastbourne): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Fraser: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Fallon: Not for the moment.

Earlier this week, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was able to announce the approval of the 100th grant-maintained school, which is to start in September. In September 1989, there were only 18 grant-maintained schools. Already, the grant-maintained sector is growing and successful. More than 70,000 pupils will be walking through the gates of grant-maintained schools this September. More than 2,000 schools have expressed an interest in becoming grant-maintained, and more than 300 have balloted already.

Grant-maintained schools are successful and I shall quote their success with parents. Baverstock school in Birmingham received 350 applications for 210 places last year, an increase of 50 per cent. over the previous year. At Bullerswood school, Bromley, there has been a 79 per cent. increase in applications for places in the coming year.

Grant-maintained schools are also popular with heads. I quote the head teacher of Ecclesbourne school, who said:

"I am handing more of the administration to my bursar and turning my mind back to education. I would not miss what is happening here for anything. It is the most professionally fulfilling period of my entire experience as a head."

The head teacher of Hendon school has said:

"Grant-maintained status has enabled the more flexible use of funds, ensuring that all the school's resources are targeted on meeting its educational aims. It has been possible to redirect the funds previously required to sustain the LEA bureaucracy towards supporting the school curriculum."

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): I thank my hon. Friend for quoting the remarks of the head teacher of Hendon school, Mr. Lloyd. Is my hon. Friend aware that, when Hendon school was under the control of the local authority, there were about 100 to 120 applications each year for the places that were available, but that there were 350 applications for the places available for the school year that begins in September 1991? Hendon school, which was under-subscribed when it was under the control of the local authority, is now a heavily over-subscribed school. It was the first grant-maintained school in London. Does its experience not advertise how successful the grant-maintained policy is with parents, pupils and teachers?

Mr. Fallon: It most certainly does. My hon. Friend makes the point most effectively.

I have another quotation that relates to grant-maintained schools. A former Labour councillor, Mr. Graham Gardner, said of the school in his area:

"We are delighted and thrilled to be the first in Wales to opt out."

Mr. Gardner's remarks appeared in an article in the *Daily Mail* of 16 November. He is reported as saying:

"Parent power had triumphed where Neil Kinnock had failed."

The article stated that not one Labour councillor supported Mr. Gardner.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): It is important to emphasise the popularity of grant-maintained schools with parents despite vindictive campaigns, in many instances, by local education authorities. One example of vindictiveness is the attitude of Birmingham's local education authority towards Baverstock school. It is important also to emphasise the educational atmosphere that the popularity of grant-maintained schools creates.

Baverstock school provides a classic example. Eight years ago, Baverstock school could attract only 25 first-place choices, although it can take 180 pupils. My hon. Friend appears not to have the latest figures, which reveal that the number of first-place choices for Baverstock school increased to 400 this year rather than the 310 that he mentioned.

In addition, a new teacher, who came from a local education authority school in Birmingham, said that the greatest difference that she could see between teaching at Baverstock and her previous school, which happened to be the George Dixon school in the middle of Birmingham, was that, when she entered a class room at Baverstock, the pupils stood and were eager to learn. They did not insult her and spit at her, as they had done in her previous school in the middle of Birmingham.

Mr. Fallon: Yes. That is exactly right.

[Mr. Fallon]

As with city technology colleges, we have been seeing the same hostility to grant-maintained schools. On the other hand, some education authorities have been co-operative with grant-maintained schools. Indeed, some enlightened local education authorities have encouraged their schools to become grant maintained. They see it as a sign of maturity that their schools are ready to run their own affairs and control their own budgets. Other LEAs have been openly obstructive.

We find that, quite often, parents that are looking to choose a secondary school for their children have not been told about the grant-maintained school in their area. In Tameside, the grant-maintained school has been expelled from the technical and vocational education consortium working group. In Kirklees, grant-maintained teachers are excluded from national curriculum meetings. In Newham, the director of education wrote three days ago to parents selecting schools—his letter is dated 16 July—in these terms:

"Newham does not believe that the existence of this independent secondary school"—

that is the Stratford grant-maintained school—

"is in the interests of the children of this borough. Newham has no responsibility at all for the education provided in this school and I am concerned about the ability of the school to provide a good education for your child since the numbers there are now so low. It is also the declared intention of Newham to begin procedures to close Stratford grant-maintained school at the earliest opportunity. This could be soon. You will obviously wish to be aware of this since it could have an effect on your child's education."

That is the position at local level. At national level, the Labour party plans to reintegrate grant-maintained schools into the very LEAs from which they sought independence. It plans a sort of systematisation of grant-maintained schools. If the House thinks that that is too strong a word, I refer it to the words of Lord Peston, who is an Opposition Front-Bench spokesman in another place:

"These schools are a blot on the educational landscape and we shall do our best to remove them."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 12 July 1991; Vol. 530, c. 1594.]

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): My hon. Friend's point is important, because it touches on the case of that 11-year-old boy. I accept the assurance given by the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett). Nevertheless, the problem has arisen, and the letter from Newham has been written, because of the climate of intolerance that has been encouraged by Labour party policy, with its ideological, almost totalitarian, view of the education system.

Labour Members are basically saying, "There shall be no education system other than the comprehensive system, to which we are ideologically wedded. We will not rethink our policy; we will not change our minds." It is that climate which has given rise to the cases that have been mentioned. The hon. Member for Leeds, Central may try to put the problem right, but he should also reconsider his policy and his philosophy—and then the case of that 11-year-old boy and the letter from Newham would not have arisen.

Mr. Fallon: My hon. Friend is right. The Labour party's policy is deeply rooted, from the local level upwards through every level of the Labour party.

Most sinister of all has been a series of threats to the future of those who teach in grant-maintained schools. I must tell the hon. Member for Leeds, Central that next term 5,000 teachers will be teaching in grant-maintained schools—and the Labour party has plans for them. I shall quote Councillor Stephen Byers, a senior figure in the Labour movement. He is the Labour education chairman of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities. On 2 October last year, he issued a press release stating:

"Now is also the time to warn heads and teachers of the possible consequences of remaining in a school which opts out. There can be no guarantee that their employment would be continued when that school returns to the local authority."

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): My hon. Friend has painted an extraordinarily sombre picture of the policies and attitudes of Labour Members. If nothing else comes out of today's debate, I hope that Labour Members will be encouraged to reconsider their policies, for all the reasons given by my hon. Friends. Is it not amazing that there are only two Labour Back Benchers present today to participate in a debate on such an important subject?

Mr. Fallon: It is amazing. Two Labour Members hardly convey an impression that education is a key policy item. Like my hon. Friends, I attach some importance to the speech that we are about to hear from the hon. Member for Leeds, Central. I hope to hear that the Labour party has made some progress on issues such as city technology colleges and grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Fraser: The Minister referred to parental choice. What parental choice was there for parents who had children at Sylvan school before it became a city technology college, and who voted overwhelmingly against that?

Mr. Fallon: There was a choice because, for the first time in that borough, parents could choose between different types of school. They are no longer restricted to the local authority monopoly. The hon. Gentleman should be proud of the fact that he now has different types of school in his constituency.

The final way in which we are securing better choice is not just through new types of schools, but by delegating budgets to schools on the basis of pupil numbers and introducing more open enrolment, so that parents can choose. This year 80 per cent. of secondary schools—a total of 3,000—will have their own budgets, and 6,000 primary schools already have their own budgets. All schools will have their own delegated budgets by April 1994.

Earlier this year, we announced three improvements to budgetary delegation. First, any school that wants a budget earlier than April 1994, and is refused that by the local education authority, can now apply direct to my Department. Secondly, we have insisted that by next April all secondary schools should have their own bank accounts and cheque books, which will make a reality of their control of their budgets. Thirdly, we are for the first time, restricting the amount that can be held back by the centre —the LEA tax—to 15 per cent. of the total school budget as a maximum by April 1993.

Schools are now regaining control of their affairs. Local management of schools, although an interim and preparatory step to the final and fuller freedom of grant-maintained status, gives schools much more

freedom and control over their own budgets. I shall cite two examples. The head of Heathland school in Hounslow said in *Education* on 17 May:

"We are beginning to realise that the Government was absolutely right to insist that the budgets were pupil driven, absolutely right to stand firm against demands that account should be taken of the actual costs of teachers' salaries. Freed from the concern that our school budgets should reflect the LEA's budget generation, we are beginning to plan expenditure according to our own individual strategic needs."

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): I am sure that my hon. Friend will correct me if I am wrong, but I understand that education legislation relating to special needs does not include the special needs of exceptionally bright children. Will my hon. Friend ensure that the new schools, as well as looking after the special needs of the mentally disabled and children with other disabilities, also look after the needs of exceptionally bright children? If we forget such children, we may as well forget the future leaders of our country.

My understanding is that the law does not provide for schools to take account of those special needs. With the widening choice that the Government are providing, we now have an opportunity to ensure that parents of bright kids can say to a school. "You are legally obliged to provide facilities for my bright child, in the way that you provide them for backward or disabled children."

Mr. Fallon: The representatives of the National Association for Gifted Children have been to see me on that point, and I shall certainly reflect further on it. The key point is that, through local management of schools, the heads and governors have more resources under their control to allocate as they see fit. Provided that they have sufficient headroom in the budget, they can make that special provision.

In case the House thinks that I am quoting only one of the best examples, I shall also quote from a school that has a more difficult budget, perhaps because historically it has been over-funded and its budget has now been adjusted in line with pupil numbers.

In *The Times Educational Supplement*, the principal of Chulmleigh community college in north Devon said:

"It's been a bad month, and not one to repeat next year. But some good will come of it. Faculty heads must be less insular and learn to think more whole-school; some teachers will have to work harder and show more commitment; and every bit of the budget will be more carefully scrutinised. We shall also improve our public relations. Ten more children in the school would have saved all the anguish. We are losing twice that number to the private sector and elsewhere each year. There's a challenge for everyone: be sure about the quality, improve customer relations, watch the budget, and we may see off the redundancy spectre for good."

That tells an eloquent story about the success of local management of schools. Combined with more open enrolment, LMS means that all schools must be much more responsive to the local community. They have to keep up their numbers and offer what parents want. For us, wider choice is not an abstract but means practical power for parents—and that power will drive up standards.

Higher standards are at the centre of our education policy. We introduced a new national curriculum for the first time and we are insisting that all pupils are tested at ages seven, 11 and 14, before GCSE. It is extraordinary that, before 1988, nothing was compulsory. Pupils could drift through school without ever being given a spelling test, doing any science, or taking much French. Worse, they could drift through school without ever knowing what was expected of them.

That drifting is at an end. Ours is the first Government to implement a compulsory curriculum, which introduces a new structure for children from age five upwards. It has been widely welcomed by teachers. It is true that many grumbled, with reason, at the pace of change and complained at the weight of the paperwork, but every school that I have visited accepts the principle of a fixed, basic curriculum as a framework for its teaching. It is a framework and not a straitjacket, as the speech of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister emphasised. It should be simple and manageable—and flexible after a pupil has reached 14, so that those who want to pursue an academic route can do so, while others may choose to start earlier on the vocational path.

The national curriculum itself will raise standards. For example, all girls will be required to take science all the way through their school career, and every pupil will take a foreign language and study technology. Crucial to the success of the national curriculum is our insistence that what is taught will be tested—at seven, 11 and 14. The objective is to provide a check on progress, so that schools can compare their performance year on year, and parents can compare school against school.

In working together with the new chairman of the National Curriculum Council and with the Schools Examinations and Assessment Council, we will ensure that the curriculum and assessments will be manageable and sensible in future.

Mr. Pawsey: Can my hon. Friend confirm that, if his Department approves any application from a Muslim group to establish a grant-maintained school, such a school will be required to adhere to the national curriculum—and that it will apply equally to girls as to boys?

Mr. Fallon: I can certainly give my hon. Friend that assurance.

The GCSE is a success story. More pupils are entering every year, and the pass rate is rising. However, we need to ensure that those at the top who want to progress to A-levels will not be disadvantaged by the different treatment of course work as between GCSE and A-level. Course work for the latter will in future account for a maximum of 20 per cent. of the assessment, although for a GCSE it can still account for a maximum of 70 per cent.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made that clear in his speech:

"If the transition from GCSE to A levels is causing difficulties, we must level GCSE up, not lower A level standards down."

That is because the A-level remains our bench mark. Our recent White Paper on education and training clearly sets out our commitment to A-level, alongside our belief in a wider curriculum at sixth form. We want to see earlier and larger take-up of vocational courses. Some vocational policies lie beyond the scope of today's debate, but I assure the House of our unswerving commitment to A-levels and to the standards that they set.

We want more pupils to remain at school on the academic or vocational routes. This year, 60 per cent. of all 16-year-olds are staying on at school—but we are not satisfied yet, for we want more of them to continue into

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higher education. When we came to office, only one pupil in eight entered higher education. Today, the figure is one in five, and by the year 2000 it will be one in three.

The other key to higher standards is a better-paid and well-motivated teaching force. We hope that next week we shall have, by statute, for the very first time, an independent pay review body for teachers, which will put them on a par with doctors, dentists and other professional groups. None of my right hon. and hon. Friends will forget the helpless ambivalence with which Labour first greeted the announcement of that body. Certainly we will never let any teacher forget that Labour—in kow-towing to the militants in the National Union of Teachers who wanted to preserve the right to strike—voted against a pay review body.

Our third aim is greater accountability. Each of our three Education Acts puts parents first, by giving them rights to choose their children's schools; to attend annual parent meetings; to receive information on the curriculum, exam results, and the school budget; and to have regular reports on their children's progress. We will build on those rights by ensuring more systematic inspection. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said:

"The school inspector should be the parents' friend."

Wider choice, higher standards and greater accountability are all threatened by Labour. Independent schools would lose their charitable status; the assisted places scheme would be phased out; city technology colleges would be scrapped; grant-maintained schools would be reintegrated; and local education authorities would be back in business—free to dictate policy to their schools, and to direct their customers around the schools in their system.

Labour always defends bureaucracy. When Labour runs cities such as Newcastle and Coventry, almost half those employed under the education budget are not teaching. Labour would not only restrict choice but fudge standards. Its plans include fudge and more fudge. At 16, a pupil could take any option—to stay at school, leave, or return—and still claim the same rewards. Labour has dreamed up something called the advanced certificate for education and training, which they call "ASSET"—which perhaps proves that Labour cannot spell. It would fuse academic and vocational qualifications in a glorious fudge—the same level for plumbers and philosophers, engineers and business students.

Every one of Labour's targets is empty or meaningless. The party's document, "Aiming High", states that every three or four-year-old should have a nursery place, but it does not give any date. Neither does Labour make any commitment. I understand that the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) does not give any priority to that pledge. Labour suggests also that all 16 to 18-year-olds will achieve five GCSEs within five years of a Labour Government, and that within 10 years, all 16 to 19-year-olds will gain at least the equivalent of one A-level.

Those are meaningless targets, having all the logic of Soviet tractor production. If a target must be met by a certain year, it can be met only if the standard is adjusted—and adjusting the standard, as we have come to learn, means debasing it. That is exactly what Labour is planning.

Let us go into Labour's education policy more deeply, and examine the Labour education organisation, the Socialist Educational Association. My hon. Friends may be interested to know that the association's motto is "Educate, Organise, Agitate". Its membership includes the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw). I do not know whether the hon. Member for Leeds, Central is a member; the association may be one of those organisations from which Front-Bench spokesmen have forgotten that they are supposed to resign.

The Socialist Educational Association is not at all happy with the curriculum. It would like a curriculum that was

"pluralist, internationalist and global in approach. All students should leave school having had the chance to write poetry and to understand how Fascism was defeated in the 1940s."

Nor is the association happy with the GCSE. It appears to think—I urge my hon. Friends to contain themselves at this point—that the GCSE is too tough; it wants it to be

"broadened to take in all the ability range."

Certainly, the association is not happy with sixth forms. It wants them to be swept away, along with A-levels, in an orgy of anti-elitism. Curiously, it is also not happy with Labour's ideas. At a recent conference in Luton, a resolution called on the Labour Front Bench to

"stop being defensive and bland over 16 to 19 proposals."

The association would prefer everyone to receive a grant at that stage.

Finally and most revealingly, the Socialist Educational Association is not happy with parental choice:

"Too little attention,"

it says,

"has been given to continuity between primary and secondary schools. This would be improved if all the children transferred to their local secondary school from feeder primary schools. Although some parental choice seems inevitable, many problems would be solved if schools ceased to feel that they were competing for customers."

There—with the public relations floss scraped off—is the true mind of the Labour party. That is how the party runs Lambeth and Liverpool; that is why Lambeth voters are voting for grant-maintained schools, and why Labour voters there have been begging the Department to intervene. That is why some Lambeth parents will do anything, even cross the river, to escape educational socialism.

Let us be in no doubt about what a future Labour Government would hold in store, should one be elected next year. Let me paint the picture. We would see the closure of many independent schools, robbed of their charitable status; the end of the assisted places scheme; the destruction of 13 city technology colleges; the reintegration of perhaps 200 grant-maintained schools, against the democratic wishes of their parents; and the end of A-levels—this year's new sixth formers could be the last to sit that well-established examination.

Worse than all that, the bureaucrats would be back in charge in the classrooms, and all the policies that go with that would return: the watch on gender rather than grammar, and the insistence that racial discrimination takes priority over linguistic discrimination.

Far from putting more money into education, Labour, as we already know, would take money out of the system. Under Labour, those earning more than £20,000 a year would pay more tax. When the election comes, we shall ensure that the message gets across in every constituency in the country: Labour would increase tax for the average

secondary school teacher at the top of the scale, who now earns more than £20,000 a year. That is taking money out of the education system, not putting it in.

Conservative Members remain committed to our reforms—fundamental but necessary reforms, protracted in their implementation but overdue. Our education policy puts parents first. We believe that the key to higher standards lies in wider choice and greater parental accountability.

10.25 am

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): The Opposition welcome this debate on standards in education, which is the first education debate in Government time that we have had in the current parliamentary year. Every other education debate has been sought in Opposition time. The Government published what they claim to be important White Papers on the reform of education and training for those over 16, but none the less could find no time in which to debate the issues.

We always welcome debates on education. One thing is abundantly clear: whenever education is debated, it is good for the Labour party and for Labour support. *[Interruption.]* Will Conservative Members keep quiet for a moment?

According to a current opinion poll, the Labour lead in regard to education——

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): Is falling.

Mr. Fatchett: No, it is not falling. According to the most recent Gallup poll, it is over 24 per cent.

When education is debated and the Conservatives' record is put under the mircoscope—when Ministers are seen on television—we observe one simple factor.

Mr. John Marshall: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fatchett: Will the hon. Gentleman be patient for a few moments? I have only just started.

When the Government's record is exposed, Labour's opinion poll lead increases. That is why we always welcome education debates.

The Minister's speech was well trailed and well rehearsed. It was in the Conservative research department brief and I had the pleasure of reading most of it along with the Minister. The delivery was perhaps not as good as the original text, but we expect little better from the Minister.

Interestingly, the Minister's speech concentrated hardly at all on standards for all our children. We need to talk about that. Labour's aspiration and ambition are to increase standards across the education system and, in that regard, we share a concern felt deeply by parents.

Conservative Members will no doubt have seen a poll, published in early spring, which showed that British parents felt the greatest anxiety in western Europe about education standards. That concern extends to the Conservative party. A Carlton club political committee seminar held in March 1991—and, incidentally, attended by the junior Education Minister—also discussed standards. The brief on that occasion was slightly different from the Minister's brief this morning, in which he seemed to be suggesting a very different line in terms of the Government's performance.

The Carlton club seminar referred to anxiety about standards and said that the Government's education reforms were not working. Present on that occasion—at a meeting chaired by a former Cabinet Minister, the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler)—was the present Minister. Now, only a few months later, the Minister is trying to pretend that standards are improving. That came from the Carlton club, deep in the heart of the Conservative party. Only this week, a report from the disbanded Assessment of Performance Unit showed a slight decline in writing standards, according to the reports in *The Daily Telegraph* and elsewhere.

Mr. Fallon: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fatchett: I shall give way in a few minutes.

That sets the debate against an interesting backcloth. There is parental concern about falling standards. There is also concern in the Conservative party, and there is some objective evidence of falling standards, but the essential fact to remember in all this is that any 16-year-old leaving school this week, at the end of his or her period of compulsory education, will have been educated under only one Government, the Conservative Government who have been in power for the past 12 years.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): Hear, hear.

Mr. Fatchett: The hon. Gentleman says, "Hear, hear". That makes the essential point, does it not? Who is responsible if standards are falling? The Government try to persuade us that others are responsible. Sometimes, it is the fault of teachers and sometimes the fault of parents. The Minister seems to think that it is the fault of television companies and is developing his own blacklist of television programmes that children should not watch. We are given numerous excuses—a long list of those responsible for any decline in standards.

Is not the simple fact that the Government have been in office and have presided over the education system for 12 years? If they have any sense of personal and collective responsibility they will put up their hands and say, "We are the party that has been in charge and we are responsible. If there is a fall in educational standards, do not blame others. Blame the Conservative party, which has presided over the collapse of educational standards". That is the key lesson to be learnt in this debate. The Government alone have been responsible for the education of any youngster leaving school this week. If that youngster suffers from a fall in standards or a reduction in opportunities, he or she should blame the Conservative Government.

Mr. John Marshall: The hon. Gentleman alleged that Labour had a lead in the public opinion polls. Is not a much more important question how individual parents react when they have a choice put before them? Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, in January 1990, 1,600 pupils came from the people's republic of Brent to be educated in the Conservative-controlled Barnet education authority area? Is not it significant that, where parents have a choice of having their children educated in a Labour or a Conservative borough—this includes the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw)—they choose to go to a Conservative borough? Does not that show that parents have more faith in Conservative councils and does the hon. Gentleman accept that such councils produce much better results than their Labour-controlled counterparts?

Mr. Fatchett: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman wishes to criticise his colleagues in Brent, where I understand the Conservatives are now in charge.

What have the Government done about standards in the past 12 years? What is their record? They have failed in so many ways. They have either done the right thing incorrectly or they have done the wrong thing or they have done nothing at all. We are virtually the only country in western Europe that does not value nursery education and whose Government do not recognise the need to give youngsters a good start. The Minister knocked Labour's ambitious education targets. It would do him good to talk to his ministerial counterparts—some Conservative, some Socialist—in western Europe who will tell him that they have very ambitious targets for young people starting education in their early years. They regard education in the early years not as a drain on resources but as an investment in the future—an investment which they must make if they are to improve educational standards.

It is always worth quoting the remarks of those within the Conservative party. The Carlton club tells us what has happened to the important nursery education service under the Government:

"Under the Conservative party nursery education is in danger of becoming the Cinderella of the education system."

No other Government and no other country would allow such an important provision to become the Cinderella of the system. The Government try to conceal their record and, as always, their statistics should be accompanied with a health warning.

The Carlton club continues:

"Worse is yet to come, for the same Government policy document on education then goes on to claim, '48 per cent. of under-fives are now in nursery schools. These figures compare excellently with those of many other European countries'".

It is a pleasure to find that some people in the Conservative party recognise the truth, and the Carlton club document then does just that:

"Regrettably, this claim is both false and misleading, and the true picture was accurately stated at the Carlton club education seminar by Malcolm Thornton MP, the Chairman of the Select Committee, who said, 'Sadly, the United Kingdom has one of the lowest proportions of children under five in education of the advanced industrial nations'".

The Carlton club document then provides graphics—presumably, realising that that is the best way of getting information across to Members of the Conservative party—under the heading "bottom of the class". That is not what the Minister and Conservative central office claim and the figures in the Carlton club document may come as a bit of a surprise to hon. Members who rely on central office briefings. The percentage of all three and four-year-olds in education in Belgium is 96 per cent. In France, it is 95 per cent.; in Italy, 88 per cent.; in Spain, 66 per cent.; in West Germany, 51 per cent.; and in Holland, 50 per cent. There, at the bottom of the list, is the United Kingdom with only 44 per cent. of all three and four-year-olds in education. How can we raise educational standards when the important early years are ignored by the Government? They do not invest in our young children and we will not improve standards without that investment. They have failed to do something that is crucial to the improvement of educational standards.

One can improve standards in other ways, of course, but that requires some consistency on the part of the Government and this Government's Ministers show a remarkable lack of consistency. They are learning to swim and, on almost every occasion, we see them going down gently in the process, shouting for help.

Let me give two examples. The first concerns the practice and experience of assessment at the age of seven. No one has ever denied the need for diagnostic assessment. That is a myth which Ministers and Back Benchers like to peddle. On the Committee that considered the Education Reform Act 1988, there was never any difference between us on the need for assessment. We all recognise that good teaching is supported by assessment and testing and both the Labour and the Liberal parties expressed that view in Committee. Four years, two Prime Ministers, three Secretaries of State and seven Education Ministers later, no one yet knows how next year's seven-plus assessment will work. Neither teachers nor parents know and I suspect that Education Ministers simply do not have any idea. That is leaving aside what is going to happen with assessment at 11 and 14.

We all remember the claims of the Home Secretary, then Secretary of State for Education, that it was possible to take from a filing cabinet somewhere in the Department a series of assessment tests that could be implemented almost at the stroke of a ministerial pen. For two years children aged seven have been used as guinea pigs and teachers have had no clear definition of what is expected of them. That is all because we have Ministers who are incapable of making up their mids and who simply do not know what they want to use assessment for and what is its value. That inconsistency make life difficult for teachers and makes it difficult to raise standards. Above all, it gives an impression of a Government and Ministers who are not on top of their job and are unable to perform effectively to raise education standards.

I shall give another example—the GCSE, an examination introduced not by the education establishment, which is much criticised by the Government, but by the former Secretary of State for Education and Science, now Lord Joseph. It was introduced by the Conservatives, made to work by individual teachers, supported by parents and, subsequently, even this morning, praised by Ministers. There is a consensus.

What happened? Much of the fundamental thinking behind the GCSE, Lord Joseph's thinking, which has been praised by Ministers, was changed at a stroke in the Prime Minister's speech two weeks ago. There was no consultation with teachers or parents—just a prime ministerial whim announced at the Cafe Royal. Is that the way to improve standards and our education system? If we expect commitment from teachers and support from parents, the Government need to show consistency to improve standards.

The Government could have built on the consensus, but they have failed to do so. The Minister rightly said that there has been a strong element of agreement about a national curriculum. Again, there was no doubt about that in terms of the Education Reform Act. If the Minister were not such a newcomer to education debates, he would know that during the 1987 general election all three main political parties supported the idea of a national curriculum. There will always be arguments about detail, but not about principle, and that education principle was widely accepted.

There is a consensus about change, improvements and raising standards, but what have the Government done? Over the past two weeks, they have made two

appointments—David Pascall to the National Curriculum Council and Lord Griffiths to the School Examinations and Assessment Council. Both people were members of the No. 10 policy unit under the previous Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher). Both appointments were clearly party political. According to one profile, Lord Griffiths seems to have little to offer in certain respects. The profile says:

"A former Dean of the City University Business School, he has reached eminence by compliance . . . and by constituting no threat to the Prime Minister's own intellectual limitations."

That may not have been the most flattering of comments. Many teachers and many people involved in local government and in education have noticed that, yet again, the Government believe that making appointments to Government bodies is the sole right of a particular ideological wing of the Conservative party.

We will never build an education consensus and raise standards if education is used as the plaything of one ideological element in the Conservative party. What can be seen from those two appointments, particularly that of Lord Griffiths, is a Government and Ministers who like to hear comments that support their ideological position. We have seen that in the health service. We saw it from the present Secretary of State for Education and Science when he was Secretary of State for Health—each of the health authorities was stripped of political opposition and people were replaced by Conservative party supporters and placemen. That is happening again this time.

If we are to have a system of independent bodies, Ministers should have advisers who are candid friends and are prepared to say, "You are getting it wrong. You need to change." But we are likely to get the ventriloquist's dummies who will give Ministers the responses that they want. There can be no faith in a system that fails to build on consensus but simply builds on the ideology and commitment of one section of the Conservative party.

Mr. Fallon: The House will deeply resent that personal attack on two important figures in the education world. I wish to correct the hon. Gentleman. Mr. David Pascall has not been appointed to the National Curriculum Council; he is already a member of it. He has now been appointed chairman of the council. In addition, I should have thought that most teachers would welcome the fact that the previous chairman of the School Examinations and Assessment Council, who was a civil servant, has been replaced by a man who has spent almost all his life teaching.

Mr. Fatchett: The Minister does not try to defend what are clearly political appointments. Those appointments will undermine a great deal of faith in the legitimacy of the education system. If the Minister looks at Labour's proposals for an education standards commission, he will see how a party that has respect for a pluralist democracy intends to work when it takes office either later this year or next year. Appointments to that body will be approved by the House of Commons Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts. We will ensure that there is independence and faith in the system and that people have respect for it. Because of the two appointments to which I referred, the legitimacy of the good work that has been developed by the NCC and the SEAC will be questioned.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: The hon. Gentleman makes much of the need to build a concensus in the education system about reforms. How does he square that with the views which were made known publicly by Nigel de Gruchy, the general secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers, on the education standards commission? Mr. de Gruchy said that he was hostile to it. Doug McAvoy, the general secretary of the National Union of Teachers, described the proposed commission as a gimmickly idea, meant more for public relations than to produce any substantial improvements in education standards.

Mr. Fatchett: Conservative Members who rely on Conservative party research department briefs should look at the date on those briefs. We launched the education standards commission document in June this year. If the hon. Gentleman looks at the press cuttings, he will see what Mr. de Gruchy and Mr. McAvoy said. June 1991, rather than any earlier date, will be useful to the hon. Gentleman. The Government are undermining the consensus in our education system and therefore taking away the commitment to improve standards.

There is another key point—standards will never be improved if there is no investment in the education system. That is true of the Government's record. Parents say that too many of our children are educated in crumbling schools. The Government's inspectorate talks about a backlog of repairs costing £3 billion to £4 billion. That means that many of our children will be in schools with leaking roofs or in primary classrooms that do not have running water or the facilities that make it possible to teach aspects of the primary national curriculum.

How does one improve education standards when there is such a poor record in terms of crumbling schools? When the Conservative Government leave office in a few months time, they will be remembered as the Government of crumbling schools, because they have brought schools in many parts of the country to a low standard. This is the only Government in western Europe in the 1980s who have been prepared to cut education expenditure as a percentage of national wealth. In 1979, when Labour left office, 5·5 per cent. of the national wealth was devoted to education. Ten years later, in 1989, the figure was 4·6 per cent., which shows the decline in priority.

Mr. Donald Thompson (Calder Valley) *rose*——

Mr. Fatchett: The hon. Gentleman has only just entered the debate. I know that he is a quick learner, but he is not that quick. I shall give him time to become accustomed to the climate and then I shall give way to him. I must tell him that unlike his previous experience in agriculture, education debates are rarified occasions, so he must take his time before intervening.

In 1979 the figure was 5·5 per cent. and in 1989 it was 4·6 per cent. That shows the lower priority that the Government give to education. That priority has been declining, but the Government have the audacity to lecture other people this morning about education standards. This Government have failed for a decade to improve standards of education.

However, there are standards about which the Government know a little—double standards. They like to experiment with ideology in the maintained sector, but Ministers and members of the Cabinet send their children to schools in the private sector. They were opting out of the maintained sector before the principle of grant-maintained schools was even thought of in the Education

[Mr. Fatchett]

Reform Act 1988. No privilege is too expensive for the children of Ministers and members of the Cabinet but for our children who use the maintained sector, the right to a decent education costs too much.

The hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) underlined the idea earlier this year when he wondered how one could have faith in the Government's education reforms if Ministers were not prepared to use the state education system.

Mr. Walden: I am beginning to wish that I had not written the pamphlet to which the hon. Gentleman refers because I have had to correct Opposition spokesmen about it so often. It was called "The Blocked Society". The reason behind the idea of a blockage was that I believe we have a blocked education system because the private sector, which has every right to exist, has far higher standards than the state sector. The state sector is blighted by a false ideology and a false philosophy to which the Opposition subscribe. That is why people continue to send their children to private schools, and I regard that as extremely unhealthy and socially damaging. That is what I said in the pamphlet.

Mr. Fatchett: I am grateful for that clarification, but it might be helpful if I quote the crucial sentence from the pamphlet. The hon. Gentleman wrote:

> "When the Government claim that the state sector has changed out of all recognition as a result of their policies, why do government Ministers still steer clear of it?"

That is the crucial question to which the Minister has no answer. Why should parents have faith in a Government who are not prepared to trust with the education of their own children the system over which they have presided for 12 years? That is the Government's double standard and that is the crucial question which must be answered.

There are also double standards in other respects, for example, in funding. It always amuses me that in these debates it is the Labour party that is supposed to have an ideology and the Conservative party that is supposed to have none. The Conservative party is supposed to be the party of the pragmatist, of the common-sense person. As the hon. Member for Buckingham said, it is the party which has views. To judge from what the Minister said this morning, I think, that he might be rather annoyed and irritated by the comment that he has views—I suspect that he has a clear ideology about grant-maintained schools, city technology colleges and independent schools. The Government's policy is invested with a high level of ideology. Of course, when elements of that ideology clash, the Minister has no answer other than to push forward with the bad element of ideology which he considers to be the most important.

That was most noticeable when my hon. Friend the Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) intervened about the Harris CTC, the previous Sylvan school. The Minister had made a number of comments about parental choice. The parents at Sylvan school had held a ballot on whether the school should become a CTC and they voted against the idea. The Government took no account of the parents' views and went ahead to form a CTC. That shows the Government's regard for parental views and that they will listen to them only if they agree with the ballot result. They are interested not in the principle of a ballot but in an outcome that ensures that they can move in their chosen ideological direction.

Mr. Fallon: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will answer the direct anecdotal evidence that I laid before the House. A recent open evening at Harris CTC was attended by more than 2,000 parents of prospective pupils and the police had to close local roads because of congestion. Is not that that the clearest possible evidence that parents in the locality welcome the wider choice provided by such colleges?

Mr. Fatchett: The Minister has again failed to respond to the main point which was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Norwood. If the Government believe in ballots, why did not they take notice of the views expressed by the parents at Sylvan school? Those parents clearly rejected the idea of the school becoming a CTC. It is no good the Minister nodding his head. The parents rejected the notion of a CTC. Why did the Government take no account of the outcome of the ballot if they believe in such ballots? I am happy to give way again to the Minister.

Mr. Fallon: If I cannot persuade the hon. Gentleman that 2,000 parents clogging the streets of Lambeth to attend an open evening at a new college is not evidence of parental interest, I do not know what will convince him.

Mr. Fatchett: The Minister is not doing very well.

Mr. Fraser *rose*——

Mr. Fatchett: I shall give way after I have given the Minister another opportunity to answer. It seems that this debate is becoming an educational re-sit. We have twice asked the Minister a question about the ballot but he has refused to answer. I put the question to him again. We do not want to hear anecdotal evidence about a parents' evening—we want a simple answer. If the Minister believes in ballots, why did not he take account of the views expressed by parents at Sylvan school? Was it because the Minster will take account of ballots only when the outcome agrees with his ideology? He is a member of a party which yesterday lectured the Soviet leader about democracy but which takes no account of parents' views. I shall give the Minister a third opportunity to answer if he wishes to do so.

Mr. Fallon: I shall willingly take it. I have already described to the House how all the 13 new CTCs have been oversubscribed from the day they opened their doors. I have also described the memorable evening in Lambeth when police had to close local roads because of congestion when more than 2,000 parents attended an open evening to hear more about the college.

Mr. Fatchett: That is the Minister's third failure. Those of us who know a little about show jumping know that at the third failure the horse is disqualified. After three failures I think that the Minister should be withdrawn.

Mr. Fraser: I remind my hon. Friend that in a ballot about the break-up of the Inner London education authority 94 per cent. voted against it, but there was no recognition of that fact.

Mr. Fatchett: We seem to be tapping a rich vein of interest here. My hon. Friend the Member for Norwood points out yet another ballot—the ballot that was held by

parents on the future of the Inner London education authority. More than nine out of 10 parents voted for the continuation of the Inner London education authority, but their views were totally disregarded. Earlier, we had a lecture from the Minister about choice for parents. From the Minister's comments, we can see how far that choice goes. It does not extend to the parents of Sylvan school who did not want their school to become a city technology college; they voted against it. That choice does not extend to the parents of children at Inner London education authority schools, because they also voted overwhelmingly against the abolition of the authority. This Government listen to parents when parents agree with them; they totally disregard parents when parents offer an alternative view.

It being Eleven o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *interrupted the proceedings, pursuant to Standing Order No. 11 (Friday sittings).*

Group of Seven

11 am

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I will make a statement on the economic summit held in London from 15 to 17 July, and the subsequent meeting with President Gorbachev. I was accompanied at the summit by my right hon. Friends the Foreign Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The economic declaration and the separate political declarations issued at the summit have been placed in the Library of the House.

The themes of this summit were "Building World Partnership" and "Strengthening the International Order". Our common aim was to build on the movement towards freedom, democracy and the open economy which was the theme at last year's Houston summit. I believe that we achieved valuable and productive results. In the political discussion, there was full support for our proposal for a United Nations register of arms sales. We agreed to consult on the guidelines that apply to conventional arms sales, and we agreed on restraint in the transfer of advanced technology weapons. We agreed also that donor countries should take account of military expenditure when deciding on aid programmes. We also agreed a number of steps in preventing the proliferation of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons.

We agreed that we should make preventive diplomacy a top priority in the United Nations. We proposed the establishment of a United Nations disaster relief co-ordinator so that the United Nations can in future take the early action that has sometimes been missing in the past.

We agreed also on the need for confidence-building measures by both sides in the Arab-Israel dispute, including the suspension of the Arab boycott and of the Israeli policy of settlement in the occupied territories. We encouraged South Africa to pursue policies that will permit normal access to all sources of foreign borrowing. That is vital to enable the economic growth that will be necessary for a successful conclusion to the political negotiations.

In our debate on the world economy, we recognised increasing signs of economic recovery. These are welcome, but require us to maintain policies aimed at sustained recovery and price stability. This means prudent and vigilant fiscal and monetary policies, to bear down on inflation.

All the summit leaders recognised that the world cannot afford a failure in the Uruguay round of trade negotiations. We committed ourselves to completing the round by the end of this year. Crucially, we committed ourselves to remain personally involved to ensure that that happens to resolve any disputes. Action will be needed on services, intellectual property, trade access and agriculture.

We reaffirmed our commitment to support reform in the countries of central and eastern Europe. For them, trade access is vital. We cannot encourage them to build market economies and then deny them a marketplace in which to sell their goods. The European Community has led the way in offering access through the association agreements which are now being negotiated.

We devoted a lot of time to the problems of developing countries and secured agreement on the need for additional debt relief measures for the poorest, most

[The Prime Minister]

indebted countries, going well beyond the Toronto terms agreed in 1988. I have been pressing for this since I launched the Trinidad initiative as Chancellor.

At the summit, we committed ourselves to work for a successful United Nations conference on environment and development in June next year. By the time of the conference, we aim to have achieved, in particular, a framework convention on climate change and agreement on principles for forest conservation. We also hope to negotiate by the end of next year a framework convention on bio-diversity. We agreed also to support financially the implementation of the preliminary steps of a pilot programme for the conservation of the Brazilian rain forests.

Earlier summits have stimulated effective action in tackling the trade in illicit drugs. This year, we asked the Customs Co-operation Council—on the basis of an initiative by the United Kingdom—to intensify its work and liaise with international traders and carriers to curb the spread of drugs.

These global issues require the involvement of all. Developing countries and east European nations are playing an increasingly active part. But one great country has been until now largely detached from the international economic system. That is the Soviet Union. We had a productive, substantial session with President Gorbachev. It was an historic occasion. The emphasis was on informal, frank and direct discussions.

We reached agreement on six specific points. The first was special association with the International Monetary Fund and the World bank. Both the fund and the bank have a wealth of experience in helping Governments to work out their own economic reform programmes, especially in the crucial areas of fiscal, monetary and structural policies.

Secondly, the international institutions—the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development—as well as the IMF and the World bank—are to be asked to work closely together in their support of the Soviet Union. They can provide the Soviet Union with practical advice, know-how and expertise to help create a market economy.

The third point was intensified technical assistance. We believe that there should be greater co-operation in the following sectors in particular: energy, defence conversion, food distribution, nuclear safety and transport. Yesterday, I announced an increase in Britain's know-how fund assistance from £20 million to £50 million.

The fourth point was improved trade access to markets for Soviet goods and services. This would also help to attract more inward private investment.

Fifthly, it was agreed that, as chairman of the summit, I should, on behalf of summit colleagues, follow up our meeting and visit Moscow before the end of the year to review progress. I look forward to doing so.

Sixthly, we agreed, in response to President Gorbachev's invitation, that Ministers of Finance and of Small Business should go to Moscow for discussions with their Soviet counterparts. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor hopes to do so soon.

This was a landmark meeting with President Gorbachev. It will, I believe, be seen as a first step towards helping the Soviet Union to become a full member of the world economic community. I believe that it was a successful summit, and I commend the outcome to the House.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): May I first thank the right hon. Gentleman for his statement on the summit and on his meetings with President Gorbachev? I am sure that everyone agrees that it was good to see President Gorbachev in London again.

On the summit's political declaration on strengthening the international order, may I welcome both the Prime Minister's and the general commitment to developing and strengthening the United Nations in a variety of ways? May I also support the specific declarations dealing with the Gulf and the middle east, with Yugoslavia, with the drugs trade and with terrorism? May I especially welcome the general undertaking given to make more effective the means of providing international humanitarian aid? Can we take it from that that the Prime Minister will now change the policies that have cut Britain's aid budget in half in the past 12 years?

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): You are a small-minded, silly little man.

Mr. Kinnock: The figure is £8 billion down on 1979 and people are starving because of that. We all know the view of the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) of the third world.

May I tell the Prime Minister that I share his disappointment on the failure to get the full agreement that he was expected to achieve on debt relief under his Trinidad terms? Even though those terms would have affected only non-operational debt amounting to just over 1·5 per cent. of total third-world debt, the proposal was useful. Does the Prime Minister expect the United States and Japan to change their stance and support his proposal at a later stage?

The G7 commitments to achieve the effective banning of chemical and biological weapons and to maintain and reinforce the non-proliferation treaty are obviously welcome. The proposal to establish a register for arms sales and restrain the transfer of high technology weapons is also commendable. Does the Prime Minister also favour stronger measures to control arms sales, particularly in sensitive areas, such as the middle east and the Gulf, and to Governments with records of repression?

The whole House will congratulate President Bush, President Gorbachev and their negotiators on securing the historic strategic arms reduction treaty. Does the Prime Minister believe that it will be necessary to proceed, in due course, to a START 2 process with British participation in the negotiations?

Does the Prime Minister recall that, 11 days ago in a speech at Olympia, he solemnly said:

"The environment will feature strongly on the G7 summit agenda."

He said that it was incumbent on the G7

"to give a strong lead".

As the host for the G7 meeting, can he tell us why the critical subject of the world environment was discussed for only 15 minutes? That was something of a global disappointment, to say the least.

We welcome the commitment to complete the GATT Uruguay round by the end of this year. Does the Prime Minister recognise that successful completion must involve

a wide-ranging reform of the common agricultural policy leading to the elimination of CAP subsidies? Is that not essential in order to achieve a parallel elimination of the high United States subsidies to agriculture? Would not the consequence of reducing subsidies be a significant boost to the industrial competitiveness of the European Community? Does the commitment that the Prime Minister made at the summit to

"a substantial reduction of tariffs and parallel action against non-tariff barriers"

include the multi-fibre arrangement? Will he assure us now that he will agree to no change of policy that could tell to the disadvantage of the British clothing industry, which is already under severe pressure as a consequence of international conditions and the Government's domestic policies? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinnock: The fact that I do not engage in the wall-to-wall sycophancy practised by the press should not upset Conservative Members. I am sure that the Prime Minister will agree that these are important questions and that he will seek to answer them.

When the Prime Minister was discussing with the other G7 members the communiqué's reference to

"increasing signs of economic recovery",

did he tell them exactly where those "signs" were in the British economy? Did he tell them about the biggest rise in British unemployment in any June in post-war history, or did he give comfort to our competitors with news of the fall in British output and investment which his policies have brought? Did he explain how, as former Chancellor, he managed to get Europe's only oil-rich economy to the bottom of the G7 league?

How do the increases in the Government's borrowings this year and those planned for next year fit into the G7 statement that

"continued progress in reducing budget deficits is essential"?

In what ways do the continued extra Government borrowings, resulting from the slump caused by the Prime Minister's policies, constitute "continued" reductions?

I commend the provision of further technical assistance to the Soviet Union and the offer of special membership of the International Monetary Fund and the World bank. Why did the G7 not endorse the European Council recommendation that the lending capacity of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development to the Soviet Union be increased? Why are the Government hostile to the provision of a stabilisation fund to facilitate the internal convertibility of the rouble, particularly when a similar fund has been such a success for Poland?

In view of the need to avoid doing anything to make the parlous condition of the Soviet economy even worse, will the Prime Minister urgently reverse his decision to send the Chancellor of the Exchequer to Russia?

The Prime Minister: It is surprising how the right hon. Gentleman always seeks, in one form or another, to try to sell the country short—*[Interruption.]* I shall repeat the point that the right hon. Gentleman always seeks, one way or another, to sell the country short. I am grateful to him, at least, for some of the welcomes that he gave at the outset of his remarks for policies—many of which were initiated by this country—to strengthen the United Nations and deal with other related matters.

The right hon. Gentleman may produce his own fantasy figures on aid, but there has been a significant increase in not only the value and nature of aid but the extent to which countries abroad appreciate the value of the aid, direct and indirect, that they receive from this country.

The right hon. Gentleman should be sufficiently well informed to know that the details of debt relief are agreed in the Paris Club and not in the G7. Had he known that —plainly, he did not—he would not have raised the points that he did. We have made the most substantive improvement in debt relief write-off for the third world —the very poorest countries—that has ever been agreed in an international forum. I should have thought that the right hon. Gentleman would welcome that warmly, at least.

I welcome the right hon. Gentleman's comments about the register of arms sales. As for other measures, it was the view of the G7 that peer pressure, through the changes in the United Nations, would have a material effect, both on whom arms were sold to and on a clear transparency of what arms were sold. Our purpose is clear: to ensure that, when a country builds up a level of armaments beyond what is needed for defensive purposes—its armaments are clearly, therefore, for offensive purposes—that becomes clear to the suppliers, who will then be subjected to the peer pressure of their colleagues in the United Nations not to increase their supplies to the country concerned.

The right hon. Gentleman's remarks on the environment were ill conceived. If he had listened to my statement a few moments ago, he would have recalled that I said that we agreed that, by the next conference, there would be a framework convention on climate change, agreement on the principles for forest conservation and a framework convention on biodiversity. There was also clear agreement among Heads of Government that, where possible, they would seek to attend the meetings in Rio next year. I certainly intend to attend the Rio conference next June as Prime Minister.

On the general agreement on tariffs and trade, there is a clear understanding within the United Kingdom and throughout the European Community that we require a reform of the common agricultural policy. It is unlikely to be achieved before the GATT agreement, but it is clear to our colleagues in GATT that an agreement is necessary and that it would require movement among member nations of the European Community. To achieve a GATT agreement requires movement among countries throughout the world—in the European Community, the Cairns Group and the United States—on agricultural and other matters. It was because of that clear understanding that the Heads of Government agreed to remain personally involved to ensure that the political impetus to reach that agreement is clearly there.

I note that the right hon. Gentleman wants to remove the common agricultural policy and keep the multi-fibre arrangement, as well as everybody else. His remarks about the world economy clearly show that he has no understanding whatsoever of how the economy works and no appreciation whatsoever that the necessary ingredients for growth are to bring down inflation and ensure that we have the right economic circumstances for sustained growth, not the sort of quick dash, leading to terminal unemployment, that the Labour party's policies would bring.

With regard to stabilisation funds for the rouble and such matters, in our discussions, we agreed with the Soviet Union to establish a continuing dialogue. Those are matters that lie—if at all—some way ahead. There is a

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great deal to be done on technical assistance and other matters in the short term. Those are under way, and we have announced a small increase—in fact, a doubling—in our assistance to the Soviet Union through the know-how fund.

We also addressed the prospect of much closer co-operation at all levels of government, to ensure that the Soviet Union has the proper assistance it needs to bring its economy back into the world economy. That was the most significant shift in relationships between the industrialised, western nations and the Soviet economy that we have ever seen. It will be noted that the Opposition are unable wholeheartedly to welcome it.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall be able to call a great many right hon. and hon. Members provided that they ask brief questions, as we have not yet begun to hear the speeches from Back-Bench Members in the education debate. Therefore, I ask for brief questions, and will allow them to continue until noon, when we must return to the debate.

Sir Geoffrey Howe (Surrey, East): Does the Prime Minister accept that the great majority of people will much admire the substance and style of the calm, competent and comprehensive conclusions arrived at by my right hon. Friends and their summit colleagues? Does he agree that people will attach a special value to the historically important agreements arrived at with President Gorbachev? They constitute an entirely appropriate achievement to build on the foundations so firmly and patiently laid by my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher). Finally, does he agree that the practical success of the 1991 London summit will most of all be judged by the seriousness of the commitment to bring the Uruguay round to a successful conclusion, which will crucially depend on the willingness of all Governments, particularly those in the European Community—notably Ministers of Agriculture—to accept conclusions that are tough as well as fair?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for his opening remarks.

It was specifically recognised and repeatedly stated during our plenary sessions that, in order to reach a general agreement on tariffs and trade, decisions would have to be made in a number of member countries that would be uncomfortable domestically, but there was a great prize to be achieved in a successful GATT round. Therefore, those difficult decisions need to be made.

It was clear to everyone that dangers of protectionism would exist if a successful GATT round were not concluded, and that there was much in the GATT round, to all intents and purposes already agreed, which would be lost if the round were not completed during the balance of this year. Those facts were fully understood and may lead to difficult decisions having to be taken by a number of Heads of Government who put their names to that agreement.

I share my right hon. and learned Friend's view on the importance of the new relationship with the Soviet Union. I think that that view is also shared by President Gorbachev, and believe that it will lead to a substantial improvement in and thickening of relationships between both the Soviet Union and this country, and the Soviet Union and all the countries the G7 group.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): The Prime Minister is entitled to feel a good deal of personal satisfaction over a broadly successful and smoothly run summit. I have no doubt that he will have significantly enhanced his reputation abroad, which must be good for the country. I particularly welcome the establishment of the arms register, which I know was his initiative and about which Liberal Democrats have been enthusiastic for a number of years.

However, does the Prime Minister realise that many people will believe that the summit fell short in two crucial respects? First, its proposals to assist the developing world and the poor nations, welcome though they are, are still inadequate in the face of the massive human tragedy that is now developing. Secondly, in relation to the environment, the summit seems to have decided on promises tomorrow, when what is needed is action today.

Finally, does not the Prime Minister find an irony in the fact that, on the day after he announced a world recovery, Britain announced unemployment figures that are rising at record levels in the south, manufacturing output that is 6 per cent. lower than it was a year ago and manufacturing pay that is still rising? Does he not understand that the judgment on him will be based not on easy words about the world recovery but on the hard facts of Britain's slump, for which his actions, his Government and his policies are responsible?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his generous opening remarks.

I think that the right hon. Gentleman may have understated what has been achieved in relation to the developing world, in which several factors are of critical importance. The first important move is the opening of free markets, so that countries in the developing world have a market for their goods. The heads of the G7 clearly recognise and acknowledge that, and demanded action.

Secondly, there is little of more importance to the developing world—the two things are related—than the successful completion of the GATT round, to which the Heads of Government also pledged themselves. Thirdly, although the details of the new debt relief must necessarily be determined in the Paris Club, nobody should understate the significance of the extent of debt relief that is to be written off for the very poorest countries in the world.

The Toronto terms of 1988, initiated by my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), led the world at that time in providing assistance for the poorest countries. We have taken our current initiative to show that we take a real and direct interest in ensuring that the poorest countries are given the best possible help to lift their economies to a level of self-sufficiency. I believe that we have made real progress with that during our discussions of the past couple of days.

I share the concern of the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) about unemployment levels in this country, but of most vital interest to the people currently employed and those not yet on the employment market——

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): What does that mean?

The Prime Minister: Let me tell the right hon. Member that the phrase "not yet on the employment market" relates to people still at school. As the shadow Foreign Secretary sits jabbering on the Opposition Front Bench, I wonder what sort of figure he would have cut in the past few days.

We are setting the framework for the future to ensure that we have a sustainable, lasting recovery in this country, with jobs that will be sustained and living standards that will improve. There is no easy way to achieve that, and the way in which we are seeking to do so is the right way.

Mr. Nigel Lawson (Blaby): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his successful chairmanship of a successful summit. The whole nation will know what to make of the petty-minded carping of the Leader of the Opposition.

In deference to your injunction, Mr. Speaker, I shall confine myself to one point. In the massive, challenging and unprecedented task of assisting the countries of central and eastern Europe to transfer from a command socialist economy to a market economy, does not my right hon. Friend agree that the most important thing that the western world can do is to assist in demonstrating that that can be done? Therefore, we must do whatever we can to help those countries that are not merely talking about economic reform, but are engaged in the tough and difficult measures of bringing it about—in particular, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland.

The Prime Minister: I entirely agree with my right hon. Friend. That matter played a significant part in our discussions during the past few days. It is not simply a question of providing words of comfort to the nations of central and eastern Europe. We wish to provide them with practical aid and assistance to help them recover. In terms of the European Community, that also includes the association agreements that we are seeking to negotiate. We made it perfectly clear in our declaration that we renew our firm commitment to support reform efforts in central and eastern Europe as well as in the Soviet Union.

We also underlined our commitment further to improve their access to our markets for areas such as steel, textiles and agriculture, which will be of importance to them. We also acknowledged a secondary point, with which I think my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) will agree. It is that encouraging reform in the Soviet economy will also benefit the economies of central and eastern Europe, for which, traditionally, the Soviet economy has been an important market.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): I deeply welcome the meeting between President Gorbachev and the G7 leaders in London and hope that, before long, the G7 will become the G8 so that the Soviet Union can play its proper part in the global management of political and economic affairs.

The Prime Minister has not satisfied the House over the crucial area of aid to the third world. He produced the Trinidad terms, they were his proposals, and we have not been told how far those terms, which have been elaborated, have been accepted by our G7 partners. If they have not been accepted, will the Government make them available to debtor countries?

The Prime Minister: The proper role of discussion in the summit is to obtain agreement on the broad principles that will determine the detailed decisions of the Paris Club. That is what this summit has done, just as the 1988 summit did on the Toronto terms. It is the job of the Paris Club to finalise the details. On the Toronto terms, there was the same general agreement as the one we have obtained this week, and the Toronto terms were eventually agreed by the Paris Club. We agreed in principle on more generous treatment on debt for the poorest and most indebted countries, but, as I have said, the Paris Club is the proper mechanism to finalise that agreement. We shall still pursue the Trinidad terms without change in the Paris Club, and I hope that we shall achieve the desired outcome. However, the matter must be decided in that forum.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): Will my right hon. Friend accept the genuine support and enthusiasm which greeted his announcement at G7 about the enhancement of the peace keeping role of the United Nations? Does he agree that that offers the opportunity to make progress on some of the fundamental aims and aspirations of the founding fathers of the United Nations, which for so long were thwarted by the realities of the cold war?

The Prime Minister: We certainly hope that that will be the outcome. That principle underpinned our proposals. We seek to ensure that the United Nations are in a position to prevent fires starting as well as helping to put them out at a later stage. If the United Nations can successfully undertake that role, it will be of significant advantage to the whole world.

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): Is the Prime Minister aware that it is perfectly possible profoundly to disagree with his Government's policies and still acknowledge the skill, diplomacy and authority with which he chaired the G7 conference? He spoke about strengthening the movement for freedom and democracy. In his discussions with President Gorbachev, did he raise the question of freedom and democracy for the Baltic states and the right to self-determination and independence?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. My discussions with President Gorbachev were wide ranging. We discussed the Baltic states and a range of other matters within the Soviet Union. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not expect me to respond for President Gorbachev, but I assure him that we discussed that matter.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): I, too, warmly congratulate my right hon. Friend on the evident skill with which he presided at this historic conference. A major problem facing the G7 leaders was the difficulty in arriving at a proper world trading pattern. I hope that my right hon. Friend will not hesitate to invite the G7 leaders—say, at the end of the year—to come back to London to resolve the problems in GATT.

The Prime Minister: In the light of the commitment given by the Heads of Government, I very much expect that such a meeting would not be necessary. However, the option for such a meeting clearly exists, because everyone recognised the importance of concluding the round this year.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Did the summit discuss the very real link between the debt crisis and the drugs crisis? Those countries whose economies are most crippled by the

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repayment of debt, such as Colombia, are greatly involved in the drugs issue. The Prime Minister mentioned the poorest countries. What about the so-called middle-income debtors, such as south America, Nigeria and the Caribbean? Is there no question of debt reduction for them?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady's points are important, but it was not possible in the time available to discuss all the structuring of debt between middle-income, the lower-income and the very poorest countries. The matter has been discussed on previous occasions, and for that reason we concentrated our discussions on the very poorest countries, with the outcome that I have set out. The hon. Lady will know that these matters are subject to continuing discussion bilaterally, in the European Community and in the Paris Club of creditors. The hon. Lady asked about drugs and debt. We did not discuss any linkage between them, but, as I said in my statement, both were discussed.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): My right hon. Friend presided over and guided this highly constructive summit with skill, vision and patience, as is recognised in all responsible parts of the House. In the context of the question by my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), does the Prime Minister agree that, while we all want to see the Soviet Union move without violence towards a more diffuse, decentralised new political structure, the first priority must be to see the new young democracies of eastern Europe brought to freedom and prosperity? As he rightly says, that requires not merely more open trade with Europe but the re-creation of a trading system within eastern Europe through a new payments clearing system, so that countries can trade with one another and begin to pick up the bits and advance towards prosperity.

The Prime Minister: Yes, I agree with my right hon. Friend. I set out earlier some of the practical measures that we think are necessary to help the countries of central and eastern Europe. I would not in any way underestimate the importance of the association agreements with the European Community and the prospect that at some stage these countries will feel inclined and be able to join the EC. That is clearly some way ahead, but it is a goal which we should leave open for them and one that I hope they will eventually reach.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Is it not ironic that those European countries that have been pressing President Gorbachev to adopt a market economy, notably France and Germany, are the very ones which are distorting the world market economy by their continuing support for the common agricultural policy, thereby damaging Britain and devastating developing countries? Does this not indicate the need for radical change, not only in the Soviet Union but in the EC? What sort of intervention does the Prime Minister propose, in view of the fact that we have had promises of action this year from European Governments and have had such promises before?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is entirely right about the need for reform of agriculture, particularly in the European Community. The Government have taken that position for some time, and we have been forward in the Community in consistently pushing the need for reform of the common agricultural policy. There have now been some proposals, and we welcome the fact that there is now acknowledgment throughout the Community of the necessity for reform of the common agricultural policy. We should not fool ourselves that that will be speedily or easily achieved. There are many distinct national interests, but a great advance has been made with the acceptance of the necessity for reform. We must now get down to examining the details and turn that objective into reality.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, for many years, the Government have made a constructive contribution to measures intended to improve and protect the environment in this country and globally? Does he recognise that I and many of my hon. Friends very much look forward to his going to the Rio conference next year to lead the British delegation? Does he further realise that the contribution by the Leader of the Opposition on this matter, as on many others, shows that he would be wise to follow the adage that he should quit while he is behind?

The Prime Minister: It is striking how environmental factors now appear at every point of our economic discussions, on economic policy, trade, energy, relations with European partners, relations with eastern Europe and aid. That fits entirely with our environmental policy-making. It may have been the case some years ago that only a few far-sighted people realised the importance of the environment, but that is no longer the case. It is recognised as central to our futures, as something that needs careful consideration in every aspect of policy-making.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Why was not more done to assist Mr. Gorbachev in the changes that he is trying to bring about in the Soviet Union? It is all very well saying that financial resources will flow after the changes have been achieved, but some say that, unless the financial resources get there, the changes will not be achieved. If Mr. Gorbachev fails, we shall fail throughout the world. The Soviet Union breaking up into chaos will imperil all of us. Will the Prime Minister, rather than talking in general terms about moving from a command economy to a market economy, say specifically what changes Mr. Gorbachev will have to achieve before he gets the necessary economic resources, along the lines of a Marshall plan, so that he can go from success to success?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman might have had his tongue in his cheek for part of that question. The solution to the problems of the Soviet Union will essentially have to come from within the Soviet Union. That is recognised by President Gorbachev and other politicians in the Soviet Union, and acknowledged by the countries outside. What we can and should do is assist him in enabling economic reform to take place, and the sort of assistance that he needs is available in joint venture co-operatives—these were widely discussed in our meeting—technical assistance, and the trade and open market flows that I mentioned earlier.

We are at an early stage of this relationship. The expertise of the four financial institutions will now be available to Mr. Gorbachev, and the associate status

relationship with the International Monetary Fund will be of critical importance. I believe that this was a significant advancement for the Soviet Union. On the basis of my conversations with Mr. Gorvachev, I can say that that is the President's view as well.

Sir Peter Blaker (Blackpool, South): I pay tribute to the skill and authority with which my right hon. Friend conducted these meetings, and I heartily endorse what he said about the Soviet Union. While we all hope that the arrangements made with it will mark the start of a long and fruitful relationship with that country, is it not also clear that, in spite of the collapse of socialism there, it could do a great deal more to attract inward investment and aid from the west? For example, it could have real democracy, a real market economy and, not least, a framework of law within which western business men could operate.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend is right in each of those remarks. It is my understanding that that point is now acknowledged and understood by those in the Soviet Government who are seeking to put in place the mechanisms to encourage inward investment, in terms both of direct ownership and joint co-operative ventures.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I welcome the register of arms sales, although I am pessimistic about enforcement of it. Will that register extend to the technology that would enable countries to produce their own advances on mass destruction weapons?

The Prime Minister: That is not yet clear. I agree with the right hon. Gentleman that that is one of the matters that deserve careful study. It will have to have that careful study at the United Nations General Assembly this autumn.

Mr. Michael Knowles (Nottingham, East): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that access to international financial institutions is absolutely vital to the future of South Africa and consequently to the future of Africa as a whole? What further progress will he be able to make with his colleagues on this front?

The Prime Minister: I share my hon. Friend's view that access to international financial institutions is vital to South africa. A particular problem is that, for some time, it has had nil economic growth and 3 per cent. population growth, so it needs assistance and access to international institutions and the inward investment that is the surest sign that it will be able to improve the living standards of its poorest citizens.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): On the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), the Prime Minister will recall that, at the conclusion of the second world war, Marshall aid was made available to the Soviet Union, but was rejected by Stalin's Government. Does he not understand that, by failing to underpin the technical know-how and other resources that the G7 is proposing with the financial assistance that the Soviet Union believes is necessary, the G7 is hindering the pace of reforms that it is looking for inside the Soviet Union and which can only be for the good of that country?

The Prime Minister: With respect, I believe that the hon. Gentleman is wrong. We cannot impose or insist upon those reforms in the way that he is suggesting, externally. We can only encourage the Soviet Union and provide the information, the technical expertise, the access to markets and the advice that will enable it to do the work that only it can do for itself to bring its economy up to the standards that it would like and to the nature of western liberal democracy. It cannot be done externally.

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): Does not the Prime Minister's success reflect an extraordinary grasp of the entire range of political and economic issues? I particularly appreciate the new and enthusiastic support that he is giving the United Nations as an organisation. That should enable it increasingly to fulfil the good intentions of its founders.

Is not agriculture the central issue in trade negotiations? Is it not absurd, not only in Europe but in the United States and Japan, to go on giving way to the pressure of producer interests, rather than putting the interests of consumers and the countries as a whole in the forefront of the argument? Will my right hon. Friend make sure that the Heads of Government get to grips with Agriculture Ministers and sort them out?

The Prime Minister: I share my right hon. Friend's view of the primary importance of consumers. That means that there will have to be robust discussions and negotiations in the GATT round to achieve a settlement later this year. There must be a settlement, and that has been acknowledged. I am grateful for my right hon. Friend's remarks about the United Nations. It can be a great force for good. It has not always lived up to what its founders hoped for it. It is now in a better position to begin to live up to its founders' aspirations.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): Why is it that anything other than the most sycophantic praise for the Prime Minister's efforts gets him jumping to his feet bawling and shouting about selling the country short? Surely his position is not so insecure that we cannot ask probing questions?

I shall ask him about the negotiations on GATT and the related multi-fibre arrangement, which he dismissed in a rather off-hand way. This arrangement, which ends at the end of July, is essential to protect many tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of jobs in textiles, including many in my constituency. Employers and employees alike have been writing to Members of Parliament, on both sides of the House, pointing out the danger that this agreement will run out with nothing to take its place. This is not a restrictive agreement. It allows expansion of exports into this country, but in a controlled way. It is essential if our textile industry is to survive.

The Prime Minister: Of course we have to look at the MFA, but that was not a subject of discussion among the G7 on this occasion. The GATT Uruguay round spreads across a whole range of trading matters and is a much bigger matter than the MFA, although I acknowledge the latter's importance. For that reason, we concentrated our discussions on the GATT round as a whole.

At these meetings, there is a limited amount of time and a vast range of matters to be discussed. On this occasion, we stretched the agenda to the maximum possible and reached constructive agreements. On that account, we can point to the substantive outcome of the summit. I have a

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question for the hon. Gentleman or anyone else. On what previous occasion were so many substantive agreements reached at a summit?

Sir Peter Tapsell (Lindsey, East): Did not the exceptionally warm tributes that the other G7 leaders paid to the chairmanship of my right hon. Friend confirm what he has just said? Does my right hon. Friend accept that most people will think that the G7 leaders were right not to give large-scale financial assistance to the Soviet Union at this stage, although one hopes that the special relationship with the International Monetary Fund will help the Soviet Union to get into a position in which it can make good use of such assistance in due course? For instance, did the Prime Minister of Japan describe to my right hon. Friend the way in which the Export-Import bank of Japan gives help to Japanese companies that invest in Russia and the Soviet Union? Could consideration be given to the British Government backing British firms that will help in the regeneration of the Soviet economy?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his earlier remarks. We shall be examining in the discussions that will continue in future the extent to which we may be able to improve the trade and investment flow between the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union, so the matters to which my hon. Friend points, among others, will certainly be the subject of discussion within the Government.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): Did the summit leaders express concern at the world banking order and the decision of the Bank of England, supported by the Prime Minister at his meeting with the governor on 28 June, to close the Bank of Credit and Commerce International? The Prime Minister says that it was a successful summit. Does he agree that the headlines in the newspapers were a deep embarrassment to him during the summit? Does he agree also that to help the reputation——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman's question is wide of the statement. Questions must be directed to the statement.

Mr. Vaz: Does the Prime Minister agree that the matter can best be sorted out by a public inquiry?

The Prime Minister: That question has no conceivable relevance to the summit.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): There is no doubt that the G7 meeting will provide the framework for a safer and better world, especially because of the way in which the Soviet Union's leadership has been involved. Does my right hon. Friend agree, however, that it would be folly for the west to pour money into the Soviet Union while it is spending so much of its gross domestic produce on defence?

Is it not right that the Soviet Union has launched six Typhoon class submarines within the past six months and that it has hidden, although we have spotted them by means of our satellites, quite a lot of the machinery, weapons and equipment that it says that it has destroyed? Is it not right that the President of the Soviet Union has yet to control his military conservative colleagues in a way that will lead the west to feel secure under his leadership?

The Prime Minister: We discussed particularly the prospects for defence conversion, which I think bears directly upon the pertinent points that my hon. Friend makes. I think that he is correct to say that now is not the time for large-scale financial assistance.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Did the Prime Minister caution the Soviet leader against too mad a dash to an untrammelled market economy without any planning or controls? Did he warn him that that could lead a country to lose one third of its manufacturing industry in 10 years? Did he explain that it could lead to financial scandals such as the BCCI? Did he ask Mr. Gorbachev's advice on how Moscow, unlike London, has been able to avoid having a cardboard city?

The Prime Minister: President Gorbachev is very keen to move towards a market economy, but then these days the Soviet Union leadership is to the right of the Labour party.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the great statesmanship that he displayed. Does he agree that a real test of whether the worthy declarations of G7 will be translated into solid achievements will be the international trade discussions? Does he agree also that it is essential that many of us—even those who represent agricultural constituencies—will have to face some difficult decisions if we are to get a tougher package of proposals on guaranteed price and compensation payment reductions to break the stalemate on the Uruguay round and bring about an essential revival of talks on the GATT?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely right about that. We ought not to overlook, however, some of the difficulties there will be in reaching agreements on services and intellectual property and on other matters. There are a number of areas in which there are difficult decisions to be taken, both for this country and elsewhere. I believe that it is an accurate judgment to say that agricultural movement is the cornerstone of a successful GATT outcome.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): How can any British Prime Minister credibly go to Brazil to talk about the conservation of forests without doing something to save what remains of our own ancient Caledonian forest, and in particular rescuing Mar Lodge? In the light of the pleas of UNICEF—I gave notice——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have heard a lot about Mar Lodge.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) for giving notice that he would raise the issue of Mar Lodge and the estate. It was typically generous of the hon. Gentleman to do so, and I am most grateful to him. We have made it clear that we shall look to the conservation agencies in Scotland to work with the future owner of the estate, whoever he turns out to be, to ensure that the special qualities of the estate are preserved and enhanced for the benefit of this generation and future generations.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): Will my right hon. Friend tell us a little more about the support given to his initiative to set up a United Nations arms sales register?

Has not the time come for the United Nations secretariat, to maintain the momentum of the initiative, to establish more effective verification procedures?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I share my hon. Friend's view on that. As to the depth of support, we have complete support from the European Community, which was obtained previously. Indeed, the European Community will join us in tabling a motion at the United Nations General Assembly later this year. I now know that that motion will have the support of all members of Group of Seven.

Ms. Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): I welcome the moves to strengthen the United Nations. Can the Prime Minister say whether there was any discussion about how the United Nations could work towards a solution for the Shia population in southern Iraq, which, as I said yesterday, is out of sight of the cameras and in respect of which the United Nations seems to be doing nothing? Was there any suggestion of an initiative of the sort that we organised for the Kurds?

The Prime Minister: That matter was not discussed at the G7 summit. The hon. Lady points accurately to the purpose behind one of the changes that we are suggesting to the United Nations, which is that the United Nations in future should look towards identifying problems and damping them down, rather than being an organisation that responds to problems after they have arisen and have achieved an international dimension. It is precisely to meet an attempt to prevent the sort of problem to which the hon. Lady referred that we are seeking the reforms that I have outlined within the United Nations.

Sir Peter Emery: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his outstanding leadership, and ask him to accept the thanks of many hon. Members for the way that he brought President Gorbachev on to the Terrace of this place in a way that had never been done before, and introduced him to many hon. Members. I hope that that example will be taken up and followed in future.

Will my right hon. Friend stress the need for our industries, and western industries generally, to go outside Moscow into the regions, where, with the break-up of centralisation, there is much to be done on the technological side to deal with the vast problem of transportation across the whole of the USSR? Very few people understand the difficulties that now exist.

The Prime Minister: I think that my hon. Friend is entirely right in his remarks about the Soviet Union, and entirely correct to point out that many business and other opportunities will be found far outside Moscow and the other main cities that will none the less be well worth examining. I am grateful to him for welcoming the fact that President Gorbachev was able to meet a number of hon. Members on the Terrace last evening. I thought it would be appropriate for President Gorbachev to do that. I was particularly pleased that I was able to introduce him to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). I thought that it was nice for President Gorbachev to meet one of the few socialists in Britain who has not let his membership lapse.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): In between discussing sending the Chancellor of the Exchequer to Russia to save its small businesses—while small businesses in Britain are going down the pan—and discussing the budget deficits of other countries—while our public sector borrowing requirement in the first three months of this year reached £6·9 billion—did the Prime Minister have a word with George Bush about drug-dealing banks? Did he discuss —I would find it unbelievable if he did not—the BCCI and the need for a public inquiry to expose the Government's squalid cover-up of their involvement in the bank and the fact that they have been passing letters to one another— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: If there is a top, we can rely on the hon. Member for Bolsover to go well over it. It is odd of the hon. Gentleman to raise the question of borrowing, when his party has £35 billion-worth of pledges that will raise borrowing to massive heights.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I heard one hon. Member say "penalty". I intend, exceptionally, to extend questions by five minutes, but then we must move on.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): With the world moving towards freer markets and more open economies, how much respect would the British leader have received if he had gone to the summit with policies for increasing interference in the British economy, renationalisation, lax monetary arrangements, and letting public spending rip, and with policies that were so contradictory that, while asking for reform of the common agricultural policy, he was not asking for reform of the multi-fibre arrangement, despite the enormous damage that that does to developing countries?

The Prime Minister: None, Sir.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Despite all the lavish praise that the Prime Minister has received from his supporters, including the Tory press, is he aware that, when we return to our constituencies later today—where there are Tory as well as Labour supporters—we will be asked when the recession and the misery will end? If the Prime Minister is as confident of his position as apparently he was last night——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Those points have nothing to do with the statement.

Mr. Winnick: They are as relevant as the points of the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim).

The Prime Minister: With your agreement, Mr. Speaker, I will tell the hon. Gentleman what I have already told the House many times—that I am confident that, in the second half of this year, the economy will begin to take off again. There is clear evidence from around the world that the world is coming out of recession. The United States of America is coming out of recession, the slowdown in France has begun to stop, Germany is still helping to pull the European Community out of recession, and Japan is still booming. There are far too many signs for anyone to doubt that, in the second half of this year, there will be a great improvement and we will be moving out of recession.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Is my right hon. Friend aware that more significant than the congratulations that he has received from his supporters in the House are the

[Mr. Ivan Lawrence]

plaudits that he has received from his fellow world leaders and the world's press? Do they not fully justify the 25-point lead that he has over the small and mean-minded Leader of the Opposition in the opinion polls?

Is my right hon. Friend aware that, quite apart from the economic ramifications of the splendid conference, the most important single long-term benefit has been the boost that it has given to the strengthening of the United Nations, with its powers to prevent wars, to stop wars and to deal with the misery that follows wars and national disasters?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. and learned Friend. It is important that the United Nations retains the enhanced authority that it rightly earned during the Gulf conflict. Our proposals, together with those suggested by others, which have been enshrined in the G7 declarations, will go a long way towards ensuring that the United Nations becomes a much more potent force for good than it has sometimes been in the past.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On the question of preventive measures by the United Nations, to which the Prime Minister alluded, was there any discussion of the implementation of United Nations resolution 688 on the repression in Iraq? In view of the clear breaches of that resolution on Wednesday in Arbil when four people were killed, and the use of tanks against the civilian population in Salumaniya, was it the general view of the leaders at the summit that some action should be taken either by the rapid deployment force in southern Turkey or by American marine deployments in the eastern Mediterranean?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman knows, those are matters for the United Nations. We made it clear in our discussions during the past few days that we stand by United Nations resolutions 687 and 688. They are very important, not only in the aspect to which the hon. Gentleman referred, but in view of the information that has lately come into our hands that Iraq still retains the capability to produce nuclear weapons——

Mr. Dalyell: Is the right hon. Gentleman sure of that?

The Prime Minister: Yes, we are sure of that, and it is a matter of great importance. We have made it clear to Iraq, as have our partners, that Iraq must remove those capabilities or we will take action to remove them.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): I wish to add greater accent to the question asked by my right hon. Friends the Members for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) and for Guildford (Mr. Howell) about the help being given to developing nations in eastern and central Europe. Many still worry about the level of aid in both know-how assistance and funding. I hope that the G7 summit will lead to increases, where those are necessary.

The Prime Minister: I am not sure that I can add to my earlier answer to my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), but it was acknowledged at the G7 summit that, in our concern about the Soviet Union, there must be no question of overlooking the imminent and urgent concerns of other central and eastern European nations. That was the view of the G7 summit and, by our actions within the European Community, it is clear that it is also the view of the European Community.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry that I have been unable to call all hon. Members, but I give an undertaking that, on the next occasion that the Prime Minister is at the Dispatch Box to make a statement, even though it may be on another subject, I shall give some precedence to those hon. Members.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: What possible point of order could arise from that?

Mr. Madden: When colleagues sought to raise the matter of BCCI, Mr. Speaker, you rightly said that it was a little wide of the statement. Have you had any indications from the Prime Minister that he intends to make a statement about BCCI on Monday? It is clear that the longer that the Government and the Prime Minister maintain silence on that very serious matter, the more suspicion will mount that the Government's failure to act was dictated by political expediency rather than by any other matter.

Mr. Speaker: I have not had any such indication, but I do not underestimate the importance of what the hon. Gentleman has said. I am sure that it will have been heard.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is a genuine point of order, which also follows upon an earlier point of order by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). We are aware that the Secretary of State for Employment received a letter stating that BCCI had lost $600 million of loans and $150 million across the exchanges, and that there had been a charge that the bank was corrupt and another charge of nepotism, and that a doubt was cast upon the bank's auditors. The Secretary of State simply passed that letter on to the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley), who at the time——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Those are matters that could rightly be exposed, if there is any substance to them, in the debate to be held on Monday.

Mr. Bell: Further to that——

Mr. Speaker: Order. These are matters not for me, but for the Government. They are matters for Monday, not today.

Mr. Bell: With respect, Mr. Speaker, this is a position we face time and again in the House. This legislature is here to hold the Executive to account——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member is taking debating time from his own colleagues, which is not fair. There will be other opportunities to raise that matter. What is the point of order for me?

Mr. Bell: Has the Secretary of State for Employment, who received the letter and sent it on to the Department of Trade and Industry, made a request to make a statement

at 2.30 pm? Earlier this week, the Leader of the House said that Opposition requests for statements would be taken on account——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have not heard that there is to be a statement at 2.30 pm, but it is an important matter and I am sure that the hon. Member's remarks were heard by those on the Government Front Bench.

Schools

12.10 pm

Question again proposed, That this House do now adjourn.

Mr. Speaker: May I point out to Back Benchers who hope to be called that although I did not earlier limit speeches to 10 minutes, and cannot do so now under the Standing Order, perhaps they will bear such a limit in mind, so that all of them may be called.

Mr. Fatchett: It is a strange experience to have a 70-minute break, but I reassure right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House that I am almost two thirds or three quarters through my speech.

Mr. Pawsey: Is that meant to be reassuring?

Mr. Fatchett: Yes, because it means that I shall not take much more time.

It may be helpful if I summarise my earlier points. I said that any deterioration in education standards over the past 12 years is the Government's responsibility and I criticised them for their failure to provide nursery education and to give our young people the start in life that they would enjoy in other European countries. I criticised the Government also for their managerial incompetence and inconsistency and for their politicisation of education. I criticised them for failing to invest in our education system.

As we reached the enforced half time, I spoke of the double standards of Conservative Members in imposing their ideology on the maintained sector, but sending their children to private schools.

I turn to another area of criticism. I sought information about the funding level of city technology colleges, but still await some parliamentary answers. The Government have not denied that there is a massive differential between the funding of CTCs and adjoining schools. For example, the Nottingham CTC grant represents 71 per cent. more than the normal funding level for Nottinghamshire's local education authority; for Kingshurst CTC in Solihull, the figure is 24 per cent. more; for Middlesbrough, 60 per cent. more than other schools in Cleveland; Gateshead, 270 per cent. more; and Bradford, 250 per cent. more. We know also that the Harris CTC is funded on the basis that it has 1,100 students, when it really has fewer than 800.

The Minister excuses such differentials on two grounds. He argues that CTCs are new schools and therefore should benefit from start-up money. That is not the case with the maintained sector. In an earlier intervention, I asked the Minister to name one maintained school that would benefit in that way under local management, but he was unable to do so. The Government's argument applies only to CTCs, not to other schools.

The Minister's second argument, which was equally erroneous, was that CTCs are funded more expensively because of their emphasis on technology. That shows the Government's double standards, because if it is right that CTC students should have access to the best in technology—and they should—the same facilities should be made available to all children.

When the Government speak about choice, they mean choice for a few. They have no view on how to raise standards across the whole education system. For 12 years,

[Mr. Fatchett]

they have been more interested in ideological experimentation and in the education of the few than about the majority of children.

Overall standards must be improved in each and every school throughout the country and we do not accept that some market mechanism will make that possible. Under the market system, some schools will improve, but others will deteriorate and no overall increase in standards will result.

The Government's obsession with the right to choose for a few means that the entitlement of all parents to high-quality education for their children is ignored. The Conservative party is the party of partial choice for a small group of parents. The Labour party is the party of rights and entitlement for all parents, because we believe in improving standards across the system.

It is clear from this and previous debates that only one party is serious about raising standards for all children and that is the Labour party. The public trust Labour because only our party has policies for improving standards and has articulated them. The public know that under a Labour Government, there will be an expansion of the good start in early education through higher investment in nursery education. They know that Labour will improve education performance school by school, local authority by local authority, through its powerful, independent, much-acclaimed and non-political education standards commission.

Labour has an approach to managing the education system, but the Government have abdicated their responsibilities. Parents recognise that difference and look to Labour to improve overall standards. Parents know also that Labour will open up participation in post-16 education and that it has ambitions for our young people which will put them in line with those in the rest of western Europe.

The Minister knocked Labour's ambitious targets, but our counterparts in western Europe would view them only as realistic, everyday and matter of fact. It tells us much about the Minister and the Government's record that the hon. Gentleman saw fit to mock Labour's ambition to match the targets achieved by our European neighbours.

Right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House agree that education is the way to build for the future and to provide skills and knowledge to ensure individual achievement and the country's economic success. For the first time in our history, personal satisfaction and economic success through education are converging. The country needs a Government who will seize on that opportunity and build for the future. For Labour, education is not just the big idea in opposition, but will be its big achievement in government.

12.18 pm

Sir Rhodes Boyson (Brent, North): I am mindful of the time and will try to keep to the guidelines issued by Mr. Speaker.

Let me congratulate the education team, from the Secretary of State downwards. Over the past 12 years, the Government have tried to get to grips with education problems; yet, somehow, the education establishment has constantly eluded us. For the first time, we have now brutally taken the whip hand to ensure that what we want to be done will indeed be done.

As a headmaster—and, indeed, since ceasing to be one—I have witnessed the decline in educational standards that began in about 1965. That decline cannot be blamed on either teachers or parents; it was caused by two other factors. The first could be described as the intellectual climate, in which "trendies" insisted on following every fashion, including the discovery method. The second is Labour's obsession—mentioned by the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett)—with the egalitarian comprehensive system. I should add that inspectors in university departments and teacher training colleges were largely responsible for destroying the primary schools. We shall never get education to work properly until those two problems are dealt with.

Teachers in the classrooms did not want the new methods; they wanted to go on teaching. Parents did not want them, either: they wanted their children to be taught. Never has there been such a betrayal of both parents and teachers as in the past 20 years.

The first thing that should be taught in infant and junior schools is discipline. Unless children are trained to sit down and work, nothing will be achieved. The hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) may laugh——

Mr. Fraser *rose*——

Sir Rhodes Boyson: No, I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman. If he wishes to indulge in a little laughter session, that is his privilege, but I do not intend to join in.

Mr. Fraser: I have to agree with what the right hon. Gentleman is saying.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: That worries me rather.

The discovery method is the worst form of teaching that we have ever seen. When it is introduced in primary schools, standards fall. Teachers are paid to teach—to plug children into arithmetic and English and to equip them with a body of knowledge. Children do not acquire such knowledge by accident. Schools are, in a sense, artificial institutions: children will not go to school because they want to. They would prefer to play outside. Nowadays, some schoolrooms are really indoor football pitches.

All these developments have undermined the confidence of teachers. They have now been told that they must not actually teach; they must simply place around the room such items as Euclid's theorems, Faraday's electromagnetic laws and the use of the subjunctive and the children will discover them of their own accord.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Sir Rhodes Boyson: No, I will not—much as I respect my hon. Friend, who once taught at a school where I was headmaster. I wish to allow others time to speak.

The continuance of civilisation depends on men and women standing on the shoulders of those who have lived before. The "discovery method", however, rejects that principle, relying on induction and, in many instances, destroying what had been achieved in infant and junior schools. At the same time, there was a move to the "look and say" method and "real books" and away from phonics, which is the method by which most children learn

to read. Ten per cent. of teachers can teach by any method if they are left alone; 10 per cent. cannot and must be got rid of. The remaining 80 per cent. need a method and that is where phonics came in.

In the early 1960s, when I was a headmaster in Lancashire, I supported early experiments in comprehensive schools. I do not believe that an entire system should be turned around until it has been tried. Before long, however, I found that the Labour party and certain other organisations were trying to achieve salvation by means of faith rather than works. The Labour party got shot of its previous policy—as it often does: it has recently been forced to support the free market because of its shortage of policies. Looking round for a replacement policy, it became wedded to the concept of the egalitarian comprehensive school and destroyed 400 good technical schools. It destroyed hundreds of grammar schools and thousands of secondary moderns. I know: I taught for 10 years in secondary moderns and also did some remedial work. It will be a long time before the situation is remedied, even with the help of the city technology colleges.

What have we done over the past 12 years? We seem to be getting to grips with the problems better than we were before; again, I offer my congratulations to the present ministerial team. I approve of the tests for children aged seven, 11 and 14. I also believe that diagnostic tests should be applied automatically and that any teacher who does not apply them should be out of a job. The new tests should establish whether schools are doing their job and, if they are not, their staff should be replaced. Children's chances, especially in the inner cities, are made or broken by what they are taught at school. I know that from my experience of teaching in inner cities and downtown textile areas.

As soon as we presented our proposals, the educational establishment set up committees on which ordinary teachers were hardly mentioned or seen. They built a massive structure, at great expense. Once again, the left wing damaged what had been achieved. I am glad to hear my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science talk of returning to pencil-and-paper tests which can easily be applied within the curriculum without distorting it.

The Government have also done a good deal to enhance parental choice. My hon. Friend the Minister mentioned the assisted places scheme, which has benefited 50,000 children. The Labour party would destroy that, too: Labour has learnt nothing from what has already happened. The introduction of the CTCs and grant-maintained status has also increased parental choice. I want a system in which all parents can choose from a variety of schools and can even choose among mini-schools within schools.

We must do two more things. First, we must openly return to some system of selection at the ages of 11, 12, or 14. We will never return to the grammar schools as they were, just as the Roman Church was never the same after the reformation and the counter-reformation. One can never go back, but every other country with which we compete has some form of selection, according to interest and ability, at those ages.

We have been hearing about the G7 summit. Woe betide us if the Russians and eastern Europeans, with their excellent education system, ever go to a genuine free market economy. If we do not get our education right, they will overtake us. On the whole, education is better in Russia and eastern Europe than it is here, despite the improvements that we are trying to make. I recently met the headmaster of a school in Russia which recruits its 200 pupils from a recruitment field of 7 million. I am not advocating that; I am merely mentioning it. It is a physics and mathematics school. The Russians did not get to outer space by accident. They were able to do it because they have a sound educational system. It is a good thing for us, in competitive terms, that they had a bad economic system. That is why they did not do even better.

Russia has a whole series of specialist schools, including trade schools. Thirty five per cent. of children in Russia go to trade schools where, from the age of 14, they are trained for trades, and can study 1,150 crafts. Germany has three types of school. Sweden and the Netherlands have different types of school, as does Japan. Only the Labour and Liberal parties—I regularly pray for their salvation—have swallowed the concept of the egalitarian comprehensive school and teaching in mixed-ability schools, which is the most uneconomic teaching system ever discovered by man. It is like going back to hand-loom weaving. Previously, we brought children with the same interests and abilities together under skilled teachers. The Government must accept different forms of selection so that each child is taken to the limit of his ability.

We must raise the status of teachers. The discovery method degraded and denigrated teachers. They were almost unnecessary—just chairmen or people wandering round. They must be teachers again and must be paid as such and the professional factor must apply. I therefore welcome what is being done about teachers' salaries.

It is particularly important that primary and infant school teachers are well trained. I would not go so far in respect of secondary teachers. One can put teachers into a secondary school and give them a year's induction and one knows almost immediately whether they will make teachers or not. But the skills required for junior and infant school teaching require careful training.

I believe that the 1,265-hour contract should be torn up. Just when industry was buying out the rule book so that people finished the job, we gave the teachers a rule book. There are trendies in the Department, as there are in every educational establishment. I hope that there are fewer of them now. They may be very nice people. No doubt there is nothing wrong with them—they do not beat their wives or eat their grandmothers—but they have been partly brainwashed. When I was at the Department, they tried to get the proposal through and, if I did nothing else, I stopped it then. Teachers should be professional workers who finish the job. If that means working until 7 pm or 8 pm, I would expect no less of my teachers or myself. But if the examinations are over and teachers want two days off in the summer, they should be able to take that time off. There is no need to add everything up and say, "Where are you on this?" That represents the proletarianisation of the whole profession.

I welcome the fact that the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State and Ministers are to keep A-levels, which are an important benchmark. We want to build up a similar assessment at age 18 on the technical, vocational and trade side, and one which is accorded equal respect. They have such tests in other countries and we should follow their example. We are moving towards that, but for goodness sake let us keep A-levels in the meantime.

[Sir Rhodes Boyson]

I was never an enthusiast for the GCSE and I am still not, but I accept that it is here and that we must work with it. I am glad that we are moving back to examination work rather than project work because project work is against the interests of the inner-city child and of children from deprived homes. In a home with books, the whole family does the project. I have suggested that the whole family —including grandmother—should go up for the certificate and not just the pupil concerned. But in a home without books, a pupil is disadvantaged by project work. So many things done by the trendies handicap those from deprived homes.

I should like another GSCE board to be established on which there are no educational experts, just a random sample of parents and employers. Let that board draw up a syllabus to compete with those produced by the educational establishment and let schools be able to choose a totally new board from outside.

I am in favour of grant-maintained schools. I make a gentle suggestion to my hon. Friend the Minister. In our general election manifesto we should say that we will make all schools grant maintained. That would be one of the most popular actions that we could take. It would be good for parents and would help us to be re-elected. We should look after parents and pupils. For the good of this country, we should be re-elected.

12.34 pm

Mr. David Bellotti (Eastbourne): Many hon. Members wish to speak in this important debate. Those of us on the Opposition Benches may say that the Government have got many things wrong, but we cannot accuse them of not doing anything in recent years. The education service has experienced regulation after regulation, Bill after Bill, and coercion after coercion until those involved, whether teachers, parents or pupils, are beginning to wonder what is going on around them.

The Minister began his speech by talking about city technology colleges, and I wish to do so as well. When the Government first announced CTCs, we were told that eventually there would be hundreds of them, but the Government decided that they had to scale down their ideas—*[Interruption.]* I saw a statement to that effect by a Minister. Eventually, there was another statement by a Minister who said, "No, we must stop at 20." The Government stopped at an unlucky 13.

The Minister took us on a tour of one or two of the more successful CTCs, from the Government's perspective. In Brighton a massive amount of Government money has been lost and tremendous disruption has been caused to the local education authority by the Government's proposal to have a CTC in Brighton which never eventuated. Private individuals put Government money into their pockets and then left. The Government and the LEA lost money. At that time, the LEA had a plan for secondary education in part of Brighton. Because of the Government's desire to have a CTC, the church involved in a church-aided proposal for a school in the area does not wish to proceed. The LEA and children have suffered greatly as a result of the Government's proposal. The Government torpedoed the LEA's plans. I should like to know how much money the Government spent on the aborted CTC proposal. I believe that more than £250,000 of public money has been wasted.

I turn to another plank of the Government's policy which has been espoused today—grant-maintained schools. On 14 September 1987, almost four years ago, the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mr. Thatcher) said:

"I think most schools will opt out."

That has not happened. Last week, I saw a picture of the Secretary of State for Education and Science who had a piece of paper and was celebrating the fact that 100 schools were grant maintained. But there are 23,250 schools.

Mr. Fatchett: Does the hon. Gentleman share my view that the photograph taken at the Hampshire school was an abuse of Government and political power, in the sense that those 100 children were used for deliberate party political purposes? It would be interesting to know whether the consent of the parents was sought in respect of the photograph in *The Daily Telegraph*, how much money the Department of Education and Science spent on setting up the photograph, and why the school agreed to become part of what was clearly party political advertising. Does that not again make the point that the Government have to learn an important lesson—that there is a thin line between party political activities and expenditure and Government activities and expenditure? The Government have clearly gone over that line many times.

Mr. Bellotti: I am grateful for that intervention and I entirely agree with it. I should like to see pictures of the Secretary of State with pupils of some of the 23,150 schools that have not opted out, perhaps with some of the derelict buildings that have resulted from lack of Government funding.

That photograph was an abuse of political power. If Ministers set out on a journey expecting most schools to opt out but have found that only 100 out of 23,250 have done so, that is an indictment of their intentions after four years in government.

The Minister referred to and quoted many people who were supportive of the Government's policies. I shall share two quotations with the Minister. The first is from the Conservative chairman of Hampshire education committee, who said on 17 June:

"Mr. Clarke is hell bent on destroying local education authorities without any idea of what to put in their place. If there were a logical plan for a system better than the present one I would, as a loyal Conservative support it. But there is not.

Mr. Clarke's ambition is to get all secondary schools and many primary schools opted out. I am going to be left with a demoralised, unhappy dump of an authority running sinking or ghetto schools."

Those are the words of the Conservative chairman of Hampshire education committee. If they are not enough, I will read a second quotation, because the Minister gave us six. The second quotation is from the Conservative chairman of Solihull education committee, who said:

"Opting out was initially intended by the government as a get-out clause for crumbling, badly maintained schools which were being ignored by local authorities . . . it was not meant for schools with attractive buildings, good facilities and excellent examination results.

The whole issue in Solihull will be bruising and damaging to the authority and to the schools concerned.

I have to admit that I am finding some government policy hard to reconcile as a Tory myself. In education particularly there is an almost flippant attitude and consequences of government actions do not seem to have been considered."

I could not put it better than those two Conservative chairmen of education authorities.

The Minister tried to demonstrate one of the advantages of the shift—which the Government are proud to espouse and for which they do not apologise—towards central control of education. The Minister also explained that there had been a shift towards the involvement of parents. One of the main planks of that shift appeared to be the parents annual meeting which the Government had legislated to introduce in every school. From their experience in Sussex, school after school will tell him that those annual meetings are a complete waste of time. Parents are already involved in their children's schools, but they regard the annual meeting as a fruitless waste of time. I know of one secondary school in Sussex which has to organise other social events so that the meeting can take place and so that half a dozen people will attend.

The Government have tackled education reforms, but they have not achieved what they set out to achieve. Indeed, almost the reverse is true in respect of choice. In areas where the Government have funded a city technology college or a grant-maintained school, there has been massive destruction of local authority planning for post-11 education. Local authorities have been left to pick up the pieces for the children in the areas surrounding those areas affected by the changes.

The Liberal Democrats believe that local education authorities should be responsible for all education in their areas. In government we would put back under local education authority control all those grant-maintained schools and CTCs, because it is absolutely essential that education can be well planned in each area. However, we agree with the Government that such schools should have full delegated budgets and much more power than they had previously, because we support that aspect of the Government's proposals. The Government did not need to disrupt the education system in some parts of Britain to achieve some of their aims. Those aims could have been achieved anyway.

There should be more places on governing bodies for people who are intricately involved in education, such as parents and teachers. We have gone overboard in trying to include people from the business community who are not yet convinced that their time will be well spent.

The divisiveness of the assisted places scheme must surely go. Resources must be applied across the board for the benefit of all our children. Parents must also have the opportunity to complain and to raise various issues, and the Liberal Democrats would appoint an education ombudsman so that complaints could be referred when necessary.

The Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science complained about local authorities that restricted so-called "freedom of choice" by not making all information available to all parents, and he referred especially to their restricting education authority services to those schools that were not grant maintained or city technology colleges. The hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) intervened to say that a crossing patrol had been taken away from a school which was funded outside the local education authority service.

If the Government are taking funds away from local education authorities and giving funds to schools directly, do they really expect local education authorities to use the funds allocated by Government and those raised locally for schools for which they no longer have a financial responsibility? If they use funds for such schools, there will be a further reduction in the money available for schools which are not grant-maintained schools or city technology colleges. When teachers from those schools are invited to training courses in the local education authority, is it not right that the GMS schools and the CTCs should make a financial contribution? No one can provide something for nothing.

The main theme of today's debate is choice. The Government are found very much wanting on that matter. In the past three or four years, in education authority after education authority, parents have less choice than they had before. East Sussex is an example. Even today, two parents out of 100 each year do not get one of the schools of their choice, although they are asked to write down the names of up to three schools. That is not good enough, because parents should have greater choice. East Sussex has an increased school population in many parts of the county. Given that and the county's inability to build new accommodation, it is obvious that parental choice will be reduced.

The title of the debate refers to "Choice", but the reality is that for parents, there is not choice, but preference. Parents are asked to give their preferences; they are not asked to choose. Liberal Democrats want parents to be able to choose. I was chairman of the education authority in East Sussex between 1986 and 1987. That year still stands as the best example in the past decade of parents receiving their first choice in education. We were able to achieve that because we appointed 100 extra teachers that year to ensure that teachers were available to teach the children in the schools that the parents chose. In that year, 96·5 per cent. of parents obtained their first preference at 11-plus. If the Government were serious about choice, they would encourage local education authorities—and financially support them—to employ the number of teachers who are needed for parents to achieve their choice.

The Government would also have to address the issue of school accommodation and buildings. If there is spare capacity, the appointment of more teachers is fine, but some schools are full. The Government's building programme is such that, one after another, schools make application through the local education authority to the Government for funds to build new schools or to extend existing schools, but the Government are not prepared to allocate the necessary sums. The Government must be honest. Unless they are prepared for local education authorities to employ more teachers and unless they are prepared to allocate funds for extra school buildings, choice becomes a fiasco and a fallacy.

It is interesting to read the answer to a written question in *Hansard* on 26 April 1991. We see that 34 of the 39 county councils that are local education authorities have to spend more than 100 per cent. of the money that they are allocated for education through the standard spending assessment to achieve the standards that we all believe should be achieved in our schools. That clearly shows that the Government are underfunding and failing to recognise what is needed to deliver the education service.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) has asked me to say that in Sefton, £20 million needs to be spent immediately on school building premises, yet the Government are not prepared to support the local education authority in that regard.

[Mr. Bellotti]

May I outline two or three areas in which we differ from the Government——

Mr. Philip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): The hon. Gentleman has already spoken for long enough.

Mr. Bellotti: I shall bear the time in mind, but the Minister spoke for 50 minutes. I am making the only contribution from my party today and I wish to develop a few more points.

The hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) referred to nursery education and a table on that matter. It is generally recognised that more resources must be allocated to pre-school education and the Liberal Democrats' alternative Budget statement in March contained a figure of £250 million, which would be available for the education of children aged three to five. It is essential that every parent who wishes to have education for that age group should be able to achieve it. Whether it is in school, in a pre-school play group, or whatever, it should be available on demand. The latest figure that I have seen in the Labour party's proposals is £50 million and I encourage the hon. Member for Leeds, Central to try to have that figure increased.

If ever there was an area in which the Government have failed to deliver, it is special education. Every local education authority should have a separate special educational needs service, which should be properly funded and involved with parents. Wherever possible, it should be integrated in the mainstream of schools. Local education authorities do not have the resources to ensure that children are statemented almost immediately a need is identified by a teacher. My authority of East Sussex tries to do that within a time scale of six months, but, with the discussion thereafter about the child's needs and which school it should attend, it can be as much as a year before such a child receives the education that it needs.

The Minister will be aware of early-day motion 972, which has now attracted 123 signatures. It draws attention to the serious problem of special educational needs and whether the Education Act 1981 is being fulfilled. Is the Minister prepared, following today's debate, at least to see whether there are ways in which the Government could help local authorities, with extra funds or whatever, to adopt higher standards in relation to special educational needs?

The hon. Member for Leeds, Central spoke of the consensus on the national curriculum. The Government had a consensus in the three major parties on that issue, but went over the top—a phrase which has been used several times today. The national curriculum has now put teachers in a straitjacket with no flexibility. I met the secretary general of the Soviet Union teachers' association two years ago and he told me that the Government of the Soviet Union had decided that they would control less of the curriculum from the centre and allow individual schools, with parental support, to decide on parts of the curriculum. I shared with him the view that the British Government were going in the opposite direction and putting teachers and schools in a position where they have absolutely no flexibility.

As I come to the end of my remarks—*[Interruption.]* I have dropped 10 pages of my notes in the light of today's disruption—we could all have spoken for longer if events had turned out differently.

I wish to draw attention to the role of teachers. Unless hon. Members are united in praising and encouraging teachers, we shall not be doing our best for children. It is those teachers whom we rely on to deliver the education. Year after year, when I was outside the House, I heard murmurs from Ministers deploring teachers in our schools, when I wanted to hear words of encouragement and support. One way to elevate the status of teachers would be to have a general teaching council, which would give them the status that they deserve. That council could control professional qualifications and set standards which would be acceptable to all political parties.

In this context, when announcing the pay review body we should consider that, from 1974 to 1989, teachers' salaries as a proportion of average non-manual earnings fell from more than 135 per cent. to less than 110 per cent. One cannot devalue a profession over that period by reducing pay in relation to others and then expect it to deliver the goods.

A subject that has not been touched on much today is that of 16 to 18-year-olds. I sincerely believe that when the Secretary of State announced in the House that central Government would control sixth-form colleges and further education, the Government did not realise that that would cause the chaos that we have now and which will continue. There is now a dual track system, in which the education of some 16 to 18-year-olds will be under central Government control and others' education will be controlled by local authorities. That is a recipe for chaos as time goes by and we try to address the key issue of the staying-on rate of 16-year-olds.

We have heard about a table relating to three to five-year-olds. I shall refer to one relating to 16 to 18-year-olds which comes from the Department of Education and Science statistical bulletin for 1990. It says that in 1988, 79 per cent. of the 16 to 18-year-old age range in the United States were in education, in Japan there were 77 per cent., in France 66 per cent. and in West Germany 47 per cent. Once again, the United Kingdom came bottom of the league, with only 35 per cent. of 16 to 18-year-olds in education. Unless we address that issue —the Government are not doing so through the youth training scheme cuts—we shall have problems.

The word "choice" appears in the debate's title, but in this context "choice" is a delusion. The title also includes the word "standards"—such values are far too important to leave simply in the hands of the Government. The Minister concluded by saying that he wanted to put children first. Having observed the Government's education policy from outside the House for 12 years, I believe that the one thing that the Government have not done is to put children first.

12.57 pm

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): I support the Government in the radical reforms that they have introduced during the past 10 and 11 years to improve choice and accountability and, therefore, standards. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) said so brilliantly, they have been doing so in an

educational climate which, for more than 20 years, has made the job of good teachers—who constitute the vast majority—that much more difficult.

There are three basic characteristics of that educational climate. First, it was a climate that judged standards by what resources were put into education, rather than what was turned out at the end of the day. Despite the increases in resources that the Government have made available for education, particularly teachers' salaries, I do not see any connection between existing standards and the resources that have been put into education during the past 20 years. In many cases, precisely the opposite is true.

Secondly, the presumption is too often made that uniformity would allow excellence to be preserved. It is assumed that by making schools comprehensive and ignoring parental choice, good standards could be imposed on schools. Good standards are attained with the support of parents for their children's education. That can be done only in a regime that gives parents a genuine choice.

The third characteristic of the old regime was a fundamental distaste for testing or any sort of relative elitist standards. When the Conservatives were in power in Birmingham in 1982-84, I was on the education committee. We set up a standards working party, but as soon as we lost power in 1984 it was abolished, even though it was the only way that the education committee could address what was happening in the classrooms.

When the National Foundation for Educational Research carried out a review of reading standards in schools it found that only 26 out of 95 local education authorities could provide any information about the movement of reading standards in their schools over the year. That is appalling and shows how testing and assessment have fallen into disrepute in our schools.

The Government have adopted the right approach by making parents more accountable either through grant-maintained schools or local management of schools. I am the chairman of the board of governors of a large comprehensive school in the north of Birmingham. Even on the pilot scheme that is available under local management of schools, that school is three teachers better off and has managed to increase the amount spent on equipment, tools and materials by no less than 50 per cent. in two years. It has had a tremendous effect on teachers' morale.

Further reform would be welcome in three areas and would improve standards. Attainment targets and testing should be made more comprehensible for the layman and the parent. I was delighted to see that in May the number of attainment targets for mathematics and science was reduced from about 14 or 17 to five in each subject and that the number generally has been halved.

Good teachers want to know how children are doing relative to others in the class. I am certain that parents want to know that and also want to know how the class fares compared with other classes in the school and in the area. I hope that Professor Griffiths, who will chair the School Examinations and Assessment Council, will ensure that there is a more easily comprehended exam-oriented rather than course-oriented system of assessment, because that would improve standards.

Secondly, we must look at qualifications for head teachers. There should be no restrictive practices about how one becomes a head teacher, but there is evidence that headmasters do not have sufficient knowledge of what goes on in their classrooms. As a result, they are not able to resolve the problem of teachers whose expectations of their pupils are too low. I was in a school a few days ago and a parent told me, "In class my son was told by the teacher to expect only a grade D at GCSE this year." Such a low level of expectation condemns pupils to low standards and can be resolved adequately only by heads of departments reporting to head teachers who are properly briefed. Head teachers could do more such operational work.

I am glad to note that the Secretary of State proposes to reform the structure of Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools. I hope that its operations will also be reformed. We need to look at the inspectorate system as a whole, especially as more schools become grant maintained. I should like to see more co-ordination between the activities of the schools inspectors employed by local education authorities and Her Majesty's inspectorate. I hope that the Government will address that.

1.3 pm

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): I shall confine myself to problems in education in my borough. Lambeth has been responsible for education for 16 months since 1 April 1990. We did not want to be responsible for education and warned the Government about the consequences of the break-up of the Inner London education authority. We realised that if education were left to financially hard-pressed boroughs with intense social and economic pressures, which were described by Lord Scarman in his report and in a series of inner-city reports, there would be a danger that in poor areas with shrinking populations education would be ghetto-ised. That underlines the difficulties in what is a relatively small area for an education authority. That is what has happened in my borough.

Achievement in education is often a reflection of the social and economic pressures at home and among families. My constituency, which covers a third of Lambeth, has unemployment approaching 25 per cent. and unemployment has increased by 40 per cent. over the past 12 months. In the borough as a whole, 25 per cent. of the population is in receipt of poll tax benefit, which shows the levels of poverty among the families of schoolchildren. Seven out of 10 people in Lambeth are tenants and 60 per cent. of those tenants are in receipt of housing benefit—another sign of the depths of poverty. We have the second-highest level of lone parents anywhere in England. I shall not moralise about single-parent families, but it is a fact that it is immensely more difficult for a child from a lone-parent family to achieve educational attainment than it is for a child from a two-parent family.

In some of our postal districts—indeed, in one that the Prime Minister once represented as a councillor—more than half the population is unemployed and a quarter is living on social security. Coupled with that, between a quarter and a third of the population is black. I hasten to add that I am not equating poverty and a failure to achieve attainment with being black, but that adds another burden. Discrimination, and sometimes the lack of a tradition of education, make it even more difficult to succeed.

That is the social and economic background in which Lambeth has to act as an education authority. The break-up of ILEA was bound to make it more difficult and was bound, eventually, to reduce the choice that is crucial

[Mr. John Fraser]

for the people whom I represent. Already, more than half our secondary school pupils are educated out of the borough. Before the break-up of ILEA, that was unimportant. My children were educated out of the borough, partly by the wife of the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) in a comprehensive school in adjoining Southwark.

With the break-up of ILEA, local authorities are becoming more parochial in the way that they view intake, and opting out will make the choice for pupils who go outside the borough even more restricted. For instance, the city technology college in what was Sylvan school in Upper Norwood is bound to be choosing its pupils on the basis of aptitude and ability. There is bound to be a selection process that operates against the people whom I represent.

I recently had a letter from a former Member of Parliament, and a former councillor, about what is happening in Bromley, another adjoining borough. Mr. Macdonald tells me:

"Bromley had 17 Secondary Schools . . . So far 1 has opted out and 6 more . . . await the Secretary of State's decision."

I will not detain the House by reading out all the arguments from this responsible person, but it is clear that opting out will deny children from my borough access to schools in neighbouring boroughs. Furthermore—it is a decision that I regret—the pressure of poll tax capping on my borough has led to the council not giving travel passes or maintenance grants to children taking sixth-form education outside the borough.

I shall give what is perhaps an extreme example of how parochialism will reduce choice and chance. Islington runs a further education college which has an optical technology unit. I would not have known about it if my son had not happened to study optical technology. He travels once a week from Brighton to Islington because Islington provides the only course that is available in southern England. Islington has discovered that only one or two Islington children take up the course, so the course is at risk of being closed. That is a vivid illustration of the way in which the break-up of education in London will start to restrict choice because of the taking of parochial views.

As well as reduced choice, we have reduced resources. That was always inevitable following the break-up of ILEA. In the City of London there are about 12 affluent parents paying for one child while in the borough which I represent each child is supported by only six parents. Locally based resources in my constituency are much less than in many other areas.

The break-up of ILEA was bound to have the greatest effect on boroughs such as the one in my constituency and to lead to those that have having more and those who have less having even less.

One of the prime purposes of my being a Member of this place has been to explore and promote the ideal of equality—at least equality of opportunity. No great equality of wealth can be brought about by tax redistribution or by giving people extra benefits. Some of the figures that relate to those on social security in the area that I represent illustrate that. One way of achieving more equality, however, is the provision of education opportunity. It is the one thing which enables people to break out of their history and inheritance and to achieve equality.

I shall illustrate my argument with some figures. It is extremely difficult to accumulate £250,000. That sum, as a capital investment, would produce an income of about £25,000 a year. It would be difficult by the redistribution of wealth to give everyone £250,000, but if someone is lucky enough or good enough to pass A-level examinations and to go to university, he or she will have no great difficulty in London in earning £25,000 a year at the age of 23 or 24 in some of the professions. That is the equivalent of the benefit of owning £250,000 and that is an illustration that people with education achievement can break through much more rapidly than others.

Education provides the only means by which people in a borough such as the one that I represent can break the chains round them and enjoy equal opportunity. Unfortunately, there are huge impediments. Many children grow up in homes where there are not many books, where there is not the tradition of literature. Often the religious tradition, for example, was tied up with literature, but that tradition has been diminishing. In many homes the television is much more important than the book. That is the position in far too many families.

There are also far too many families where there is no one to talk to children. A single parent is often under great pressure, so the child is left with a minder. That child can be almost irreparably damaged by the age of five years. There are far too many families that have experienced homelessness. That has a tremendously deleterious effect on young children as they move from one bed-and-breakfast hotel to another.

When reading a novel by Tom Wolfe entitled "Bonfire of the Vanities", I was struck by a throwaway remark about someone coming from a family of third-generation welfare. I thought about my constituency. Certainly there are families who are second-generation welfare. If we do not break the cycle, we could have third-generation families in that position. It will be extremely difficult for them to break out of that inheritance.

Are we breaking out? Examination results are not a bad measure of equality and achievement. I had a vivid illustration of that when I attended a parents meeting in Brixton. A black mother said, "Don't bother so much about the equal opportunities policy, just give my child his O-levels, his A-levels and his degree, and his opportunities will be equal. All the cultural aspects in the world that are put into the curriculum will be no substitute for the inequality that my child will suffer without those qualifications."

In the schools in my borough, only 30 per cent. of children obtain between one and four GCSEs, grades A to C, against a national average of just under 50 per cent. Only a handful of children took A-levels at the last examination, although we should not ignore the fact that many children—511—took A-levels at colleges. Nevertheless, only 35 children, out of a 250,000 population, took A-level examinations in Lambeth's schools. Only one in five children gained GCSE mathematics, grades A to C. Because some of them did not even sit the mathematics exam, only 15 per cent. of children in the borough gained GCSE in mathematics. Indeed, 10 per cent. of the children entered for examinations did not turn up for the exam. It is against that background that I contrast the record in my schools

with my devout belief in the importance of giving equal opportunity through educational achievement. There is a huge discrepancy in my area, which does not exist in all other areas.

I make it clear that what I say is not a reflection on Lambeth. I know that some people will say that it is, but Lambeth has been doing the job for only 16 months. Indeed, the figures that I have given are marginally better than they were under the Inner London education authority. Even the Minister has praised the quality in our schools. It is not a reflection on our schools, nor a reflection on the quality and commitment of our teachers. We are not saying that the position is hopeless. Some schools achieve examination results above the national level, which shows a degree of commitment and interest.

Of course, what I have said does not apply only to our secondary schools because the damage is often done before the children leave primary school. Often, the damage is done by the time they go to primary school because they have had no nursery education, and sometimes they have lived in bed-and-breakfast accommodation and been looked after in child minding facilities. We cannot blame just one segment for any failure. I am underlining the need to provide adequate resources to balance the inequalities between the opportunities for one part of the population and those for another part. I shall not rehearse all the arguments against the poll tax. However, as a result of poll tax restrictions, less money is being spent in my borough this year, which implies a 7 per cent. cut. Lambeth has done its best to protect statutory services, and primary and secondary education in particular, but I am appalled at the cuts that it has been compelled to make in youth services, including sport.

In a city borough, sport is an important adjunct to education, because athletics promotes an understanding of the relationship between effort and reward. That is an important analogy, which teaches that if one studies hard, one achieves results. I am unhappy that boroughs such as Lambeth are forced to concentrate on statutory services at the neglect of others.

There is no substitute for additional resources for boroughs such as Lambeth which have such enormous discrepancies in educational results and in which people are denied an opportunity to play their full part in society. I am not suggesting that throwing money at an education authority is the only way of solving its problems. I demonstrated that results can be achieved with only limited resources. However, if there is to be equality of opportunity and if people are to be allowed to break out of the chains of their inheritance, more resources must be provided—and at the moment there are not enough of them.

1.20 pm

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): Two of the Government's principal objectives are greater parental choice and improved quality. We want parents to have the maximum possible choice, but if they are to exercise it, they must be kept properly informed. I therefore welcome proposals to increase the available information about individual schools. It should not be restricted to examination results but should include teacher numbers and teacher continuity.

The information given should also include truancy levels. I welcome the recently published regulations requiring schools to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absences. Some schools have accepted high truancy levels for far too long. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) said, if children do not attend school, they cannot learn.

When parents are able to make an informed choice of schools, standards will rise. The majority of parents naturally want the best for their own children, and will elect to send them to the school which offers the quality of education best suited to their own children. Schools that do not offer parents what they want, where academic standards are slack and discipline poor, will not attract pupils. Parental choice is a powerful force, and when it is unfettered it will improve standards. The best schools will serve as a benchmark against which others in the area will be judged.

For too long the assumption has been made that the only good state education is local authority education, but that concept is being challenged, and that will increasingly be challenged with the growth of the grant-maintained sector. One hundred grant-maintained schools have been approved and the applications of a further 100 are well advanced. Their popularity is due not only to the additional cash that they receive but to the greater independence that they enjoy. Now that the apron strings which tied them to local education authorities have been cut, grant-maintained schools are able more accurately to reflect parents' wishes and aspirations and to take account of local conditions. They no longer have to obey the diktats of a local education authority which is sometimes motivated more by political than educational motives.

With the benefit of hindsight, I am convinced that we did not do enough to publicise the benefits of grant-maintained status. When we introduced the Education Reform Bill, we naively did not anticipate the fact that some LEAs would mount massive campaigns of disinformation against grant-maintained status, funded by charge payers' money. I was delighted when, in a recent speech to the Centre for Policy Studies, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said that the Government would legislate to limit the amount that a local education authority could spend to campaign against grant-maintained status.

I also welcome the provision that allows school governing bodies in future to be reimbursed up to the same limit as LEAs to fund their own campaigns for school freedom I make no secret of the fact that I want more schools to be grant maintained. I expect grant-maintained schools to become the 1990s equivalent of the council house sales of the last decade. Both allow more choice, more freedom and greater independence. I believe that even the Labour party will come to accept grant-maintained schools, just as it has been forced to accept the sale of council houses. The conversion may be slow, but I think that the Labour party will recognise the power of parents' arguments for grant-maintained status, as it has been made to recognise the strength of tenants' arguments for council house sales.

I am convinced that the only reason why more schools have not become grant maintained is that many head teachers and their staff fear—I use the word advisedly—that if, God forbid, Labour wins the next election and returns grant-maintained schools to the local education authorities, those who suported grant-maintained status will be penalised—their cards will be marked. That is a sad

[Mr. James Pawsey]

comment on the position currently adopted by some LEAs and another reason why their stranglehold on state education should be broken.

However, it is not just grant-maintained schools which provide parents with choice. Choice is also provided by the city technology colleges. Although only 13 have emerged so far, and the process is slow, that should not detract from the fact that they are proving highly popular and successful. Solihull CTC, for example, has received 1,000 applications for its 180 annual places. It takes children at all levels of ability, including "statemented" pupils and those with special needs. It certainly does not cream off pupils. The CTC ethos ensures that children work—Solihull's school day is between 20 and 25 per cent. longer than the average day at a comparable LEA school, although the college receives no extra funding.

Incidentally, 66·4 per cent. of the intake at Emmanuel CTC in Gateshead come from deprived or severely Deprived backgrounds. The principal says:

"We have taken more than our quota of disadvantaged children."

There is not much cream there!

Any debate about quality and choice in education must, of course, refer to the nation's teachers. As I have said repeatedly in the House, the majority of the nation's teachers are dedicated both to their profession and to the children in their charge. That dedication is now being recognised by an improvement in remuneration, and by the establishment of a pay review body. When this year's pay award has been full implemented, the average classroom teacher will receive about £17,000 a year, while seven out of 10 secondary school teachers will earn more than £20,000. That is good news—news which builds on the success of the interim advisory committee.

One of the more significant sets of statistics that I have seen recently refers to the number of days lost through strike action taken by teachers. In a parliamentary answer dated 10 June, my hon. Friend the Minister told me that in the three years 1988, 1989 and 1990, fewer than 60,000 days were lost through industrial action, while in one single year—1985—851,000 days were lost through strikes. We have come a long way since the dark days of 1985. Teachers now recognise the good intent of the present Administration and I believe that we are now winning the battle for the hearts and minds of the nation's teachers. Over the next few years, the review body that the Government have announced will serve to enhance the esteem in which teachers are held. It should be recalled that, without teachers' good will, the reforms that we have introduced will be that much harder to implement.

Independence and freedom have also found their way into advanced education. Despite opposition, the polytechnics are no longer tied to local education authorities and, despite many gloomy forecasts from the Opposition and their cohorts in the LEAs, no polytechnic has gone bankrupt. Indeed, the reverse is true—they are extending choice, increasing the number of courses and offering students greater variety than ever before. With the excellent example of the polytechnics before us, we now intend to free up the colleges of further education and remove the uninspired hand of LEAs from their affairs. I am certain that some of the benefits that the polytechnics now enjoy will be extended to colleges of further education.

One of the best indicators of the Government's success in schools is, paradoxically, to be found in advanced education. When we came to office in 1979, only one in eight of the target group were in advanced education. The figure is now one in five and by 2000 it will be one in three. Those figures illustrate two things—first, that the Government have much expanded the sector to absorb the greater number of people now seeking advanced education and, secondly, that large numbers of young people are now suitably qualified and able to take advantage of that expansion. There are now more than 1 million young people in our colleges, that figure being about a quarter of a million up on that for 1979. That is a real indication of the Government's success, and my right hon. and hon. Friends can certainly take credit for it.

No success comes on the cheap, however, and this year, for example, spending on education is up by 16 per cent. —more than twice the rate of inflation—and I have no doubt that the Conservative Administration will further increase funding to the benefit of the nation's children.

Our aim, in a nutshell, is further to improve the quality and standard of our state education so that it compares favourably with that offered by any other country in the world. That is our objective, and that is what we shall achieve.

The Minister may gain the impression that I am less than enthusiastic about the role of local education authorities. I do not doubt that they have done excellent work in the past 100 years but times change, and organisations—no matter how good—must respond to change. In my view, with the emergence of the grant-maintained schools and with the independence of the polytechnics and colleges of further education, the role of the LEAs will be much diminished. I hope, therefore, that proposals will soon be put before the House to redefine the role of LEAs.

1.33 pm

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): I hope that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, will not take fright at the bundle of papers in my hand. It provides the basis for the first part of my argument and goes right to the source of the education problems that the House faces. No matter how much money we put into it and no matter how many reforms that we introduce, we shall never get education right unless we get our ideas about education right. The document, "Language in the National Curriculum—Materials for Professional Development", intended for the training of teachers, goes right to the heart of our education problems. It cost £21 million to produce. It is part of a project on the English language and I propose to quote one or two passages to give the House some idea of the quality of the report. It states:

"The speech situation is almost always a shared one, and the writing situation is usually an isolated one."

You may smile, Madam Deputy Speaker, but that quotation probably cost you a fiver. The document also states:

"The interactive purpose of speech events affects the language used."

Blow me down—another fiver gone. It talks of

". . . secretarial surface features such as spelling and punctuation".

Note the combined disdain for secretaries and for teaching people how to write and spell. Again I quote:

"Most speech contexts are interactive, and involve the participants in both speaking and listening."

I did not know that before! Yet another fiver gone.

Let us consider the report's ideological bent. It states:

"Parents need educating. If they are pulling pupils in a direction that we do not endorse and which may subvert our aims, what are we doing to counter this? A valuable staff activity would be to devise a poster or pamphlet setting out the school's approach to spelling and justifying it."

The writers of that report would have a hard time justifying some of the approaches to spelling and grammar taken in that lamentable document. Regrettably, not all parts of the document are as amusing, in a funereal way, as some of those quotations. Most of the report is taken up with banal, pseudo-intellectual bilge—that is what the document is and it cost the taxpayer £21 million.

The Government's aim on teacher training is to reduce the amount of theory involved and to have more practical work. But the document states:

"An additional linguistic trend, not confined to functional theories of language, has been welcome to the compilers of the LINC programme. Until about 15 years ago, most linguistic studies were characterised by attention to small units of language, up to but not beyond the level of the sentence, usually out of the context in which they were actually used. More recently, however, developments in text linguistics, discourse analysis and functional grammar have provided a basis for examining patterns of language across complete texts. The LINC programme recognises the importance of this work and its relevance to education. Accordingly a text-based view of language is adopted and complete texts are the usual focus of attention."

We move in that paragraph to a decision to base the whole of the £21 million document and the training for English in the national curriculum on something which is, admittedly, called a "linguistic trend".

I have no faith in the education industry, as constituted, to take account of new ideas in education and to treat them with reserve. They are merely ideas and do not deserve to be immediately implemented and foisted on the impressionable minds of young teachers who, sadly, are among the lowest achievers in terms of A-levels.

What is the effect of having hastily adapted and adopted theories of unproven substance as the basis of reports, then thrusting them on people who—let us be frank—may not be of the highest intellectual calibre? Moreover, that is much more likely to damage their students than it is to aid them. The Government have much work to do to sort out the over-reliance on theory, transmitted and transmuted by people who are not of the first intellectual quality and in whose hands these theories can be extremely dangerous.

First, the education industry is highly inbred as a profession. Secondly, it is isolated from life. It includes people who have never in their careers left education—they come out of the classroom, go on to teacher training, do some teaching and go into university. The whole thing is cyclical and introverted. Thirdly, some people will ask whether this is a serious academic discipline at all—it certainly has pretentions to being such. It is a fact of life—not just my opinion—that the people with the best brains do not teach in the educational departments of universities and that those who do are not always held in the highest esteem. As a result, the dangers of a hasty adaptation of fashionable dogmas, of which I gave examples for the LINC report, are extremely serious.

You may think, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I am building too much on this report, but, although the Government decided that the report was so banal, so sub-standard and so inadequate that they would not publish it, even though the project cost £21 million, it will still be used to teach teachers, because that section of education is outside Government control. The hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) spoke about the educational plight of his constituents. I understand his concern, as I was taught in Dagenham which had a few problems when I was a boy. Those children will get nowhere under such an approach because they are told, "Don't worry about the secretarial aspects of punctuation or spelling; that's for secretaries. We're not going to bother your heads about that." They will not get a job that way. The problem is not merely one of funding and organisation, because ideas determine the outcome of education. If ideas that are fundamentally flawed are implemented and absorbed by people who are more interested in playing around with those ideas than with the end product, people in Lambeth and elsewhere will not be able to write or to get a job. How can they get A-levels when they cannot write properly?

On a higher level, I could not help noticing that Mrs. Raisa Gorbachev said that people in Britain no longer read English literature. She is right, but they can read shop signs. If you think that I am joking, Madam Deputy Speaker, I refer again to the £21 million report—a bundle of fun—which mentions shop signs in its passage about literary language. I do not want to bore the House or to be accused of tedium, but this document is written in such tedious language that I could quickly send the House to sleep. The report says that we must deconstruct—that fashionable word has crept into the mind of these low-grade people—the whole idea that there are different sorts of literature. Until now we had believed—in our feeble way—that there was a difference between Barbara Cartland and some perhaps slightly more elevated forms of literature. But no; we are told that we must deconstruct that idea. We are told that literature occurs everywhere.

The report states:

"Such contexts include advertising language, newspaper headlines, playing on puns in everyday conversations, the rhetorical patterning of a parliamentary speech"—

I hope that I cannot be accused of that—

"the imaginative names used on shop fronts by hairdressers and hairsylists."

As Raisa Gorbachev said, we might not read English literature, but we shall breed children who might be able to make puns on shop signs, so our aims are extremely high.

Let us imagine the effect of such semi-intellectual claptrap on the impressionable minds of some young teachers. Although the Government are not publishing the report, it will affect young teachers and will perpetuate a vicious circle of under-achievement in places such as Lambeth.

Another fundamental question is that of the so-called democratic nature of the organisation of our education. As I said, it is not, broadly speaking, run by the Government; it is run by liberal-left ideologues—I must use that phrase—and by local authorities. That is where the power lies. What is the democratic basis of those local education authorities? Statistically, the highest turnout in the most recent elections was about 50 per cent. The average was much lower. One of the lowest levels in the shire counties was reached in Humberside, where the figure was 34 per cent. The figure for my county of Buckinghamshire was not brilliant, at 33 per cent. The figure for Hackney was 36 per cent., as it was for Newham. Those figures apply to the turnout. The basis for the exercise of educational power is rather lower because it is a proportion of the number of

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those eligible to vote. In Humberside, all educational decisions are based on the support of 14 per cent. of the electorate. The figure for Staffordshire is 15·9 per cent.; for Hackney it is 18·7 per cent. and for Newham it is 20 per cent. Those are Labour authorities and the turnout is rather low. However, I am sorry to say that there are also Conservative examples.

Labour Members and the Liberal Democrats—we must not forget them—rail against what we regard as choice and say that what is sacrosanct is the democratic and local nature of education. I have described the reality. When so much grave twaddle is talked in the House about the democratic roots of education, we should realise that that simply is not true. The turnout in our local elections is extremely low. People run education without having any real democratic authority. If a quorum were involved, it would not be attained on such numbers.

The implications for grant-maintained schools are serious. In such schools, there has to be a 50 per cent. quorum in the first ballot. No such quorum applies to the people who run education in local authorities. I have a practical suggestion for my hon. Friend the Minister. I want him to drop the 50 per cent. barrier for grant-maintained schools. There should be a barrier, because it is right that there should be some form of consultation. However, the barrier should be dropped to the level of participation in the most recent local elections. If someone proposes an opting-out—grant-maintained—school in Humberside, the barrier should be not 50 per cent., but 34 per cent., because that was the turnout in the most recent local elections in Humberside as a result of which Humberside county council runs the entirety of education in its area.

To use the current phrase, that would provide a level playing field. Parents would not have to achieve a level of turnout which was far superior to the level reached by Staffordshire and Humberside county councils which is their basis for running their policies. That is a practical suggestion. Anything that helps to break up the system in a positive and fruitful way, gives choice and encourages grant-maintained schools should be permanently at the front of our minds.

The Government have done wonders over the past decade in increasing the proportion of people taking part in higher education. I very much welcome the focus on getting people to stay on at school. However, a problem has come up in my rural constituency. In education, we not only need to get the ideas right, which is fundamental, but we need the resources to support them. I understand it when hon. Members, such as the hon. Member for Norwood, talk about that.

In my constituency, a difficulty has arisen in encouraging parents to keep their children at school after the age of 16. A new cost for travel arrangements has just been put on them. There will no longer be a subsidy for travel. In a rural constituency, that is important because parents have to pay about £120 a year. If we wish to encourage students to stay on at school, which is a national necessity, it is no good telling parents that if their child stays on at school after 16, they will not only be deprived of the income that that child would have contributed to the family finances, but will have to pay £120 extra a year for the child's journey to school. The matter deserves attention. I have taken it up with the county council, which has a tight budget, partly because of the expansion of special educational needs provision. The matter poses a problem for my constituents, especially for those who are keen to take the new opportunity of keeping their children on at school after the age of 16 which the Government are offering.

I welcome what the Government are doing in the SEAC and what they are doing to give parents more choice through the grant-maintained system. Education in this country will never come right until there is a pincer movement against the educational establishment. It is a sclerotic establishment which is not open to new views and it goes out of its way, not to subvert—that is too dramatic a word—but to resist like a congealed jelly everything new. We need people at the top who are forceful and who are not bureaucrats and we need escape routes at the bottom for the children who are trapped there. Only then will we be able to put pressure on that Brezhnevite system and open it up to the benefit of all children.

1.52 pm

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I hope, Mr. Speaker, that you will forgive me if I leave shortly after speaking because my daughter is to be married tomorrow and there is much to be done.

The Brethren wrote to me this week and raised a number of points of conscience with which I should have liked to deal, but I cannot do so in the time available. However, I know that they would like to have on record the fact that they have strong views on subjects such as sex education and computer education, which many schools and local authorities are not taking into account.

I strongly support the emphasis on choice that my hon. Friend the Minister set out in his opening speech. The speech of the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) was interesting. He said that he was looking for equality of opportunity within Lambeth, but his constituents have always voted Labour. They voted for an authority which removed choice. Circular 10/66 stated that all secondary schools should be comprehensive and uniform in nature, a ruling which was heavily applied by the inner London education authority and totally applied in Lambeth. I know almost every school in Lambeth from my 23 years of teaching in London. I saw excellent schools being changed in character from good grammar, technical and secondary modern schools into comprehensives. That policy took away all choice, ambition and competition in schools.

The hon. Member for Norwood lamented the fact that children have little choice to learn about life through sport, and I agreed with the thesis that he put before the House. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman is no longer here, but perhaps he will read what I have said. In the Dick Shepherd school near the Tulse Hill school in his borough, for a long time children were not allowed to play competitive games. Some brilliant West Indian boys at that school were known to have great cricketing talents, and they asked only to have a wicket painted on the wall and to be allowed to play competitive cricket, but the school, under the ILEA, would not allow them to do so. The hon. Gentleman may not know about that case, but I did not hear him championing the need for proper team games and competitive sport at that time. We lost generations of children to bad, uniform education which did not take account of the need to give children a proper

choice between schools and a choice of courses within schools. They were also grossly denied the opportunity to learn through sport.

My hon. Friend the Minister mentioned the assisted places scheme, which has been a great success without being a highly expensive operation. Today, at a cost of £70 million, 28,000 children are successfully educated under that scheme. My hon. Friend went on to warn about city technology colleges and I support him on that.

My hon. Friend was challenged by the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Bellotti), who said that very few schools were becoming grant maintained. In the London borough of Ealing, more than 50 per cent. of secondary schools have voted to become grant maintained, including the school to which the Leader of the Opposition sent his children.

I do not think that the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) or anybody else should lose sight of the enormous political and educational revolution that that policy will bring to this country. Were the Labour party ever to regain power and seek to return to the old system, it would—as my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) said—reverse decisions thoughtfully taken by parents in possession of the facts after attending meetings. The schools have taken a deliberate and carefully thought out decision to become grant maintained. We are witnessing an educational revolution of the highest importance, which the Labour party would destroy.

Whatever the hon. Member for Leeds, Central says, sport has declined in many schools simply because the Labour party tried to crush children's competitive instincts and would not allow them to undertake competitive sport. We all remember the head mistress from a Bristol school who said that pupils under the age of five should not have an egg and spoon race because it encouraged them to be competitive, which was bad for them.

When I first started to teach I was elected general secretary of the Westminster Schools Athletic Association —a sports association of all the schools in Westminster, including comprehensives, grammar and secondary modern schools. We had wonderful inter-school competitions which did a lot for children. There were annual prize givings, with prizes for the winners and recognition for the losers, with prizes for some of them as well. I returned to that competition in the last year of ILEA, which is strongly run by the Labour party. There were no prizes or competitions; schools merely received a certificate for being good schools and the children received an acknowledgement for being present. That revolution was achieved by ILEA over about 30 years. It was not good or fair to the children. The Select Committee has said that there must be compulsory basic physical education and games in schools for pupils up to the age of 14, with diverse provision after that, which I strongly support. Teachers should be paid for extra-curricular activities—if I had time, I would develop that point.

As one who marked O-level and A-level papers for 25 years, I want to see proper standardisation between all schools. Lawrence Norcross, former headmaster of Highbury Grove school was right to write in *The Daily Telegraph* this week that in some schools where there are teachers of high integrity, children receive grades in English and other subjects that are conscientiously thought out by the teachers, whereas in some other schools all the children receive grade A because the teachers are less conscientious. I do not think that the examining boards are sorting out that problem properly, but they must do so.

It is right to penalise bad spelling and bad grammar in GCSE exams other than English to the extent of 5 per cent., but, as someone who examined English and other subjects at O-level for a long time, I would not want there to be heavier penalisation than that. If one is marking chemistry, one should consider the chemistry element, not the English, although that must be satisfactory. Otherwise, we would be penalising pupils for bad English, bad grammar and bad spelling in both the English and the other papers. To overdo that would be unfair, and to underdo it would be wrong. A balance has been struck and I hope that my hon. Friend has no plans to go further.

1.59 pm

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): The debate is about wider choice and higher standards and I had hoped that the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) would use it to give a detailed analysis of what his party, if it were ever to return to office, would do to raise standards and widen choice. However, we were treated not to a clarion call to Labour's policies but to carping and denigration of Government policies.

The hon. Member for Leeds, Central spoke about the Government's failure on nursery education. The Government did not dismantle the system of nursery education bequeathed to them by their predecessors. Nursery education has been extended, but more needs to be done to improve education than simply to say that the essential foundation is 100 per cent. provision of nursery education. I am anxious, as I am sure are the Government, to see a reduction in the numbers in primary schools, and the Government have significantly improved the pupil-teacher ratio.

I was surprised to hear the hon. Member for Leeds, Central accuse the Government of a lack of consistency in their changes. The only consistency under a Labour Government was the consistency of compulsion, an attempt to squeeze everybody into a comprehensive system that left little opportunity for variety. He also spoke about crumbling schools. Perhaps Labour had no such schools when it was in office. If a perfect system had been bequeathed to us we would not have had repair bills. However, as schools get older there are huge bills for repair.

No one can expect a perfect system in which every building and every facility is in sound repair all the time. Constant attention is required and we are making progress. Labour suggests setting up an education standards commission, which seems likely to have almost draconian powers, and criticises the Government for not giving enough support to local education authorities. That is rich from a party which proposes a commission that will wield a big stick with local authorities.

The shadow of the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) was very much apparent on the Opposition Benches; perhaps that explains why so few Labour Members are present. Promises to spend more money on improving education would earn an instant rebuke from the hon. Lady, who has made it clear that there will be no extra money.

We are all anxious to improve standards and should discuss in detail how that can be done. Parental

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involvement in education is a key factor. The more we encourage parents to be interested, involved and committed, the more beneficial it will be to whatever we try to achieve in education. In that context, extending the boundaries of choice must be right. In fairness, however, we must recognise that there are limits to the extent of choice and that they are imposed by the availability of resources and, sometimes, by the availability of transport. School buildings are not elastic, and schools cannot simply be expanded to cope with enormous demand. If in any instance, only 45 places are available and there are 140 applications, not everybody can be satisfied, so there cannot be total freedom of choice.

Despite those limiting factors, it is infinitely more rewarding to continue the quest for widening choice, as the Government are, than to constrict education to a standard mould. It is a good thing if we can achieve variety in the types of school that are available. That is more easily done in an urban area and more complicated in a rural area, where distance is a factor. It is a good thing that there should be small, large, single-sex and specialist schools. Therefore, the Government are right to pursue the idea of the grant-maintained school, which is proving to be highly popular as an alternative form of provision.

I am concerned that local education authorities are hostile to these ideas. Essex county council is taking a sniffy attitude to any school that goes for grant-maintained status. It has circulated information, based on figures that are challenged by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, to primary schools in the Saffron Walden area. The authority is warning that the feeder schools may be put at a financial disadvantage if the ballot on whether Saffron Walden county high school should become grant maintained is in favour of such a change. Such activities are highly reprehensible, especially when there is doubt about the figures that are being used.

If standards are to be improved, testing is inescapable. It has to have a place in the system. It goes on all the time in schools and the issue is about what form it takes. An objective form of testing is required to complement teacher testing. There must be a constant element. If we are honest, we will admit that the arrangements this year for seven-year-old testing were not satisfactory. There has been a great reaction from teachers about it and we have said that we shall examine the system. However, we should not be bounced into saying that there is no place for objective testing. We must stick with it, because people must have some idea of what their children are capable of at certain ages, without its putting any stigma on a child who has done less well.

Other factors that are crucial in the improvement of standards include teacher training, which has hardly been mentioned today, but to which the Government are rightly turning their attention. Inspection has been mentioned, and is essential. We must have a tighter system of inspection of our schools. The Government have been inovative in their determination to raise standards and I applaud them. They have set a new, relevant and well-directed agenda. I look forward to its continued implementation.

2.3 pm

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): I have listened with interest and patience to the debate. I represent the London borough of Barnet, which has the best record of education results of any local authority. It is significant that Conservative councils, year in and year out, produce good education results. Very few Labour councils are in the top quartile of local education authorities and many are in the bottom quartile.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Popular): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Marshall: I do not think that I should give way. I have been patient in waiting for my turn. The hon. Lady has waltzed into the debate nine tenths of the way through and does not have the right to ask me to give way in the few seconds that are all that I have left.

The hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) said that the problems of Lambeth were created by charge capping. I suggest that they were caused by non-collection of the community charge. Lambeth has specialised in not collecting. It did not collect the old rates, it does not collect rents as it should and it has not collected the community charge as it should. The speech of the hon. Member for Norwood underlined the irresponsibility of Members of this place who are inciting their constituents not to pay the community charge. It is irresponsible of hon. Members such as the hon. Member for Bow and Popular (Ms. Gordon) not to pay the charge until the last minute and then complain that local authorities do not spend the money.

Ms. Gordon *rose*——

Mr. Marshall: I must tell the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) that when I referred to figures in Brent in January 1990 I was talking about Brent under Labour control. It was under Labour control that Brent sent 1,600 children to Barnet, which was under Conservative control, because the parents of those children felt that they were given a better deal by Barnet than by Brent.

In the few minutes that are available to me I wish to praise the teaching profession. Without good teachers there is no hope for the future of our children. When I was an A-level examiner, I always knew which schools had good teachers because those schools produced much better results. I remember paper after paper from one school in which gilt-edged securities appeared as guilt-edged securities. That was the fault of the teaching profession.

The vast majority of the teaching profession is highly dedicated and it is unfortunate that a small minority of teachers give the profession a bad reputation. The sloppy dress of some teachers is all too often the forerunner of sloppy standards. I read a report on my son the other week in which the teacher wrote "William trys hard." I wondered how hard that teacher had tried to produce correct spelling. If that is how he writes "tries", one wonders what else he does in the classroom.

The debate on standards in education was started by Lord Callaghan of Cardiff, who decided that the best way to improve standards was to get rid of direct grant schools and to close grammar schools. He destroyed our centres of excellence. That was his way of improving standards. The Labour party has learnt nothing from that experience. It would abolish the remaining grammar schools, city

technology colleges and grant-maintained schools, which have been so successful. I was pleased to be able to refer earlier in the debate to the great success at Hendon school. There has been a huge upsurge in the number of applicants for places at that school. The amount spent on books has increased by 50 per cent. and extra teaching places have been provided since it became a grant-maintained school as opposed to a local authority school. Grant-maintained schools are centres of high morale within the teaching profession. They are producing good results and I believe that after the next election there will be a huge upsurge in their number.

It is important to maintain the standards of A-levels. At the University of St. Andrews, to which my hon. Friend the Minister and I went, it was noticeable that the students who had studied for A-levels did much better than those who had taken the Scottish higher leaving certificate. That demonstrates the worth of A-levels as against the broader Scottish highers system.

One problem with our education system is that it lacks sufficient diversity I well remember during a visit to Israel going one morning to a school that was like an old-fashioned grammar school. It produced highly academic pupils. In the afternoon I went to another school that taught its pupils motor mechanics and hairdressing, for example. The pupils who received that training secured a job as soon as they left school. I suspect that that is not the position when pupils leave schools in Lambeth and elsewhere. That is why I welcome the CTC programme, which will lead to children being able to acquire a post as soon as they leave school.

The debate is about standards, quality and choice in education and I believe that choice and standards in education are given to us by the voluntary aided sector. It was unfortunate that my hon. Friend the Minister did not refer to the voluntary-aided sector, because many parents in my constituency welcome voluntary-aided schools. Like the chairman of the Conservative party, I send my children to voluntary-aided schools. I ask my hon. Friend to reconsider the problems of Hazmonean high school and Hazmonean preparatory school. I am sure that I have the support of my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) in asking my hon. Friend the Minister to look positively on those schools. Some 20 to 25 per cent. of people in Barnet go to shul every Saturday. The number of voluntary-aided Jewish places in Barnet is 4·5 per cent. of the total number of school places in the borough. That is far too low a figure. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to increase that provision in the years to come.

2.15 pm

Mr. Fatchett: With the leave of the House, Madam Deputy Speaker, I shall make a few brief comments in reply to the debate. It has been a somewhat unusual day, with a statement on the G7 summit and another statement to come at 2.30 pm. Perhaps we should recommend that right hon. and hon. Members spend a little more time listening to this important education debate.

I wish to pick up one or two specific points and then make a general point. The hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) has had to leave, and he apologised to the House for that. He made a number of points about school sport. I am keen on school sport and the Labour party is committed to it. It would help if the hon. Gentleman could get the facts right and rid himself of one or two of his prejudices. It is not the local authorities, of any political persuasion, that have been against competitive sport; they have found it difficult, for a variety of reasons, to maintain the level of participation in school sport. They have been forced to sell school playing fields and there have been difficulties with space in the curriculum. The charging policies under the Education Reform Act 1988 have made it difficult for schools to use sports centres. Competitive tendering has often put local sports centres and their facilities outside the financial reach of the schools. All those problems were initiated by the Government, and all have reduced the level and quality of school sport.

An editorial in *The Times* in November 1989 showed that not one authority, whether Labour, Conservative or Liberal Democrat, is against school sport—the problem is delivering it. It would have helped a great deal if the Government had shown some enthusiasm for the report of the physical education working party and, in particular, if they had accepted the recommendation that each child should be given the opportunity to learn to swim by the end of key stage 2 of the national curriculum. It was the Government who opposed that proposal.

A number of hon. Members referred to the importance of teachers. It is true to say that education standards can be improved only by good quality teaching. The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Bellotti) made the valid point—one wholly in line with Labour party policy—that we need to establish a general teaching council. That would be an important means of improving the status and the professionalism of the teaching profession. There is a broad consensus for that proposal, but for some reason that Government are resisting it.

On occasions, it would help if Conservative Members changed their script. For a decade, they have denigrated and criticised individual teachers. It would improve standards if the Conservative party recognised the value of teachers' contributions.

My general point echoes the point made by the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall), who let the Conservative cat out of the bag. His vision of a tiered, structured education system under a further period of Conservative Government is one which few parents would accept. It is one under which some youngsters would have opportunities, but others would miss out. His example of the Israeli system gave us an insight into future Conservative education policy.

I ask parents thoughout the country—although I know that this would be a burden—to read the hon. Gentleman's speech. He said that there would be elite schools for a minority of so-called academic youngsters, while others would teach subjects such as motor mechanics and hairdressing. That is a wholly outdated ideological concept, and one which would certainly damage the country's future economy.

If Conservative Members were to study the education systems of Western Europe, it would be clear to them that no other country runs an elite education system. The rest of western Europe is trying to broaden the basis of its children's knowledge and participation, but the hon. Member for Hendon, South wants a 19th century, two tier, structured elitist system.

The Conservatives offer choice for a few on the backs of the majority, and high standards for a few while disregarding the majority. That is the crucial divide between us in the education debate. Labour believes in an

[Mr. Fatchett]

overall improvement in education standards because that is right for the children of this country and their parents, and because improved education is at the root of improved economic efficiency.

Britain needs an education system which provides opportunity for all, but in today's debate we have heard from the Minister downwards only concern among Conservative Members about 100 schools. Labour is concerned about the country's 24,000 schools and all the children who attend them. Labour believes in high standards, high achievement, targets and ambition.

Mr. Oppenheim: The hon. Gentleman should try visiting more schools in Labour authority areas, to see what a mess they have made of them.

Mr. Fatchett: The hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim), who went to a private school, knows so little about the maintained sector that it would be better if he did what all Parliamentary Private Secretaries should do, which is to keep quiet. He is good in that role, but when he tries anything more, he is very bad at it.

We are keen to extend opportunity, standards, and ambition to all. The Conservative party's view is limited to the elite, is outdated, and will harm the country's children and its educational and economic performance.

2.22 pm

Mr. Fallon: This has been a good debate, but somewhat one-sided. The hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) could not find one Labour Back Bencher to support him today, but had to rely on another member of the Opposition Front Bench, the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser)—who made the more thoughtful of the two speeches.

I thank my right hon. and hon. Friends for their contributions. What came across clearly was the high regard in which we hold teachers—contrary to the claims of the hon. Member for Leeds, Central. Over the past six days, I have visited schools in three local authorities in different parts of the country and found teachers who are enthusiastic and committed. We look forward to seeing that borne out in the forthcoming GCSE and A-level results.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) made a trenchant case for selection and discipline and valuable points about teaching methods, in a speech that can be read and read again with profit by us all.

The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Bellotti) asked me two specific questions. One concerned Brighton city technology college. We did not go ahead with that project because the sponsorship was not there. The hon. Gentleman would certainly have criticised me for going ahead without the 20 per cent. contribution from the private sector. In fact, the money was not lost, and I understand that the site is being actively marketed.

The hon. Gentleman also asked me about special needs. I emphasise that none of the obligations placed on local education authorities by the Education Act 1981 was changed by the Education Reform Act 1988. Indeed, we have slightly modified local management of schools this year to allow local education authorities a little more scope to ensure that resources are available for statemented pupils—and, indeed, some others—when they are delegated at school level.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) spoke eloquently of the need for simple and practical testing and asked me specifically about the HMI review for staff. That review has now been concluded and we are studying the results.

My hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) referred to the LINC materials. I agree that they were an absurd waste of the £21 million that was devoted to them. We have already decided that they should not be sent round schools; my hon. Friend, however, was especially anxious that they should not be circulated round teacher training colleges and institutions. Let me reassure him and my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) that we are taking a long, hard look at teacher training generally and specifically awaiting the results of the inquiry carried out by the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education into the way in which the teaching of reading is taught in teacher training colleges.

I was disappointed that the hon. Member for Leeds, Central failed to respond to any of the challenges that I offered him. He waffled on the subject of nurseries, giving no dates, no commitments and no promise that the pledge on nursery education contained in Labour's document would be implemented. All that we had were pious hopes —and we know what happens to pious hopes when Labour are in government.

The hon. Gentleman also made a disgraceful attack on the integrity of the new leaders of the National Curriculum Council and the School Examinations and Assessment Council. Everyone else in the education world will wish the two new appointees well: they face an enormous challenge —to ensure that our curriculum and the testing are introduced and implemented sensibly and in a manageable form, school by school.

I outlined to the hon. Gentleman, case by case, the catalogue of intimidation, harassment and non co-operation that the city technology colleges and grant-maintained schools have had to endure since their establishment. He refused to repudiate what I had said or to give any undertaking that his party would urge the Labour-controlled local authorities that are responsible to change their policies. We received a clear message today that there is to be no change in Labour's policy. Labour remains committed to eliminating choice, wiping out the city technology colleges, re-integrating the grant-maintained schools and abolishing the assisted places scheme. It remains committed to defending the bureaucracy and giving LEAs back their monopoly; and, above all, it remains committed to fudging our educational standards. The Labour party wants certificates for all and the end of the well-established A-level. So be it. The Government will ensure that the country hears that message loud and clear. We aim for higher standards through wider choice and greater parental accountability. The Labour party has made it clear that it would replace choice with control and would entrust standards to the same bureaucracy that has already failed to deliver them.

In the 1990s, education is becoming a growth industry, as home ownership did in the late 1970s and 1980s. There is a growing appetite for more and better qualifications at every level. Only the Conservative party has the policies in place to ensure that that appetite is properly satisfied.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion by leave, withdrawn.

SITTINGS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That—

(1) this House do meet on Thursday 25th July, at half-past Nine o'clock;

(2) notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 17 (Time for taking questions), no Questions shall be taken, provided that at Eleven o'clock Mr. Speaker may interrupt the proceedings in order to permit Questions to be asked which are in his opinion of an urgent character and relate either to matters of public importance or to the arrangement of business, statements to be made by Ministers, or personal explanations to be made by Members; and

(3) at Three o'clock Mr. Speaker do adjourn the House without putting any Question, provided that the House shall not adjourn until Mr. Speaker shall have reported the Royal Assent to any Acts agreed upon by both Houses.—*[Mr. Neil Hamilton.]*

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

2.30 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Norman Lamont): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the Bank of Credit and Commerce International. My hon. Friend the Economic Secretary informed the House on 8 July of the action taken by the Bank of England and the supervisory authorities in a number of other jurisdictions to secure control of the assets of the Bank of Credit and Commerce Group. Subsequently, in the course of our proceedings on the Finance Bill, last week my hon. Friend answered points put to him by a number of hon. Members. The Governor of the Bank of England has met a number of Members to explain the background and reasons for the action, and I met the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) and a group of other hon. Members yesterday to discuss the matter.

The immediate priority following the closure has been to bring about as orderly a rundown of the bank's operations as possible to help the many individuals and businesses which had accounts at the bank. I can assure the House that we are doing everything that we can do to resolve their difficulties. In particular, the Bank of England is putting an enormous effort into bringing the deposit protection scheme into action as soon as is humanly possible. The Deposit Protection Board will be writing to depositors immediately, inviting them to make claims. Our latest estimate is that the United Kingdom branches at the bank had some 50,000 sterling accounts, although some customers may have had more than one account. The arrangements to make payments cannot commence until the winding-up order has been granted, but the bank has obtained an expedited hearing for the order which is to take place on Monday. Once the order has been granted, the board will act as quickly as possible to meet valid claims.

As my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary has explained, the provisional liquidator, the Bank of England, and the main high street banks have put in place arrangements to aid the banks in assessing applications by BCCI customers for alternative facilities. I am glad to hear that a number of the high street banks have set up special centres for dealing with applications from such customers and I hope very much that they will be able to respond helpfully in these cases.

The Bank of England and the liquidator have also kept in close touch with the majority shareholders in BCCI to seek their co-operation in securing an orderly rundown of the company and to minimise losses to depositors.

Looking further ahead, the Government and the Bank of England will be considering carefully what lessons this case has for the system of banking supervision in this country and for the framework of international co-operation among banking supervisors.

A number of questions have been raised both in the House and elsewhere about the events leading up to the authorities' action on July 5. In particular, it has been suggested that the Bank of England ought to have taken action earlier to seek the closure of BCCI. Others have argued that it acted prematurely and should have sought the co-operation of the shareholders in restructuring BCCI

[Mr. Norman Lamont]

and putting it on a sound footing. There have also been questions about the Government's role in the affair although, as the House knows, under the 1987 Banking Act the supervision of banks is unambiguously the duty of the Bank of England and not of the Government.

My hon. Friend in his earlier statement set out the general grounds for the Bank of England's action and for its timing. However, in the light of widespread public concern, the Governor and I have agreed that there should be an independent inquiry into the supervision, under the Banking Acts, of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International, to establish the facts and to make such recommendations as arise from them.

The report will be made public subject to such restrictions as may be needed to avoid prejudicing any criminal proceedings and subject to the provisions of the Banking Act.

I will announce shortly the precise terms of reference of the inquiry and who will conduct it.

I should like to make it plain that the establishment of the inquiry is not to be taken as a criticism of the Bank of England. I have no reason to doubt that the Bank acted properly and promptly in the best interests of the depositors. Unfortunately, it will never be possible to prevent fraud and deceit. None the less, both the Governor and I believe that an independent assessment of the case is appropriate and I hope that all those who have evidence bearing on the matter will co-operate with it fully.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): I thank the Chancellor for his statement. I welcome the Government's agreement to an inquiry, for which we have been calling in the past week, particularly in the letter from my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition to the Prime Minister.

Will there be an interim report on the inquiry? Should not the inquiry's remit and the published report include —this is not yet in the remit—whether current regulatory procedures provide adequate protection to the customer, whether banks should have a statutory responsibility themselves to insure customers' deposits, what the role of auditors has been in this sorry affair and—this, too, is not included in the remit—what has been the Government's role? Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that, as well as questions about the supervision of banking, there are questions which must and, indeed, can be answered immediately on the Government's role in this affair?

Will the right hon. Gentleman tell us when Ministers first knew of the problems at BCCI, what they knew, what action was taken and, if no action was taken, why not? Will he explain why no action was taken after prosecuting authorities in America asked the Bank of England for assistance over BCCI, why no action was taken after BCCI pleaded guilty in the United States in January 1990, why no action was taken after the Federal Reserve Board asked for help in its inquiries and, especially, why no action was taken after the Price Waterhouse report 14 months ago? Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the Prime Minister was Chancellor at the time when written warnings were first given to the Treasury and that if mistakes are found to have been made Ministers will accept full responsibility for what has gone wrong and will not shift the blame to junior officials?

Will the right hon. Gentleman explain why the Treasury ignored warnings in the letters of 12 June and 19 June 1990, one from an inspector at BCCI about a possible fraud? Will he now tell us why Government Departments have engaged in the unseemly episode of buck passing from the Treasury, to the Department of Employment, to the Department of Trade and Industry, where its "couldn't care less" attitude means that the letter appears to have disappeared, so that while Ministers were losing letters, small and large investors were losing thousands of pounds? Will the right hon. Gentleman explain what actually happened? Will he confirm—I want a specific answer—whether, when the bank applied to the Investment Management Regulatory Organisation for a full licence as an investment manager, it was turned down as long ago as April 1990—the only applicant to be turned down? Should not that have been the cause for alarm bells to ring over the bank's activities?

Does the right hon. Gentleman now agree that the Prime Minister was not only unfair but wrong to prejudge events when he attempted last Thursday in the House to shift the blame to local authorities for being imprudent? Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that local authorities and small investors, including hundreds of business men and women—some now at risk of losing not only their bank but their businesses—cannot be held to blame if the failures are found to be those of communication between Government Departments and of inadequate regulation? Will the right hon. Gentleman now explain in more detail what practical steps are being taken to help small investors in difficulty and to help small businesses facing hardship? Will he demand an urgent review of the compensation scheme currently being offered by the banks? Does not he agree that this is a sorry and shameful episode of a Government slow to act and even slower to come to the aid of small investors, quick to blame others and even quicker in passing the buck among themselves?

Mr. Lamont: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) for at least welcoming the fact that the Government have decided to set up an inquiry to examine the lessons that may be learnt from this affair. However, his remarks might have been more complete if he had referred to the massive, unprecedented fraud on a worldwide scale which is the real source of the problem facing us and the many other people who have lost money as a result of this sorry episode.

The hon. Gentleman raised the issues of regulatory procedures, the terms of reference and the role of auditors. I shall, of course, make the House aware of the terms of reference and I intend that the investigation should be able to examine the issues raised by the hon. Gentleman. I know that he never wants to make political points, would never wish to exploit matters and always wishes to be fair, so I am sure that he will bear it in mind that, statutorily, the responsibility for banking supervision rests, as I said fairly in my statement, with the Bank of England.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned what happened in the United States. The Bank of England made a judgment having considered the facts of what happened in the United States. It concluded that what had happened there was a local matter—*[Laughter.]* I may also say that that was the view taken in the United States. Other agencies remained open in the United States and no branch of BCCI was closed down. The judgment had to be made by the Bank of England. That matter can be examined by the inquiry, as can the issue of whether alarm bells should have

been ringing earlier, as he put it. Those issues can and will be investigated by the inquiry. I shall make an announcement to the House about the terms of the inquiry. As I said, we intend its findings to be made public.

As for the compensation scheme, we have already made it clear in the House what the position is. My hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury made a statement about that, and I have nothing to add.

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee will wish to consider the timing and the extent of its own inquiry in the light of his statement? Will he clarify several issues? First, what is the timing of the inquiry likely to be? Are its hearings likely to be public? As for the terms of reference, are they likely to be narrow or will they cover the whole range of subjects which he mentioned? Will the judicial inquiry have access to the auditors' reports which would otherwise be restricted under the Banking Act 1987? Will the composition of the inquiry be such that it can make recommendations on matters that go far beyond legal considerations with regard to the broader issues of international and general banking supervision?

Mr. Lamont: On the timing of the report, I should hope that the conclusions could be arrived at as speedily as possible, but we must be realistic. This is a highly complex matter, but I am sure that it is right for the inquiry to be set up and conducted as soon as possible.

On recommendations about the supervisory regime, we shall of course look to the inquiry to see what it says about the regime and, indeed, that is one of the purposes of setting up the inquiry.

As for the type of inquiry, I have not yet decided under what powers the inquiry will be conducted. Of course, that affects whether or not the proceedings will be held in public. I will report to the House on that matter.

I omitted to reply to one important point made by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East. He referred to letters received in Government Departments and to a letter received in June 1990 in the Treasury, which was passed to the Department of Employment because it enclosed a letter addressed to the Department of Employment. The correspondence also drew attention to the losses made by BCCI which had already been published in audited accounts. The letter contained unsubstantiated allegations about corruption similar to those that had already been made. The Bank of England received a similar letter shortly after the Ambrose correspondence was replied to. That was passed to Price Waterhouse. The Treasury heard a number of similar allegations and rumours over the period in the House and from other sources. Those allegations were, of course, passed to the Bank of England.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): Does the Chancellor understand that although his statement may have satisfied uncritical loyalists, it will not have satisfied public opinion or the hapless depositors who have lost money? Why is the inquiry that he proposes so restricted in scope? Why does he not establish a comprehensive inquiry under a High Court judge under the terms of the Tribunals and Inquiries Act 1971? If such an inquiry were to establish incompetence on the part of Government or the Bank of England, would not it be right for him to undertake that all depositors would be fully compensated?

Mr. Lamont: I have already told the House that we have to make a decision on the powers under which the inquiry will be conducted. The House has been pressing for an inquiry and I hoped that hon. Members might have welcomed it warmly. Of course, unfortunately, the setting up of an inquiry cannot solve the many problems that have arisen from this very unhappy and very sorry affair in which we have seen fraud on a massive and probably unprecedented scale, and on a worldwide basis. We face a very difficult situation, as do many small business men. It is right to stick to the position that Parliament has laid down and it is important, as the House has said, to establish the facts of what has happened in this case.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): As the headquarters of the bank is in Luxembourg, does it not make one consider again the problems of a European central bank? The regulations in Luxembourg are so minimal as to be laughable. Is my right hon. Friend aware that I have a substantial number of Asian constituents, many of whom have telephoned me to complain that the Liberal Democrats and socialists are making party political capital out of their misery?

Mr. Lamont: I note my hon. Friend's point. It would be very regrettable if people just seemed to exploit a very unfortunate situation to make party points.

My hon. Friend referred to Luxembourg and other European supervisors. I hope that he will bear in mind, before he makes any criticism of them, the evidence that we have that this was an extremely sophisticated fraud and was extremely difficult to detect. My hon. Friend is quite right that there are matters that come out of this which raise questions about the international regime. I do not think that what has happened in this case enables us just now, before we have the results of the inquiry, to be critical about the EC regime post-1992. The EC banking directives then will be established on the basis of common high standards of supervision in the Community and on closer co-operation between supervisory authorities in member states. Again, these are issues that we shall want to consider when we have the results of the inquiry.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): I am grateful to the Chancellor of the Exchequer for coming to the House this afternoon to make a statement and announce an independent inquiry. Will he confirm that, under the Banking Act 1979, BCCI was a licensed deposit taker only and that from 1987 it became a full bank under the Bank of England? Will he also confirm that, although the Banking Act 1987 gives the Bank of England responsibility to supervise banks, it is nevertheless answerable to Parliament?

Will the Chancellor also confirm that the terms of reference of the inquiry will enable the inquiry to have power over persons and to interview the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, the former and present Secretaries of State for Trade and Industry and the present Secretary of State for Employment? They were all in the Cabinet at some stage and had responsibility for their Departments when they received a letter from the banking inspector of BCCI—not merely from a person in the street—who drew attention not only to the loans to which the Chancellor referred but to corruption. What happened to the letter once it was received by the Department of Trade and Industry?

Mr. Lamont: On the first point, I confirm that BCCI was established as a licensed deposit taker in 1979 and then became a full bank in 1987. The hon. Gentleman is also right to stress that although the supervisory authority is the Bank of England, the House is entitled to and will rightly ask questions about those matters. That is why the Governor of the Bank of England will go to the Select Committee next week. As head of the supervisory authority, he will be able to give a full account of the matter, in so far as he can under the restrictions of the Banking Act 1987. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not wish any possible criminal proceedings to be compromised in any way. However, I am sure that the Governor will want to assist Parliament in every way that he can.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that when Parliament agreed, only four years ago, to the Banking Act 1987, it made a clear distinction between the roles of the Treasury and the Bank of England. Prime responsibility for banking supervision lies with the Bank of England. Therefore, is it not right that the inquiry, which I welcome, should focus on the role of the Bank of England?

Does my right hon. Friend agree that not a shred of hard evidence has yet been adduced by any critic on the Opposition Benches or elsewhere to show that the Bank of England acted other than competently? That is confirmed by the fact that some people say that it acted too slowly while others say that it acted too quickly.

Mr. Lamont: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's comments and agree with what he says. No evidence has been produced to suggest that the Bank of England, in a very difficult situation, did not act promptly and competently. However, because I am fully aware that strong concerns have been expressed by hon. Members, I feel that it is right to respond to them and set up this inquiry. It is not sufficient simply that the duties of the Bank of England should be competently discharged; they must be seen to be competently discharged.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Does the Chancellor understand that it would be much better to have no inquiry at all than a cosy little inquiry, limited in its terms of reference, designed to bury this nasty scandal until after the next general election? Will he, therefore, urgently reconsider the widest terms of reference to enable a full investigation of the roles of the Bank of England, the Treasury, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of the Environment, including Ministers? We are now faced with a bank within a bank, and massive fraud and corruption largely based in the United Kingdom. Many people are wondering why there have been no arrests or charges and why no one even seems to be helping the police with their inquiries.

Will the Chancellor ensure that the Price Waterhouse reports of last October and June are published immediately? The Governor said last night that they have been made available to a number of people, with deletions to avoid identification and possible legal repercussions and there is no reason why they cannot be published. Does the right hon. Gentleman understand that there is mounting suspicion that the Government, including the Prime Minister, failed to act on the matter last year so as to smooth the succession in the leadership of the Conservative party? Does he understand that no action was taken at the beginning of this year to ensure that Arab unity was maintained prior to the Gulf war?

Mr. Lamont: This is a serious matter and I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman injects a tone of farce into the proceedings. The hon. Gentleman came and discussed the matter with me in the Treasury and was fairer in that meeting than he chooses to be in public. He is wrong to say that we are setting up a "cosy" inquiry. We do not intend or want anything to be covered up. It is in the public interest that we should have an inquiry. It should be as full as possible, and as much as possible should be published. That is my objective.

Mr. Patrick Ground (Feltham and Heston): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the primary responsibility for running BCCI lies with the owners and management of the bank? In relation to the advertisements that have appeared today, is it still open to the Sheikh of Abu Dhabi to provide funds to meet the deficit, particularly for the protection of small deposit holders? A number of us heard yesterday evening from the Governor of the Bank of England that small deposit holders who were protected were unlikely to receive payment until at least four weeks after the winding-up order. Will my right hon. Friend explore with the Governor of the Bank of England and others involved whether that period can be shortened?

Mr. Lamont: I will pursue that matter, but I doubt whether the period can be altered very much. The Bank of England has chosen to press ahead with the liquidation. That is the judgment that it has made in the light of the evidence it has about the extent of the fraud in this case.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Is the Chancellor of the Exchequer aware that, when I used to sit on my mother's knee, she used to say, "Brian, If ever you have billions of dollars to spare, whatever you do, don't invest it in a fraudulent bank"? That being so, can the Chancellor think of any conceivable motive why the Sheikh of Abu Dhabi invested vast sums of money in a fraudulent bank, when he and his advisers must have known, like the rest of us, that it was fraudulent? Will the Sheikh be invited by the inquiry to submit himself to cross-examination? Should the inquiry find out that the Prime Minister, other Ministers and the Governor of the Bank of England were partially negligent in this affair, can the Chancellor assure us that both individual depositors and local authorities will be bailed out by the Government?

Mr. Lamont: On the question of what the implications would be if maladministration were found or criticisms were made, I have said to the House that I have no reason to think that the Bank of England has not discharged its role and duty properly and competently. If other evidence came to light, I would then have to consider the implications of that. The matters raised by the hon. Gentleman relating to the Sheikh of Abu Dhabi are not for me; some of them could conceivably be part of the inquiry.

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the decisive satement that he has made today will be particularly welcome because the independent inquiry will identify a worldwide fraud on a massive scale and probably raise significant implications for banking regulation on a worldwide basis? Will he do

his utmost to ensure that the inquiry is so constructed that those who give evidence to it will not be immune from criminal proceedings in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Lamont: I note my hon. Friend's last point. I am sorry that I have to keep repeating to the House that we are considering the powers under which the inquiry will be set up. That matter has a bearing on various others. I entirely agree with my hon. Friend's first point, that there may be implications for the international supervisory regime and the co-operation between national Governments. We shall listen carefully to what the inquiry says and to the conclusions that it draws.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): The finance officers of the Western Isles council—one of the four Scottish local authorities caught up in this scandalous affair—committed a grave error of judgment in their reward/risk decisions about this bank. However, they were culpably misled by their brokers, who should surely be investigated. Will the Chancellor urge his colleagues at the Scottish Office sympathetically to consider the request by Western Isles council for additional borrowing consent? If the Secretary of State for Scotland agreed to that request, the burden inflicted on all the people of the Western Isles would be eased to some extent.

Mr. Lamont: I note what the hon. Gentleman says about the position of that local authority. Comments on that have already been made by the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Minister for Local Government. The hon. Gentleman spoke about the role of the brokers. I shall examine what he said, but I do not think that that is a matter for the inquiry.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): I warmly welcome my right hon. Friend's statement and congratulate him on coming so promptly to the House to say what he found. I urge him to include the role of local authorities in the inquiry's terms of reference. Unfortunately, my local authority in Bury did not take Brian's mum's advice, but invested the staggering sum of £6·5 million in BCCI in 1988. My constituents are angry about that and want to know from the council's Labour leadership why they did it. The inquiry would be an ideal way to find out.

Mr. Lamont: I note what my hon. Friend says. No doubt that his observations have considerable force, but I do not think that the behaviour of local authorities would be a suitable subject for the inquiry. The inquiry will be into what has happened, particularly with regard to the supervisory regime as it applies to banks. It would be a mistake for the inquiry, which will, I know, be looking into an extremely complicated matter, to go wider than that.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): The Chancellor must allay the suspicion that for political reasons the Government will want to play this long to overload the inquiry's terms of reference. This is a complex matter and might get entangled in sub-judice rules. To allay that suspicion, will he consider detaching from the main part of the inquiry those elements that are specifically referrable to the letters of June last year, which have clearly precipitated today's hasty decision? Will it look specifically at the role of the Treasury and the Department of Trade and Industry which, when it is not leaking letters, appears to be losing them?

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman accuses me of having political motives, but his motives in his questions seem a little suspect. I assure the hon. Gentleman that we have no motives such as he ascribes to us. It is in the public interest for there to be an inquiry and it is also in the interests of the supervisory authority, the Bank of England. I have confidence in the Bank of England, but I also think that it is right to have this inquiry. Obviously, it will look at the role of the supervisory authority, but it will also look at the role of the Government.

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): Does my right hon. Friend agree that allegations by the Opposition about letters being lost between Government Departments is a red herring, because all this information was already known to the Bank of England and it was for that Bank and not for the Government to take decisions? Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to say that the junior staff of BCCI are hard working and honest? In their difficult task of finding new employment, we should not allow them to be tainted by what has happened with their superiors. We should be giving those hard-working people every encouragement to make a new start elsewhere, because they are excellent employees, of the sort that should be snapped up by another bank.

Mr. Lamont: It is excellent that my hon. Friend has made that point. Many tragedies arise out of this affair, among which are the bank employees who have lost their jobs and face uncertain prospects. It would be monstrously unfair if they were tainted because they had worked for BCCI. I hope that everybody outside the House will note what my hon. Friend has said. I have said all that I wish to say about the letters. I do not believe that the letter to which we were referring contained something material that was not already in the public domain.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): Given the content of the June 1990 Price Waterhouse report, which led to the president and chief executive of the bank resigning when they received a copy of it, it would have been a scandal if the Chancellor had not announced today a wide-ranging inquiry into the events that led to this disgraceful situation. Will the Chancellor answer some of the questions that he has so far failed to answer? First, will the inquiry have the power to summon before it Ministers and ex-Ministers who may be able to contribute to an understanding of what has happened? Secondly, if there is any serious finding of blame or of negligence or failure to carry out their duties by those who are charged with the invigilation of banks, will he say that the depositors of the bank will be fully and amply compensated?

Mr. Lamont: The right hon. Gentleman's last point is the same as that made by the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore). I said that I would have to consider the position if the conclusion was that blame applied to the authorities or individuals, or there were findings of negligence. Plainly, we would then have to reconsider the matter, as happened with the case of Barlow Clowes. I assure the right hon. Gentleman—he would not expect anything less—that Ministers will co-operate fully with the inquiry. It is in the interests of Ministers that there should be an inquiry.

The right hon. Gentleman also referred to the resignation of the president and chief executive of the bank. That is a fact. Unfortunately, it did not prove to be

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the turning point or the end of the matter, as was hoped at the time. I understand that the idea was that restructuring and a new injection of capital would enable the bank to be able to continue as a thriving organisation. That emphasises how important it is to have this full inquiry and to get to the bottom of the facts of what happened.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): I thank my right hon. Friend for coming, at the close of play of the week, the moment that he decided that an inquiry should be conducted, to announce it to the House. We should all be pleased about that. Will my right hon. Friend look at the terms of reference to ensure that, when they are decided, they do not limit, legally, the provisions of the Banking Act 1987 in relation to the deposit protection scheme and therefore will not limit payment under that Act? We would not want the inquiry to limit the provisions of that Act. If the criticisms of Opposition Members of Parliament were analysed carefully, would not the logic of them be that if they do not like the Bank of England carrying out this task, the only alternative is for the Treasury to be the inspector? Do they believe that that would be any better or more reasonable? I would find it terrifying if the Treasury were the banking inspector for England.

Mr. Lamont: It might be terrifying to my hon. Friend, but it is also a pretty terrifying prospect for me. I think that he is right in the conclusions that he has drawn. The 1987 Act was drawn up after prolonged and careful consideration and study of the regimes in other countries, and I am sure that it is right to place the responsibility with the Bank of England.

I entirely accept what my hon. Friend said about the terms of reference and the need not to cut across any compensation that will be paid to depositors.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): I welcome the inquiry, but does it not represent an implied criticism of the Bank of England? At 8 o'clock yesterday evening, the Governor informed hon. Members on both sides of the House that he felt that an inquiry—a public inquiry, an independent inquiry—would be unhelpful to the depositors and to the liquidator. Will the Chancellor of the Exchequer tell us what he has said to him in the past 15 hours that has managed to change his mind?

The Governor told Members of this place that in regard to the report in October 1990 he kept the Chancellor of the Exchequer fully informed. The Chancellor at that stage was the present Prime Minister. He told us also that on 28 June, at a special meeting at Downing street, which the Chancellor and Prime Minister and the Governor attended, he informed them that there was to be a closure of the bank. In view of what the Sheikh of Abu Dhabi said today, does not the Chancellor bitterly regret not contacting him to see whether anything could have been done to bail out the bank before it closed?

Has this not been a fiasco of lost letters and missed opportunities? Does not the Chancellor think it important that we have a timetable for the inquiry before the recess? Will he confirm that he will be in the House on Monday to reply to the debate on these matters?

Mr. Lamont: As regards the most important point, which the hon. Gentleman raised with me when we met —whether there should have been an attempt to get the Sheikh of Abu Dhabi to put more money into the bank before it was closed down—that was obviously something which the Bank of England considered. However, as I have emphasised to the House, when the report was received it contained evidence—I can say only that, unfortunately, I am not free to say very much to the House about it—of massive and widespread fraud. In considering the conclusions of that report, it was the Bank's view that the bank should be closed down. That is a matter for the Bank of England and it is a judgment that no doubt the independent inquiry will also want to examine.

As for the dates, and when I and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister knew about the discovery of fraud, I was informed in general terms that fraud had been uncovered on 26 June. I was given some details of the section 41 report on 28 June, and the Treasury sent a report to No. 10 on 28 June. The final decision was taken on 4 July. On the first point that the hon. Gentleman raised, that this does not imply a criticism of the Bank of England, I discussed this fully with the Governor, and he has agreed with our conclusion. I believe that it is in everybody's interest that we have the investigation.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will endeavour to call all those who are rising in their places, but I ask them to ask brief questions and not to ask questions which have previously been asked and answered.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): I join in welcoming the announcement made by my right hon. Friend that an inquiry will be set up. Many of us are confident that it will show beyond any question of doubt that the Government and the Bank of England acted wholly in a timely and proper fashion. Does my right hon. Friend agree that in some instances there is a substantial difference, when exercising a statutory responsibility to close down businesses, between rumour and suspicion on the one hand and firm evidence on the other? Does he agree also that it is impossible to construct banking legislation on the basis that some shareholders in banks shall be informed shortly before a bank has to be closed down? The possibility of haemorrhaging would be unfair to some depositors while giving others an unfair advantage. These are matters that the inquiry should take into account rather than the attitude of the Opposition, who seem to want to undermine confidence in the Government, the Bank of England and the banking system, which amounts to a public disgrace and a political scam.

Mr. Lamont: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I agree with his second point. Of all the criticisms that have been made, the one that has struck me as a little bizarre is the complaint that the bank had been closed rather precipitately without warning. As my hon. Friend said, that would hardly have been possible in this situation, and is hardly possible in the nature of banking. As my hon. Friend said, and as the Governor has repeatedly said, it is one thing to hear rumours and suspicions, but it is quite another to have the hard evidence on which the regulatory authority can exercise its functions as laid down by Parliament, and as subject to judicial review.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Does not the Chancellor recognise that, despite his answer, there is a certain incongruity in his saying that the inactivity of the Treasury and the Bank of England was justified because

the rumours were unsubstantiated, but in the next breath saying that council treasurers and local shopkeepers should have acted on rumours about the rumours? Does he accept that all who have heard his statement today will know that the Governor of the Bank of England has been nominated as an official Government fall guy? Has not the decision already been taken that, if anyone is to hang as a result of the inquiry, the Governor will be suspended and not the Chancellor?

Mr. Lamont: I entirely reject that imputation. I have repeatedly said that I am confident that the inquiry will find that the Bank of England discharged its duties in this matter competently and expeditiously.

On the hon. Gentleman's other point, we have repeatedly pointed out that it is not for the Government, the Treasury or the Department of the Environment to recommend to individual investors where they should put their money. That is a judgment for which each investor is responsible.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): I very much welcome my right hon. Friend's decision to hold an inquiry, and I hope that it will be both speedy and comprehensive. I ask my right hon. Friend to ensure that it especially considers two matters. The first relates to a point already made by my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne), and that is the treatment of the employees. Not only is it important that they should not be tainted by the activities of their superiors, but it must be put on record that they have been treated shoddily since the closure of the bank. For several days they were kept in complete bewilderment about what their future might be and whether they would be paid. I hope that the inquiry will specifically consider the way employees are treated in such circumstances.

The second matter relates to the role of the auditors, which needs close examination. Is it not extraordinary that Price Waterhouse apparently certified the accounts of that company as true and fair, at a time when virtually everybody else who had any knowledge of the company was deeply suspicious about its activities?

Mr. Lamont: As I said, in framing the terms of reference we shall obviously take into account everything that has been said today and other representations that have been made. As my hon. Friend said, it is possible that questions may be raised in the inquiry about the role of the auditors.

A number of my hon. Friends have referred to the difficult time that employees have experienced, but I am afraid that that is a product and a consequence of the terrible and massive fraud that has been perpetrated. Of course, I shall bear in mind what my hon. Friend said about the employees, but it cannot be a matter for the inquiry. On his first point, we shall endeavour to ensure that the inquiry is as speedy as possible, but it will be dealing with a complicated matter.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Opposition Members have listened with interest to the Chancellor's compliments about the Bank of England. We are persuaded that poor Mr. Robin Leigh-Pemberton is now unassailable in precisely the way that the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) was unassailable before he, too, took a nosedive.

On the question of auditors' reports, for the past two weeks Ministers have insisted that the only sign of fraud in BCCI, until three weeks ago, was based on rumour. Is not the Chancellor aware that a series of auditors' reports—notably the Price Waterhouse October report commissioned by the College of Regulators—had documented fraud, and specifically a series of billion dollar loans to a clique of Saudi and Gulf so-called business men? Fraud is clearly documented in those auditors' reports. Will they be made public? The Chancellor will be aware that, if the Government are unwilling to make them public, it is within the power of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee to call for them.

Mr. Lamont: I will certainly consider the hon. Lady's latter point. Her second point is a matter for the inquiry and I have already answered her first point.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): When all is said and done, will my right hon. Friend try to ensure that whoever has to pay for the consequences of the misconduct, it will not be the British taxpayer?

Mr. Lamont: We have said that the existing compensation scheme should operate as it is now constituted under the Banking Act 1987.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I welcome the inquiry, in common with other right hon. and hon. Members, but does not the real blame lie with the Government, with their rush towards deregulation in the banking and finance industries, of which crooks and shysters took advantage—just as happened with savings and loans banks in the United States following deregulation under Ronald Reagan? The Chancellor should have learnt some of those lessons. Is not it time to establish an independent supervisory body for the banking industry? Can the Chancellor say when he will announce the inquiry's terms of reference? Will we know of them before the House rises for the summer recess next Thursday? The last thing that anyone—in the House or outside—will accept is yet another cover-up. We do not suddenly want to find that the letters that were lost in the Department of Trade and Industry ended up being used as cigarette lighters by the then Secretary of State, who was under some pressure and about to resign.

Mr. Lamont: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for introducing a touch of lightness to the proceedings. Having announced an inquiry in response to popular demand, the last thing of which we can be accused is a cover-up. That is an odd accusation to make. I will announce the inquiry's terms of reference as quickly as I can. The fraud in this case goes back a long time before the deregulatory process began and was perpetrated in many countries—not just the United Kingdom.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Can my right hon. Friend confirm that £17 million of the £23 million deposited with BCCI by the Western Isles council was itself borrowed by that authority on the money markets, not for the purpose of meeting the council's legitimate obligations, but to gamble on BCCI's higher interest rates? If so, does not that call into question the behaviour of too many councils in gambling with their charge payers' money and should not that aspect come within the inquiry's remit?

Mr. Lamont: It is not for me to comment on a particular local authority's investment policy, although no

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doubt my hon. Friend's points have a general application. I do not believe that the behaviour of the local authorities concerned should be part of the inquiry, which concerns the fraud at BCCI and the way in which the supervisory regime operated. However, I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will consider my hon. Friend's comments.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Does the Chancellor expect us to believe that for more than 12 months, the authorities could not find out about the drug-laundered money that was slopping about in BCCI, when, only seven years ago, the same Government managed to trace in 48 hours the National Union of Mineworkers' money in Luxembourg and other capitals throughout the world? The Chancellor moves from one squalid, shabby manoeuvre to another. We read in the *Evening Standard* on the eve of today's statement that Freshfields, the lawyers acting for the Bank of England, are acting also for the liquidators, Touche Ross. That is a direct conflict of interests. It is like a defendant going into court and being told, "You're going to be looked after by the prosecuting solicitor." I tell the Chancellor this—get that conflict removed, or it will be another scandal.

Mr. Lamont: I shall look at that. The hon. Gentleman's first point was really the same as the one raised by other hon. Members, and I can only tell him what I have told them—that we are setting up the inquiry precisely to investigate whether the fraud could or should have been discovered earlier.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): A number of questions remain unanswered. Let me mention three of them.

First, can the Chancellor confirm that, on 28 April 1990, IMRO decided that those who were running BCCI were not fit and proper people to have an IMRO licence? I understand that they were the only people who were subject to such a decision. Surely, if that was the case, the Government would have known about it.

Secondly, can the right hon. Gentleman confirm that, if necessary, the inquiry will produce an interim report, bringing as much information as possible into the public domain? Thirdly—although we were reassured to learn that Ministers wished to co-operate with the inquiry—a key question has not yet been answered: what did Ministers know, and when did they know it? I do not know whether the Chancellor has been able to consult his colleagues at the Treasury and to ask them whether they knew that allegations were being made by letter last year, but he could at least make a start and tell the House what he himself knew, and when he knew it.

Mr. Lamont: I have already told the House what I knew. As for the hon. Gentleman's second question, we can consider the possibility of an interim report when we announce the terms of the inquiry to the House. The matters that the hon. Gentleman raised in his first question—about IMRO and 28 April 1990—are for the inquiry to consider. We are setting it up to investigate whether IMRO's decision should have been taken into account.

Peace Train (Northern Ireland)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Goodlad.]*

3.27 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): It seems that, far from needing to do away with Friday sittings, we require all the available time to complete our business. A number of hon. Members have arrived in the Chamber; if the Minister does not object, I am happy to allow them to speak as well.

We have discussed some momentous events today. We have heard a statement by the Prime Minister about the G7 summit, and another by the Chancellor of the Exchequer about BCCI. Although fewer hon. Members are present now, we are about to discuss another important item.

For the past two years, the peace train has run between Dublin and Belfast. This year, it has travelled from Belfast to Dublin and then, on the "immigrant route", through Holyhead to Euston. It arrived here today, and we have had a meeting in the Grand Committee Room and a press conference in the Jubilee Room to mark the occasion.

The peace train was first run in 1989, and then in 1990, between Dublin and Belfast. It constitutes a protest against the continuous IRA destruction of rail services. The aim is to push goods on to the road so that extortion rackets can be operated. British troops and others face considerable danger in clearing the line. The peace train is a protest against that and against the prospect of job losses on the railways, which have almost been in danger of folding up as a result of the paramilitaries' activities. It is also a symbol of the growing peace movement—a protest against all forms of paramilitary activity in, and emanating from, Northern Ireland, no matter whom they involve. It is the IRA that has disrupted the railways, but it must also be made clear that action by Protestant paramilitary groups is entirely unacceptable. There should be no ambiguity in our condemnation of the acts of intimidation and violence in which paramilitary groups are involved.

The people who support the peace train do so irrespective of their views on the border, and irrespective of their political differences on other matters. They are united in saying that such matters should be dealt with through the normal political processes of democracy, participation and involvement. The movement has quickly gained momentum, and both its support and the scope of its activities have grown.

The peace train left Belfast at 11 am yesterday and, following a ferry crossing, finally arrived at Euston at 7.14 am today. The people on the peace train then boarded two double-decker buses with open tops and came to Westminster. The buses were driven by an Irish Catholic and a Northern Ireland Protestant, to demonstrate unity. We had a fantastic rally in the Grand Committee Room and an effective press conference in the Jubilee Room. Moreover, at Euston, we heard a telling expression of views by a broad range of people, some of whom I shall mention later.

The peace train's activities have been extended to Britain because the IRA has been involved in attacking railway targets here. There were deaths at Lichfield and Victoria, and bombings at Paddington. A section of line was taken out at St. Albans and there is regular disruption of morning rail services. It seemed entirely appropriate

that activities that had been effective in Ireland and Northern Ireland should be extended to this country to show that we are not prepared to knuckle under in the face of paramilitary activity here.

Both the railway unions in all the areas concerned and British Rail have been fantastically co-operative and have assisted us greatly.

The train is not merely a protest against the disruption of the railway: it is a symbol of the need for the British public to understand the strength of cross-community feeling for peace in Northern Ireland. There are hosts of initiatives and people are bravely standing up in the face of threats and violence.

The growth of the peace train movement is manifest. Its patrons include members of 16 different political parties in Northern Ireland, the Irish Republic and Britain. At the moment, they include at least 50 Members of this Parliament—I am sure that many others would wish to be associated with it—from four political parties—the Labour party, the Conservative party, the Liberal Democrats and Plaid Cymru, and I am sure that we shall add others to the list.

The peace train movement was sponsored by student bodies, trade unions from both sides of the water, church leaders of different denominations, actors, journalists, singers and so on. The poster that was produced shows that there are some 400 patrons from about 75 organisations, some of whom act in their own capacity. The patrons include Mary Robinson, the President of Ireland, who about a fortnight ago hosted a meeting in Dublin with peace train activists, in which I was privileged to be involved.

Support for the peace train goes beyond that of the published names of patrons, and includes the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, who wrote two letters in support, the Foreign Secretary, and the Taoiseach, Charles Haughey, whose message of support was read out at today's press conference by someone from the Green party acting on his behalf. That shows the wide support for the peace train—a Fianna Fail Prime Minister handing material to someone from the Green party. In addition, a message from you, Mr. Speaker, was read out at the conference.

Many Northern Ireland figures support the peace train movement, including the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis). There is also support from other peace organisations in Northern Ireland, including Families Against Intimidation and Terror. That organisation was set up by Nancy Gracey, who came back from the seaside one day to discover that her son had been knee-capped.

Much of the violence in Northern Ireland is not cross-community violence but involves IRA violence against Catholics and Protestant paramilitary violence against Protestants. It is difficult to operate the writ of law in some areas, and the IRA and the Protestant paramilitaries operate their own crude techniques. Nancy Gracey stood up and said that that should not happen. She developed an organisation which has wide support, including from within Protestant communities. She came to a meeting at the House, and the group who came included three Protestants and two Catholics.

An impressive speaker this morning from Families Against Intimidation and Terror was Maurice Healy, an IRA terror victim who was under a death threat and was excluded for a long time from Northern Ireland. FAIT took up his case, campaigned and issued leaflets, and the death threat was lifted. That organisation has campaigned also in connection with Mickey Williams.

Other groups include Enough is Enough and Consensus. I have the honour to chair the British section of New Consensus, but it operates also in Northern Ireland and Ireland. It has specific ideas on devolved government, a Bill of Rights and integrated education. Trade unions in Northern Ireland are involved in the "Hands Off My Mate" campaign, which is highly effective.

Given the failure of the Brooke talks, the peace train and other peace movements are welcome. They are helping to change the climate of Northern Ireland politics and will increase the likelihood of successful group talks. Those movements have an impact on the politicians who will be involved in such talks.

I have not had time to mention many other cross-community activities. The glamorous, publicity-conscious activities of the peace train are important, but there are also those working in communities and Churches who draw together people in both communities and who work hard, in an unsung way, to tackle problems. We must be unambiguous in rejecting intimidation and violence, death threats and deaths and bombings. We must say to those who are involved in those activities, "You must do as others in Northern Ireland have done. You must reject that technique and return to the use of parliamentary activity and pressure and to legitimate methods."

Those who believe in a united Ireland and those who believe in maintaining the border have legitimate views, but they must follow certain methods, however hard they struggle. Sometimes, democratic and civil liberty arrangements might need to be extended to ensure that that occurs at a greater rate, but that needs to be done forcefully and well. Ireland—north and south—is a fantastic place, but in places such as Belfast, and especially in working-class areas, there is a solid sectarian divide and barriers between the areas. Sectarian street signs divide people, yet the people in working-class areas where there is massive unemployment are the very people who need to work through the normal democratic institutions to improve their lot.

3.40 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesborough): I am grateful for the opportunity to lend my support to my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-east (Mr. Barnes) and to congratulate him not only on choosing the subject of this Adjournment debate but on the fact that it coincides with the arrival of the peace train from Northern Ireland in Dublin, from where it will cross to Britain.

At the end of the first world war, Winston Churchill said that when the rigours of war were over we could still see the spires of Fermanagh and Tyrone beyond the mists, but the problems of Ireland to which he referred are still with us. The fact that they are still with us is no fault of the constitutional politicians who seek to resolve the issue through, for example the recent so-called Brooke initiative inaugurated by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the work carried out consistently by Members of Parliament which, as my hon. Friend said, is often unsung and in most cases unknown.

About six weeks ago, I took a party of Irish Members of Parliament from Dublin into the Stormont buildings in the north. It was an historic breakthrough in cross-border

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co-operation because it was the first time that Irish Members of Parliament had been to the former Stormont Parliament. The visit was achieved with the full co-operation of the Northern Ireland Office and other Ministers, one of whom came with us. He took the Irish TDs—much to their astonishment—for a walk in the centre of Belfast. It was an extraordinary experience, unaccompanied by any publicity. It was not a media event or part of a media circus; it was an example of how people can come together in good faith in the interests of their community—the island of Ireland.

One of the proponents of the new consensus scheme to which my hon. Friend referred comes from my constituency, and I welcome that involvement. The peace train is an example of people power. We often heard about people power in the 1960s and sometimes in the 1970s, but we have heard very little about it since then. The peace train is an example of people power, of people of good will sending a message to terrorists—whoever they happen to be, and on whatever side of the divide they stand—that enough is enough. Terrorism creates orphans and widows; it does not resolve constitutional difficulties.

I commend my hon. Friend on choosing the Adjournment debate and I am grateful to him for allowing me to speak for a few minutes.

3.43 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): It would be remiss of me not to compliment the honourable work of my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) in connection with the remarkable peace movement. Earlier today in an extraordinarily brief speech—extraordinarily brief for me—I offered my compliments and support to the people involved at a gathering in the Grand Committee Room.

The Minister has listened sympathetically and attentively to my hon. Friend's fine speech. I need hardly say that the beleaguered Province could be helped by the institution and recreation of the parliamentary institutions that we take for granted. I make the plea, which was also made last night by the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), that a small way in which we could help things in the Province would be the setting up of a Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs. In terms of democratic institutions within the parliamentary framework, that would be an extremely fine gesture for the Government and the House to make to the people of Northern Ireland.

3.44 pm

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): I add my congratulations to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) on the way in which he introduced this short debate. I thank him for the happy circumstances that allowed the debate to take place on this day. I endorse the views expressed by the hon. Members for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) and for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), both of whom have strong records of support for peace and better community relations in Northern Ireland. I pay tribute to both of them. I have heard the particular suggestion of the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow. I hope that he will forgive me if I do not respond to the substance of that in this debate.

I pay special tribute to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East. I know that he would be the first to say that the responsibility and kudos for the organisation of the peace train and its activities over the past couple of years, and especially the events of recent days, should go to others. I know that he would want that put on record. Nevertheless, it is right that the House should recognise that the hon. Gentleman has been a staunch supporter of the peace train movement and its activities, and of Families Against Intimidation and Terror on many occasions in the House. He has a bright and shining record in terms of cross-community activity. As he has told me on a number of occasions as we have debated these matters, his commitment arises out of his socialist beliefs. However, he has always recognised that whatever the motivation of various people who share the same objectives and aims as he has, he is willing to work with them. I pay tribute to him for that.

I join the hon. Gentleman in condemning all those who involve themselves in acts of terror and violence in Northern Ireland. He was right to stress that that condemnation extends to all those, from whatever source or corner, who engage in violence.

I was glad that the hon. Gentleman expanded the concept of the peace train and linked it to what has happened in Great Britain. I was also pleased that he was able to say a word of appreciation not only to the trade unions, but to British Rail for its co-operation in the endeavour.

There have been people who thought that by disrupting rail services in Northern Ireland, they were in some way scoring some big point. They were not. The hon. Gentleman was right. They were involved in economic disruption and it is especially ironic that those who give support to economic disruption are at the same time claiming in the newspapers to be friends of investment in Northern Ireland and to be looking for more jobs. They complain that other people do not provide more jobs in the Province. If Sinn Fein and the supporters of the Provisional IRA were more committed to the people of the Province, they would be less committed to condoning violence and more interested in promoting employment and new investment.

The hon. Gentleman was right to say that such people were involved not only in economic disruption, but in personal disruption. It is one of the pleasures—that may be an unusual word to use—of being a Northern Ireland Minister to see from time to time activities that are designed to drive people apart having the opposite effect—drawing people closer together and breaking down the boundaries that have existed for many years. Those who have been involved in the peace train activities in Northern Ireland epitomise the spirit of many similar groups and individuals throughout the island of Ireland who refuse to allow violence to cause lasting damage to cross-community relations.

The hon. Gentleman was kind enough to mention the fact that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has sent a message of support. In the past few days I have been asked to provide a similar personal message and I shall do so. However, I have been able to put my money where my mouth—and my pen—would normally be. As he knows, I have responsibility for the central committee for

community relations. He will be pleased to know that the Northern Ireland Council for Community Relations has, to date, provided £8,500 for the funding of the peace train movement. If the movement introduces other projects that fall within the parameters of the community relations funding that we have set up in Northern Ireland, I am prepared to consider whether we can provide financial assistance for those projects. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will understand that that is a commitment of support, whatever the amount of money involved. The sums are not large but they are nevertheless important and can be used effectively. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept my comments in the spirit in which they are offered.

The hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention, as he has on many other occasions, to Families Against Intimidation and Terror. He has spoken warmly of them and supported them before. It could be said that FAIT's work is conducted on a voluntary basis and has enjoyed, in its turn, some support from the peace train organisation. The hon. Gentleman will also be pleased to know—we have not mentioned it in public before—that the central community relations unit has been talking to Families Against Intimidation and Terror to see whether we can assist it. I am happy to say that we have agreed to provide a seeding grant of £4,000 to enable it to prepare a strategy for its future development, which we hope will have been prepared by the end of September. Again, although the sums of money are not large—in this case they do not have to be—they are a reflection of the support that the Government are prepared to give to those involved in a variety of activities and who seek to build bridges to accentuate the fact that, in Northern Ireland, people work together on a cross-community basis as a matter of course. They often pay no attention to the fact that they are working together on a cross-community basis and it has been most encouraging to see the growth in cross-community activities in the past few years. There is no time to set out all the activities now taking place in the Province which seek to enhance that common ground. The hon. Gentleman referred to that as a concomitant of the political processes in the Province.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned trade unions and he will be pleased to know that I have visited one of the trade union headquarters in Northern Ireland and talked to its members about providing substantial support over a number of years to develop a programme within the union to bring people together. It could be used as a basis for extending the programme to other trade union activities in the Province. We are also talking to business and industry about what they may be able to do in the workplace to extend cross-community support.

The hon. Gentleman also mentioned integrated education. It is a matter of personal and governmental pride that, later this year, the new buildings for Lagan college will be open—it was the first of the secondary schools with integrated education in Northern Ireland. It is now one of only 12 such schools, but the number is growing at the rate of about two a year. In those schools parents from both sides of the community—because they demanded it, not because the Government willed it—have their children educated in the same classroom. There are children from both sides of the community in a school which places an equal value on both traditions—an important aspect.

Hon. Members know that integrated education will not be a panacea for the problems in Northern Ireland. Changes in the curriculum in schools include education for mutual understanding, cultural heritage, a unified history curriculum for the first time, and agreement is imminent on a core religious education curriculum—all of which will be applied to all the schools in the Province. That shows the way forward that is being taken.

We have had a good debate on a subject which is important and is changing the face of Northern Ireland for the better. The message that should go out from this debate is clear: terrorists should know that there are far too many decent, law-abiding, democracy-loving people in the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland and Great Britain for terrorism to succeed, whatever the price. The desire for peace which is in the hearts of the majority of people will ultimately defeat terrorism. I pay tribute today to all those who have brought that day one step closer.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at three minutes to Four o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 22 July 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SECURITY

Lone Parents

1. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the annual cost of income-related benefits paid to lone parents.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Michael Jack): In 1990-91 the expenditure was approximately £3·4 billion.

Mr. Squire: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. Will he confirm that less than one third of lone parents currently receive regular maintenance? If that is the case, both in equity and—given his answers—in the interests of the taxpayer, must not there be a greater effort to ensure that absent parents contribute and face their financial responsibilities?

Mr. Jack: In general terms, I can confirm that figure. I also confirm that only 23 per cent. of people on income support have their maintenance orders honoured. As my hon. Friend says, because absent parents do not honour their obligations to their children, the taxpayer has to make up the deficit, to the tune of £400 million a year. The Child Support Bill now in another place will deal with that problem.

Mr. McAllion: What is the annual cost of the tax cuts and other advantages that the Government have given to the rich? Does the Minister agree that the rich have received far more from the Government than ever the poor have, which has widened the gap between rich and poor during the lifetime of the Government? Does not that reflect the reality that this is a Government of the rich, for the rich, by the rich?

Mr. Jack: The hon. Gentleman will not tempt me into areas more appropriately covered by my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Treasury. However, to answer his question and to focus again on the subject of lone parents, in 1981-82—these figures are in 1990-91 prices—we spent £2·169 billion on benefits for lone parents, while by 1990-91 that sum had risen to £4·476 billion. That shows how high a priority we give to some of the people to whom the hon. Gentleman alluded.

Mr. Conway: Does my hon. Friend agree that this has nothing to do with a battle between rich and poor but is about the fact that families on lower incomes who fall within the income tax net have to subsidise fathers who abscond and leave their wives and children so that the state has to pick up the burden?

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend is entirely correct that people on low incomes make their contribution to the £400 million to which I referred. The Child Support Agency, to whose establishment the House agree last Thursday, will be able to attend to that matter.

Mr. Allen: For many lone parents the long-term answer has to be a job, with adequate child care. Does the Minister accept that he offers a choice between keeping women out of work on low benefits and subsidising low-paying employers through family credit? Why do he and the Government continue to refuse to support a national minimum wage of a measly £3·40 an hour? That would give many people on benefits the two things that they need—a decent job at a decent wage.

Mr. Jack: That question confirms that the Opposition see little point in continuing with family credit as a benefit. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman's words show that, in their view, withering on the vine has become total decay. The contempt with which the Opposition deal with the issue of the minimum wage is summed up by a quotation from their spokesman on employment, the hon. Member for sedgefield (Mr. Blair):

> "I have not accepted that the minimum wage will cost jobs . . . I have simply accepted that the econometric models indicate a potential jobs impact."

Are the Opposition reducing people to econometric models? Is that the amount of care that they show? Our Child Support Bill will make access to family credit easier. Family credit is important, as the Opposition will know if they have eventually got round to reading examples 10 and 11 in the White Paper "Children Come First", which show precisely how child care costs can be met, to the advantage of the working parent.

Pensioners' Christmas Bonus

2. **Mr. Atkinson:** to ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about the Christmas bonus for pensioners.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Miss Ann Widdecombe): The Christmas bonus has been paid by this Government every year since we took office in 1979. My hon. Friend will be pleased to know that it is paid to 12 million people each Christmas.

Mr. Atkinson: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the Christmas bonus will once again be paid this Christmas to every pensioner, by contrast with the performance of the previous Labour Government, who refused to pay it for two years running? Does she accept that keeping the payment level for some years raises the question of its viability due to increasing administrative costs? Will she review that level with a view to increasing it in due course?

Miss Widdecombe: I have pleasure in confirming that the bonus will be paid this year as in past years. It was this Government who made it statutory, rather than concessionary, as one of their first acts in 1979. That was a worthy successor to their first act, which was to introduce the bonus in the first place in 1972.

In considering any increase we need to remember that merely increasing the bonus by £1 would cost £12 million

and that to double it would cost £120 million. Bearing in mind the fact that the Christmas bonus goes to everyone who is entitled to it and is not a targeted benefit, we have to ask whether that is the wisest use of resources. At the moment we are targeting resources—for instance, in the recent packages worth about £280 million for poorer pensioners—and that seems a better use of this sort of money.

Mr. Flynn: Does the Minister recall that a few moments ago the Under-Secretary of State referred to a benefit withering on the vine? If the Christmas bonus were paid allowing for inflation, it would now be worth £59·17.

Miss Widdecombe: And it would cost us £700 million to pay it at that level. We are trying to use money to target poorer pensioners. It ill becomes the Opposition to criticise us when for two years they did not pay the bonus at all. It is better to pay it regularly and by statute than to go for ambitious uprating programmes and then fail to deliver for two years running.

Disability Benefits

3. **Mr. Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he is taking to ensure that disabled people and their representatives are consulted on the details of the two new disability benefits being introduced next year.

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): Disabled people have already been involved in testing early versions of the claim forms for disability living allowance and disability working allowance, with very encouraging results. We have now issued these forms to a number of organisations for comment, together with the draft regulations for the benefits and the first draft of the disability handbook which will be used by officials working on DLA.

Mr. Hannam: I congratulate and thank my right hon. Friend for responding to the need for full consultation with disabled people. I also congratulate him on the Government's record level of spending on the disabled.

In the consultation process, will my right hon. Friend take account of the representations about the extra costs facing disabled people for special diets and clothing, laundry and communications? When considering the development of the living allowance, will he take those costs into account and try to arrange for their inclusion?

Mr. Scott: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's kind comments. We are determined to involve disabled people and the organisations that represent them as much as possible in developing the new benefits—we have already done that—and in the way that they are administered. That is working successfully.

I take the point about extra costs. I believe that in general our structure of benefits reflects the additional costs of disability. I should certainly be reluctant to go back to the complexities of the former additional requirements—but I note my hon. Friend's point.

Mrs. Ree: Does my right hon. Friend agree that no matter how good a benefit system is, it is important that it be accessible to those in need? What progress is being made on modernising social security offices and providing a much more sophisticated system for the future?

Mr. Scott: We are certainly making a great deal of progress with the introduction of the Benefits Agency and with the new system of district offices, both of which will improve the efficiency of our delivery of benefits. If the system is to be accessible to people they need information about it. I was especially pleased recently to be able to launch the national benefits inquiry line, which will significantly help disabled people to understand the benefits to which they may be entitled and how to claim them.

State Earnings-related Pension Scheme

4. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the forecast extra cost of SERPS into the year 2035.

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): Expenditure on the state earnings-related pension scheme is estimated to rise from nearly £2 billion in 1991-92 to £16 billion in 2035-36, at 1990 prices.

Mr. Knapman: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that reply. Is not it crystal clear that any Government or party which sought to satisfy the funding of pensions at that level solely through state provision would literally be going for broke?

Mr. Newton: If to that prospective rise in costs were added the cost of some of the promises that the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) is fond of making, the costs would at least be doubled in 2035-36 and we should be moving into a pension system which I doubt would be sustainable for those to whom the promises were made.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Will my right hon. Friend contemplate increasing the benefits for people who buy their own pensions? What would happen if by some misadventure we were not returned at the next general election?

Mr. Newton: I very much agree with the implication of my hon. Friend's question. The right course is exactly the one that we have been pursuing, which is to make sustainable promises about what the state will provide and to give maximum encouragement to people to build up their own occupational and personal provision. We have done that with huge success.

Mr. McAllion: Can we understand from the Minister's earlier replies on this issue that he is confirming that the Government will not implement SERPS and have changed the uprating of pensions purely to cut the social security budget because they are too mean to give workers in this country the kind of pensions that people receive everywhere else in Europe?

Mr. Newton: Before the hon. Gentleman puts too much weight on that point, he should reflect on the fact that if we followed the pension arrangements of virtually all other European countries, 2 million married women in this country would not have pensions in their own right. Our policies are to ensure real promises to pensioners that can be kept. We have done that and our record compares very well with that of the last Labour Government, which included the non-payment of the Christmas bonus for two years running.

Disability Working Allowance

5. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment has been made of the effect on incentives to work for disabled people of the introduction of the disability working allowance.

6. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the effect on incentives to work for disabled people of the introduction of the disability working allowance.

Mr. Scott: The introduction of disability working allowance will provide a real opportunity to work for up to 50,000 disabled people who would like to do so, but whose earnings capacity is limited.

Mr. Watts: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the disability working allowance will provide an effective bridge for disabled people between total dependence on benefits and the world of work in a way that is rather similar to the job that family credit has done for families on low incomes?

Mr. Scott: I very much agree with my hon. Friend. Disability working allowance will remove a rigid distinction in the present benefit structure between ability and inability to work. As people become increasingly aware of the opportunities that are available to them, many will take those opportunities. One of the most important aspects of the allowance is that people who avail themselves of the opportunity to go into work will for two years retain underlying entitlement to whatever disability benefit they were drawing beforehand. That should give them confidence to try out work.

Mr. Gerald Bowden: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on this new and radical initiative, which offers the opportunity for independence and promotes integration of the disabled. Does he agree that it is far better to target resources on those who are in most need, in this case low-income families, than to make uncosted and fanciful promises, as the Opposition have done, which can never be fulfilled?

Mr. Scott: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend. The Government have a good record on incremental improvements in the benefits that are available to the long-term sick and disabled. We have made an increase in real terms of more than £7 billion a year to meet the needs of those groups and we have concentrated on those who need most help. I am sure that that is the right approach.

Mr. Tony Banks: Since we are talking about people with disabilities, may I raise a case that came my way this morning? It relates to a claim for attendance allowance in leaflet DS2(1990), which is straightforward. It is a good attendance allowance, but when trying to get hold of a DS1500 report from the local GP and from the hospital, my constituent encountered complete ignorance of DS1500 report writing. Has everyone been advised of the procedures, particularly those who will be approached by people asking for attendance allowance and for a DS1500 report?

Mr. Scott: I am surprised by what the hon. Gentleman has said and I should be grateful if he would send me details of the case so that I can follow it up. We are anxious that those who have to produce such reports are fully aware of the necessary forms and how to complete them. We are conscious that there have been some difficulties and that is why, when we introduce disability living allowance next year, we shall, to a considerable extent, rely on the claimant's assessment of the effect of the disability on his life, supported by a carer, a general practitioner or some other professional so that we can substantially de-medicalise the way in which we process a claim for benefit.

Mr. Bellotti: Will the Minister consider the following? He will be aware that fewer people—[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."] I can do it perfectly well without reading. He will be aware, as the House is, that over the past 12 months, fewer people with disabilities have gone into real jobs and that training and enterprise councils have recruited fewer people with disabilities for training courses than ever before. Will he now consider extending allowances to those who go on training courses so that eventually they can be encouraged to go into real jobs?

Mr. Scott: I believe that the allowances that are paid —[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."] Certainly not. The allowances should be attractive to disabled people. We are anxious that they take part in training schemes and avail themselves of opportunities for employment. I am also conscious that new technology will make it possible for more disabled people either to take jobs in places of work, or, increasingly, to work from home.

Mr. Dunn: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that it is the aim of the Government's policy to improve work incentives, to get people into work and to eliminate poverty? Bearing in mind those three points, would not it be extraordinarily stupid to introduce a minimum wage?

Mr. Scott: That matter has been dealt with effectively in the House on a number of occasions in recent days. I understand why those who analyse these matters are convinced that the introduction of a minimum wage would destroy, not create, jobs. Our approach is much better. When I meet disability organisations or disabled people, I find that the vast majority are keen to take the opportunity of employment. The Government have, for the first time, moved to a proper partial capacity benefit.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Has the Minister seen the all-party disablement group's briefing on these questions, with its strong criticism of the punitively high marginal tax rates that DWA involves for disabled people, leaving them with as little as 6p in the £1 of increased earnings? Is this not a fierce new poverty trap? The Government plan to save millions of pounds, as they have told me, by introducing the new allowance. Instead, why cannot they allow disabled people to keep more of their own earnings?

Mr. Scott: The right hon. Gentleman knows very well that when one introduces benefits that relate to people's earnings, there is a balance to be struck between having too steep or too shallow a rate of withdrawal of benefits as earnings increase. Under the system for DWA, if earnings increase, the income of disabled people will also increase. We have moved away from the over 100 per cent. withdrawal of benefit that operated under the Labour Government.

Pensioners (Income)

7. **Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of pensioners have income from occupational pensions or savings; and what was the comparable position in 1979.

Mr. Newton: We estimate that in 1988, 82 per cent. of pensioners had income from either savings or from an occupational pension, compared with only 73 per cent. in 1979.

Mr. Sims: Does not that figure give added weight to the point made by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State a few moments ago—that the best interests of pensioners are served by directing additional resources to those who rely entirely on the state pension, rather than on a general increase in pension benefits? Does not it also suggest that the best interests of pensioners as a whole are served by maintaining a stable economic climate and a low rate of inflation?

Mr. Newton: I entirely agree with the second point. As for the first, it is to assist those who are least well-off that we have focused additional resources on increasing pensioners' income support premiums in the past two or three years.

Mr. Allen McKay: Does the Secretary of State agree that there is a difference between the pension arrangements for Members of Parliament and directors of privatised industries, who give themselves vast pay increases on which their pensions will be based, and those for people who have only just entered schemes and will therefore receive very little?

Will the right hon. Gentleman assure the House that all this talk of income from savings and pension schemes will not interefere with state benefits or with the annual increase in those benefits?

Mr. Newton: We have made it absolutely clear that, having fully and faithfully—a phrase which I have used before—uprated the basic state retirement pension throughout our period in office, we intend to continue to do so. I have always acknowledged that, although a growing number of pensioners have extra income of various kinds, a good many still have no such income. That is why we have increased income support premiums: we want to direct additional help to those people.

Mr. Squire: Will my right hon. Friend confirm, in the light of his answer, that now that more than 80 per cent. of pensioners receive additional income it is essential at times to talk of average earnings, rather than only of state pensions, as Opposition Members often do? That applies particularly to comparisons with other European countries.

Mr. Newton: I agree, but I know that my hon. Friend will accept that we should always remember that averages are averages and that they conceal the fact that some people receive less than the average. We should bear those people in mind.

Social Fund

9. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will make a statement regarding the operation of the social fund.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. and learned Gentleman to the 1991 annual report of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on the operation of the social fund, which was laid before Parliament on 17 July.

Mr. Janner: Does the Minister accept that some areas do not spend their allocations, while others, such as Leicester, do not have nearly as much as they need? As a result, people such as my constituent, Jayne Cooper, of north Braunston—*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members do not understand. Question Time is the time when we protect our constituents from all the bureaucracy that the Government impose on them.

If I send him the details, will the Minister look into the case of Jayne Cooper and see what help can be given to this lady, who has been skewered by the fierce and narrow impositions placed on the use of the social fund?

Mr. Scott: Of course, I shall look at the case, if the hon. and learned Gentleman sends me the details. In both the north Leicester and south Leicester offices, all high-priority cases are being met and some medium-priority cases are being met in north Leicester. We are making arrangements to improve the method whereby funds are reallocated from offices with surplus resources to other offices that are under pressure.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The Lancashire county council welfare rights sub-committee—of which my right hon. Friend may have heard—fears that, in future, now that Kendal and Barrow are linked with Lancaster in the same office, when the statistics go on to the mainframe computer it may be impossible to obtain those that relate to Lancaster. Will my right hon. Friend assure me that they can be singled out? Lancaster has been given an assurance this year, but it is wondering about the future.

Mr. Scott: I have no reason to believe that the introduction of a new system will in any way inhibit our ability to obtain such information.

Mr. Pike: Is not it regrettable that people who apply to the social fund are often refused a grant and are then refused a loan because their income is not sufficient for them to repay it? Are not many people in urgent need thus prevented from receiving the assistance that they need so much?

Mr. Scott: Very few people are refused a loan by the social fund because of inability to pay; but, when someone clearly cannot pay, other procedures can be brought into play. Indeed, many thousands who apply for a loan in the first place end up with a grant instead.

Mr. Harris: The old system of single payments led to massive abuse and had to be changed, but will my right hon. Friend look carefully at the administrative cost of the social fund, as evidence to the Select Committee on Social Security showed clearly that the cost of handling individual applications was very high?

Mr. Scott: I agree with my hon. Friend about the old single payment scheme, and I seem to have the support of the shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury who said recently that nobody liked the system of single payments, which was extremely complicated for both claimants and staff. Any system which depends on discretion rather than on an automatic formula and precise regulations for the

delivery of benefit is bound to be more expensive administratively because of the discretionary element involved in the decision-making process.

Mr. Meacher: What is the point of the Prime Minister unveiling a citizens charter today if, as last week's report of the social fund shows, 27,000 of the very poorest citizens in our society got no help because they were too poor to repay it? That is not a very small figure, as the right hon. Gentleman suggested. Will any of the 185,000 people who were denied assistance from the social fund, because there was too little money in a cash-limited budget, get any redress today from the citizens charter? Is the right hon. Gentleman satisfied with the social fund, the administration costs of which last year, at £77 million, exceeded the total of all the grants paid throughout the year, which came to only £68 million?

Mr. Scott: The hon. Gentleman will not expect me to trespass on my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's ground—the citizens charter—of later this afternoon. I can say, however, that the social fund, with its element of discretion, has proved to be a much more flexible and effective way of meeting exceptional need and exceptional circumstances than the old single payments scheme, or its predecessor schemes.

Widows' Payments

10. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the current value in real terms of the £1,000 widow's payment announced in June 1985.

Miss Widdecombe: The widow's payment was introduced in April 1988. The current value of the payment at June 1991 prices is £789.

Mr. Flynn: Does the hon. Lady agree that the widow's payment was announced six and not three years ago and that at that time the widow's allowance that it replaced was running at £50 a year, which would now be worth £72 a year, making the widow's payment not £1,000 but £1,450? Is it not a disgrace that the Government have allowed these almost invisible salami cuts against this most vulnerable group of people? Is it not about time that we had a widows' charter?

Miss Widdecombe: The reforms that we have already introduced and the changes that we have made to the widows' allowances effectively amount to a widows' charter. We have introduced reforms which direct benefits towards those widows who are older and who therefore do not have a work record and also towards those with dependent children. We keep the level of the widow's allowance regularly under review, but I say to the hon. Gentleman what I said in response to an earlier question. The allowance is payable to every widow. We have to consider the proper use of resources. It is better to direct them towards those in need, as we have done.

Sir Anthony Durant: Does my hon. Friend agree that this benefit, which has only recently been introduced, is much better than the death grant, which was laughable, and that its introduction is a credit to the Government?

Miss Widdecombe: Yes, indeed. The death grant had long ceased to be a realistic figure. Benefits which provide immediate relief, through immediate payments, are very much to be preferred. Everybody with the necessary contributions record will benefit from this payment. It is therefore designed to relieve immediate need in a way that the death grant did not manage to do.

National Insurance Contributions

11. **Sir Bernard Braine:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received about the levying of employers' NI contributions on all earnings.

Mr. Jack: Employers' national insurance contributions are levied on all earnings except where an employee earns below the lower earnings limit. Following a consultation exercise, we have received representations from employers' organisations expressing opposition to proposals put forward by the European Commission which would result in contributions being levied on earnings below that limit.

Sir Bernard Braine: Does my hon. Friend agree that the cost of abolishing the upper earnings limit would be severe for many middle income earners, such as doctors, teachers and the like, who are absolutely essential to the proper running of our society?

Mr. Jack: My right hon. Friend alludes to a very important point. He is absolutely right that people such as teachers and members of the nursing profession would be included in a proposal to increase national insurance above the upper limit, but let nobody imagine that would be just those people. Anyone with a wage of, say, £250 per week who received a Christmas bonus of a similar amount would find part of that bonus taxed under the Opposition's proposals. We have flushed out a tax on Christmas.

Social Action Programme

12. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the progress of the social security policy initiatives in the social action programme.

Mr. Jack: Of the five proposals in the social action programme for which the Department of Social Security is responsible, one has already been dealt with and the Government are taking a positive line in negotiations on the other four. We expect to be able to respond positively to the proposals on convergence of schemes, minimum income guarantee, occupational pensions and the schedule of industrial diseases.

Mr. Taylor: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's warning that we are about to have the Christmas Adjournment, not the summer Adjournment.

Will my hon. Friend continue to work hard on those programmes? It is important that Britain is not seen to be objecting in principle to social programmes being discussed in the European Community, which is sensible. We want to ensure that application of the programme is based on national guidelines and does not cut across what would normally be a fierce national political debate between parties. That is what my hon. Friend should be saying to the Commission in relation to the programme.

Mr. Jack: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's support for the general line that the Government are taking. We much applaud the principle of convergence of social security schemes and acknowledge the need for common provision for social security benefits, but we stick hard to

the principle that the way in which the policies are worked out in each member country should be subject to the concept of subsidiarity. We adhere closely to that point of principle.

State Pension

14. **Mr. Andrew Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what recent representations he has received on the level of the state pension.

Miss Widdecombe: In recent months, we have received several representations on the level of the state pension from individual pensioners and from pensioners' organisations.

Mr. Bowden: Does my hon. Friend accept that although the state pension has more than kept pace with inflation, the great difficulty is that 750,000 pensioners receive only the basic old age pension and do not claim any income support? Will she see what steps can be taken to ensure that more of them accept their entitlement and claim income support?

Miss Widdecombe: All those who are entitled to income support should be given the necessary information. Even those who are unable to claim income support, not because they have failed to do so but because they are ineligible, are entitled to claim benefits such as housing benefit, community charge benefit and help towards national health service prescriptions. That fact should also be made widely known.

Mr. Tony Banks: What would be the pension for a couple and for an individual if the Government had not broken the link between pensions and earnings?

Miss Widdecombe: It would be substantially higher, and the value of pensioners' incomes would be substantially lower. The Labour party practised a link with earnings, but pensioners' incomes rose by only 3 per cent. During our term in office, pensioners' incomes have risen by 33 per cent. It is much more valuable to pensioners that their overall income should rise rather than that the state pension should be linked to something theoretical, which would cost employees and employers £7 in national insurance, would not benefit less well-off people and would not result in an overall rise in incomes.

Mr. Holt: Nevertheless, as the Government have pledged to equalise the state pension for men and women, would not one small step in that direction be for prescriptions to be free for over 60-year-old men as they are for women? Will my hon. Friend make representations so that that small category of people, whom I shall be joining in 10 days' time, will not have to pay prescription charges?

Miss Widdecombe: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his impending entitlement. We are considering all aspects of equal treatment and we have those matters under review. Any retired person who is on income support or is just a little above it is entitled to claim help towards NHS prescriptions. As I have said, we are taking steps to ensure that that fact is widely known.

Mr. Meacher: Will the hon. Lady, who suddenly seems to have forgotten her facts, confirm that if Labour's link with earnings had been maintained, the single pension today would be £13 per week higher and the married couple's pension £21 per week higher? Will she also confirm that as a result of the abolition of that link, the saving at the expense of pensioners is no less than £26 billion? Will she reconsider the facts that she gave a moment ago? The state retirement pension under the previous Labour Government rose by 20 per cent. in real terms, whereas under the present Government it has risen by 2 per cent. Finally, will she confirm that the reason why occupational pensioners have done well in the past year is mainly the state earnings-related pension scheme, and that a single person retiring today on SERPS, which Labour introduced in 1975, would get a SERPS pension of an extra £40 a week?

Miss Widdecombe: Almost all the hon. Gentleman's facts are wrong. He did not manage to get right even his basic question on the increases that there would be if we had maintained the earnings link, although I must give him credit for having got it wrong in our favour. The actual change would have been £64·80 for the single person and £103·75 basic for the couple. It is not true that pensioners' incomes have fallen. We have increased expenditure on benefits for pensioners by 29 per cent. The hon. Gentleman, whose party not only failed to pay the Christmas bonus but ruined pensioners' savings through inflationary policies, is on very weak ground. Why go back to a link which did not benefit pensioners because the 20 per cent. rise was wholly eroded by the overall decrease of 3 per cent? Pensioners' savings fell, the value of their pensions fell and the value of their incomes fell—that is the hon. Gentleman's record and it is not surprising that he is ashamed to talk about it.

THE ARTS

Royal Opera House

25. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what is the average total subsidy out of public funds paid for each seat for performances of opera in the Royal Opera house.

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Tim Renton): In 1990-91, the subsidy per seat for opera performances at the Royal Opera house was £27·28. By comparison, the figure at Welsh National Opera was £33·69.

Mr. Flynn: Will the Minister explain to those of us who are having difficulties with the concept of citizenship why the citizen millionaire, Gerald Ronson had a state handout of £52 a fortnight ago when he attended the opera house with his wife, whereas a citizen who is homeless and 17-years-old gets nothing from the state and one who is unemployed and aged 24 receives the princely sum of £31 to last the entire week? Is that fair?

Mr. Renton: I will deal with the small part of the question which referred to the Royal Opera house, which falls within my responsibility. It is fairly obvious that the subsidy per seat goes very much more directly to those who sit in the cheap seats at the top of the house than to those who sit in the expensive seats at the bottom. It goes far more, for example, to those who pay £4 to sit in the upper slips. The hon. Gentleman will be pleased to know that when I was at the opera house last week, I saw the right

hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) and the noble Lord Varley. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that they were not sitting in the cheap seats.

Mr. Jessel: Does it weigh with my right hon. Friend and with the Chancellor of the Exchequer that not only opera, but all the other arts and heritage, pull into Britain visitors whose spending on hotels, restaurants, shops and travel generates income, employment and a tax yield to the Government? Should not that and the possibility of a national lottery for the arts be taken into account?

Mr. Renton: I very much agree with my hon. Friend. It is obvious that performances at the great theatres and opera houses in London are attractive to tourists from both within this country and without. That pulls in a great deal of money, including VAT revenue on tickets. It is also noticeable that the subsidy for performances at the Royal Opera house is much less than that in Rome, which is more than double that of London, and much less than that in Vienna or Berlin. It is clear that if we were to decide in due course to have a national lottery, the proceeds of that could be helpful in, for example, restoring the fabric of the Royal Opera house.

Arts Council for Wales

26. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he last met the Arts Council for Wales to discuss funding.

Mr. Renton: I meet the chairman of the Welsh Arts Council from time to time to discuss topics of mutual interest. I visited the Welsh Arts Council's offices on 2 May and met the chairman and staff for a very useful meeting.

Mr. Hain: Will the Minister join me in congratulating the Neath-based West Glamorgan Theatre Company on its pioneering work in Welsh language productions, but will he recognise that it needs more funding, especially in view of the reductions in the centrally held funds of educational authorities? Will the Minister also encourage extra funding for the excellent Pontardawe music festival, which will be attended by 20,000 people on the weekend of 16 to 18 August but receives a derisory Arts Council grant of just £1,275, which would not even buy four seats in a box at Covent Garden? Does the Minister agree that our rich arts culture cannot survive on voluntary enthusiasm and dedication alone?

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman has a point, but it is also true that that culture should not survive on public subsidy alone. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will use his influence to persuade the local authorities in Wales to ensure that they, too, make their contribution to support the activities to which he referred. I am pleased to be able to tell the hon. Gentleman that, following a series of constructive meetings with the festival arts organisers, West Wales Arts will be providing additional support. A joint action plan has also been agreed that will allow West Wales Arts to be more closely involved in the festival, particularly in its marketing activities. I wish the festival every success.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: Does my right hon. Friend agree that a national lottery would help not only Wales, but other areas of the country? My right hon. Friend will be aware that I am a member of the Brighton Festival Trust, which raises a great deal of money both from business sponsorship and from affluent individuals. However, that trust would be helped immensely if ordinary citizens in the street could subscribe, as in many ways they would like to, through a national lottery.

Mr. Renton: I note what my hon. Friend says. I had the great pleasure of opening the Brighton festival a few weeks ago. At the moment we are set on the course of the Pools Foundation for Sports and the Arts, which will provide about £40 million per year to help sports and £20 million to help the arts, which will be beneficial to both those activities. I agree with my hon. Friend that it is worth while in the long run to consider how a national lottery, if a great many people subscribed to it, could help arts festivals as well as the fabric of art buildings.

Mr. Fisher: When the Minister considers funding of arts in Wales, following the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr. Hain), will he consider conducting a survey of Welsh local authorities to see the impact of the poll tax on their arts and library budgets? A Labour party survey of the London boroughs revealed that more than £9 million this year has been squeezed out of local authority budgets by the Government's poll tax policies. Does the right hon. Gentleman have the courage to conduct such a survey in Wales to establish the facts and to see the malign effect that his Government's policies are having on the very local authorities that he is urging to back the arts in Wales?

Mr. Renton: Listening to the hon. Gentleman's nightmare prescriptions, I sometimes wonder whether, unlike Glasgow city corporation, he knows his art from his elbow. The hon. Gentleman knows very well that under this Government the arts have flourished up and down the country. The only difficulty at the moment lies with some local authorities—in Bristol and in London for instance —which are hesitant in matching the amount of money that I am contributing through the Arts Council. I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on having delivered the last of the lectures paid for by that well-known Labour supporter, Paul Hamlyn. He has become the paid piper of Hamlyn.

The hon. Gentleman spoke of using the millennium to triumph abroad the cultural achievements of this country. I agree with him about that, but his words would carry more weight if he learned how to spell "millennium" which has two n's and not one.

Museums Association

27. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will be making an official visit to the 1991 Museums Association annual conference.

Mr. Renton: I shall visit the 1991 Museums Association annual conference in Newcastle tomorrow to make the opening address.

Mr. Knox: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Government's plural funding policy for the arts has given museums and galleries much greater freedom, enabling them to be more dynamic and consumer conscious?

Mr. Renton: I very much agree with my hon. Friend's comments. That is a point that I hope to make in my address to the Museums Association in Newcastle tomorrow. Our plural funding policy has enabled

museums to attract sponsorship from the private sector—for instance, from the Leverhulme trust to the science museum, the Wolfson Foundation to the British museum and Agnew's to the national gallery, all of which have come forward in recent weeks and enabled the museums to undertake a number of ventures, including redecoration, refurbishment and putting on new exhibitions, which they would not otherwise have been able to undertake.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is the Minister aware that, with the laudable exception of the British museum, more and more museums are now charging for entry? If they do not charge they threaten by suggesting a minimum payment of £3. That is having a direct effect on the number of children who can go to museums. Is the Minister not ashamed of the contribution that he is making to the poverty of many of our children's cultural life?

Mr. Renton: The hon. Lady's remarks are wholly misguided. As my predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Sir R. Luce) said when he introduced that policy, it has been left to the individual museum or gallery to decide whether to charge. Those who have decided to charge, like the natural history museum and the science museum, are now putting on remarkably exciting exhibitions to which children are going. I opened the science lab exhibition at the science museum last week, and it was filled with children. I suggest that the hon. Lady goes there herself to see just how wrong her remarks are.

National Gallery

28. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he has yet made an official visit to the new Sainsbury wing at the national gallery.

Mr. Renton: I had the great pleasure of attending the opening of the new wing by Her Majesty the Queen on 9 July; prior to that I had an informal preview on 27 June.

Mr. Carrington: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Sainsbury wing is a triumph in the way that it displays the pre-renaissance collection? Is not the Sainsbury family greatly to be congratulated on its most generous patronage? Does that not show the way forward for private patronage of national collections to work together to the great benefit of the nation?

Mr. Renton: I fully agree with my hon. Friend. It is a remarkable act of generosity by the three brothers and it follows many similar acts of generosity by members of the Sainsbury family. The early renaissance pictures are extraordinarily well shown off in the new wing and many hon. Members might benefit from going there for a period of quiet contemplation.

CIVIL SERVICE

Ex-Prime Ministers

35. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what civil service facilities, and under what circumstances, are made available to former Prime Ministers.

The Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Mr. Tim Renton): Civil service facilities made available to all former Prime Ministers are physical protection advice and services on the same basis as for other public figures considered to be at risk; the use of an official car; access to the official papers of their Administration. Briefing and help from local posts may also be provided in connection with overseas visits. Those facilities are long standing.

Mr. Banks: What a wretched and ungrateful response that is, from a Minister who owes a great deal to the former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), for all the promotions that he got out of her. When Ronald Reagan can get public funding in America for a library to house his comics, why cannot the former Prime Minister get enough money to set up her own foundation, the Margaret Thatcher Institute for the Promotion of Political Humility, or whatever it may be called? Why can she not have some extra staff to mop up the tears every time she bumps into one of the back-stabbers on the Conservative Benches, to push her eyeballs back in after one of those BBC interviews, or to switch off the polygraph after she has recorded her memoirs telling us the truth about the Belgrano and Westland? The Minister could do far more for one of the great political loonies of the century. When we are in control, we shall give her everything she deserves.

Mr. Renton: I very much doubt whether the commitment just made by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) will be followed up by the Opposition Front Bench. I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his extremely generous approach, and suggest that such generosity should also be made available to Lord Callaghan and Lord Wilson, who have not exactly been shrinking, blushing, quiet violets since they retired. The right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) might also benefit from substantially more secretarial services to help him with his speech writing.

Mr. Allason: Will my right hon. Friend clarify the circumstances in which access is granted for a former Prime Minister to his or her papers? Is it a privilege or a right? Does it extend to members of his or her staff? Where is he or she given access to those papers—in the Cabinet Office or elsewhere?

Mr. Renton: I think that it is probably correct to say that it is a privilege rather than a right. Former Prime Ministers and, occasionally, former Cabinet Ministers from time to time request—and, as my hon. Friend will know, are given—access to official papers from their Administration for research purposes. Given the nature of the papers, it is prudent as well as courteous to offer the reader a room in the Cabinet Office to read them.

Dr. Marek: Which of the facilities granted to former Prime Ministers are also granted to ex-Ministers of the Crown? There is great general interest in this question. To what extent have Prime Ministers made use of the various facilities in the past?

Mr. Renton: I was referring specifically to facilities made available to Prime Ministers. As I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason), access to Cabinet papers is sometimes given to former Cabinet

members when they request it. With regard to the new facilities announced by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister a few weeks ago, it would be invidious for me to go into financial details in the House, but I expect that those facilities will be widely used by all five former Prime Ministers. In comparison with what is available in other western countries, the facilities here are small beer.

Public Bodies

36. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service whether he intends to take steps to ensure that the list of those being considered for service on public bodies adequately reflects the interests of women and ethnic minorities.

Mr. Renton: Yes, Sir. I keep under active review the range of good practices currently recommended to Departments to ensure equality of opportunity for women and members of the ethnic minorities. The public appointments unit in the Cabinet Office is always keen to receive names and details of anybody whom hon. Members or, indeed, the general public feel would be suitable for addition to the list.

Mr. Hughes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is an encouraging trend and in the right direction for the Government to take? Does he also agree that there is a big difference between positive discrimination, which is unacceptable, and acting positiviely, which is what the Government are doing?

Mr. Renton: I very much agree with my hon. Friend that this is a good trend. The central list now contains more than 5,600 names—about one third of which are women, who are all well qualified for public appointment. I hope that the present trend, including the public nominating themselves, will continue.

Mr. Janner: Is the Minister aware that the recently formed all-party race and community group, of which the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) is a respected officer, is concerned about the trends, not only in the sector to which the question referred, but especially in the civil service, where the numbers of people from ethnic minorities in the top grades have fallen in the past year? Will the Minister undertake to look into the matter?

Mr. Renton: The hon. and learned Gentleman anticipates a question just ahead of us on the Order Paper. He is not right to say that the number of those from ethnic minorities in the civil service has fallen—*[Interruption.]* The number of those from ethnic minorities throughout the civil service has not fallen, but increased. However, I have no doubt that a further increase would be welcome. It is for that reason that the Cabinet Office gives out policy advice about the employment of ethnic minorities.

Civil Service Secondments

37. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how many civil servants are currently seconded to private industry.

Mr. Renton: So far this year, some 250 civil servants have been on secondment to industry and commerce. In addition, 70 civil servants are currently serving as non-executive directors, and a further 50 have been selected for short-term attachments under this year's excellent programme organised by the Whitehall and Industry Group.

Mr. Marshall: I welcome those figures, because the cross-fertilisation of ideas generated by those trends can only be helpful. Does my right hon. Friend expect a further increase in years to come?

Mr. Renton: Yes, I am sure that that will happen. The trend has been significantly upwards. One good aspect is that many civil servants are attached to customer-oriented industries, where they establish the right mood for next steps agencies—which in many respects serve as a curtain raiser for the citizens charter, about which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister may shortly have a few words to say.

Women Civil Servants

38. **Mrs. Currie:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what arrangements are now being made to ensure that women civil servants are able to maintain employment with the civil service during child-bearing years.

Mr. Renton: Departments and agencies have a range of measures to enable staff who so choose to combine a career with domestic responsibilities. They include flexible working arrangements, career breaks and child care provision.

Mrs. Currie: Am I right in thinking that the majority of civil servants are women, but that fewer than one in three of those going into the fast stream are women? Is it not in the interests of the nation as a whole, as well as of women, to have the very best people working at the top of the civil service which should include far more women than is the case now?

Mr. Renton: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend. Clearly it is a matter for women themselves—whether or not they are mothers—to decide whether they want to enter or to remain in the civil service. As my hon. Friend has said, more women than men join the civil service. To help them, we have introduced provisions such as career breaks and part-time working, which mean that many more women can return to the civil service after taking a break due to child bearing.

Next Steps Agencies

39. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what visits he has paid to next steps agencies to assess the morale of staff.

Mr. Renton: I have made several visits to next steps agencies, and have met many staff working there. From what I hear from chief executives, staff morale is generally very high.

Mr. Watts: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the policy of high-quality service to the public enhances job satisfaction for those working in executive agencies, and that the development of those agencies will play an important part in delivering the objectives of the citizens charter?

Mr. Renton: Yes, my hon. Friend is absolutely right. The purpose of next steps is to encourage executive agencies to provide a better service to the customer through good management and better staff training. In many ways, that serves as a prologue or curtain raiser to the citizens charter.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

3.32 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement about knowledge of, and understanding of, the operations of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International over the years before June this year.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer made a statement to the House on Friday and indicated that the Government will commission an independent inquiry into precisely those matters. I am now able to tell the House that the inquiry will be undertaken by Lord Justice Bingham, and that the terms of reference will be as follows:

To inquire into the supervision of BCCI under the Banking Acts; to consider whether the action taken by all the United Kingdom authorities was appropriate and timely; and to make recommendations.

All the matters that the right hon. Gentleman raised today will be covered in Lord Justice Bingham's inquiry. He will have access to all relevant papers, officials and Ministers. Nothing and no one will be held back. I assure the House that any relevant matter of any sort will be made available to Lord Justice Bingham. The conclusions of the inquiry will be made public.

Mr. Kinnock: I am grateful to the Prime Minister for responding to my request to make a statement. Is he aware that simply reannouncing the inquiry and the name of the person who will head it is not an adequate answer to the questions being raised by the public? Is he further aware that since that inquiry itself had to be prised out of the Government, it would be much more appropriate for the Prime Minister to give us now the answers which he can give us from his own knowledge as a result of having been both Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer?

Is the Prime Minister aware that, in the 17 days since the BCCI was closed, it has become evident that in March 1990 the auditors—Price Waterhouse—reported that the BCCI was in near-bankruptcy and had repeatedly made huge non-performing loans, some to individuals who did not even exist, and secondly, that in October 1990 a further auditors' report stated that grave and widespread irregularities continued in the BCCI's banking, and referred also to fraudulent documentation in the bank? In addition, there is now substantial reason to believe that in January of this year a formal report was made to the Bank of England and to the relevant Government Departments that the BCCI was linked with terrorist activities.

Is the Prime Minister aware that the Governor of the Bank of England told an all-party group of Members of this place last Thursday evening that he kept the right hon. Gentleman, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, fully informed of all developments concerning the BCCI? Is he aware also that the present Chancellor of the Exchequer told hon. Members last Thursday morning that until he became Chancellor he knew nothing about the BCCI—that was the responsibility of his predecessor?

The specific questions that have previously been put to the Government but not answered must now be answered by the Prime Minister. First, when did Ministers, including himself as Chancellor, first know of the very serious banking irregularities at the BCCI?

Secondly, when did Ministers, including the right hon. Gentleman as Chancellor, first know about fraud?

Thirdly, when did Ministers, including the right hon. Gentleman as Chancellor and Prime Minister, first know that the BCCI was being systematically used for the laundering of criminals' moneys and the funding of terrorism? These are—[HON. MEMBERS: "That is for the inquiry."] These are answers that the Prime Minister can give today.

Will the Prime Minister now tell us whether the decision to allow the BCCI to continue to operate after the receipt of the March and October 1990 reports was taken with the knowledge and the agreement of the Government? Why was the BCCI allowed to continue in operation after the Government had evidence that the bank was involved deeply in financing terrorists? Will the right hon. Gentleman agree that it would indeed be strange if the Government were not aware of the repeated reports from Price Waterhouse of very serious and continued irregularities at BCCI, of the money-laundering cases in the United States of America and, particularly, of the information available from the security services about practices at the BCCI?

Does the Prime Minister not agree that no Government can be allowed to shift the blame on to officials, whether junior or senior? Is he aware also that neither legal nor moral obligations can be confined to the Bank of England? This is a matter of ministerial responsibility, and ultimately the responsibility of the Prime Minister himself. The small investors, the depositors and the local authorities that have lost millions of pounds have the right to full and honest answers, and they need to know which Ministers knew what, when they knew it and what action they took. They deserve those answers now.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is muck-racking, and he knows it.

Mr. Kinnock *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinnock: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Sit down!

Mr. Speaker: Order. What is the point of order?

Mr. Kinnock: There is certainly plenty of muck about, and I suspect that a great deal of it is on the Conservative Benches. The Prime Minister must withdraw his remark. Millions of pounds have been lost by small depositors, small businesses and local authorities. We deserve better than that answer—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not responsible for the answers that are given.

The Prime Minister: No one in my Government is seeking to shift blame. We have established an inquiry to determine where the blame lies, and we shall publish that inquiry. I am surprised that the right hon. Gentleman——

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman always rises on a point of order. I shall call him later.

The Prime Minister: I am surprised that the right hon. Gentleman should again ask those questions. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor dealt with a number of them the other day, and the remainder are for the inquiry. The right hon. Gentleman asked for an inquiry, and he has got an inquiry. All documents will be available, and all officials and all Ministers will co-operate with the inquiry. Nothing will be hidden. The matters that the right hon. Gentleman raised are matters for the inquiry.

The right hon. Gentleman has twice shifted his ground in recent days—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] I will answer the question in my way.

Hon. Members: Did you know?

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I say to the House that there are many people outside this place who are very interested in what the Prime Minister has to say. He has a right to answer the questions put to him.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman called for a statement in this House, and that could have only two purposes—either to secure discussion on the Floor of the House of the very sensitive operations of the security services or to prejudice the results of an independent inquiry. If it is the first, the right hon. Gentleman of all people should know, because he is a Privy Councillor, that security operations are never discussed on the Floor of the House. I find it surprising that he did not seek a briefing on Privy Council terms—something which is always available to the Leader of the Opposition. If it is the second, the right hon. Gentleman should be ashamed of himself.

I shall tell the right hon. Gentleman precisely what I did and did not know. I did not see, nor would I have been expected to see, any of the audit reports that Price Waterhouse submitted during 1990. I was informed of the suspected fraud uncovered in a section 41 report only on 28 June this year. I had no previous knowledge of that.

I have established an inquiry and I have made it quite clear that it will be open. All evidence, all people—including Ministers and myself—will be answerable to that inquiry. I shall publish the inquiry, and then answer for it before this House.

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): Is not it worth reminding the House and the country that the BCCI was not a British bank, and that many of the problems have arisen because of the difficulties of international regulations? Have there been any international consultations on this range of issues?

The Prime Minister: It is likely that, at the conclusion of Lord Justice Bingham's report, those matters will have to be pursued, but at this stage it would be unwise of me to pursue them.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Although the appointment of Lord Justice Bingham to chair the inquiry is welcome and appropriate, will the Prime Minister confirm that he will have the power to compel witnesses to attend to give evidence, that the inquiry will include in its remit inquiring into the activities of the security services, and inquiring into whether it is appropriate for the Bank of England to approve banks registered under the toytown banking laws of Luxembourg that guarantee secrecy to crooks and vagabonds? Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that if Bingham concludes that, if the Government or the Bank of England has not shown a responsible duty of care to corner shopkeepers, compensation will be paid?

The Prime Minister: The hon. and learned Gentleman's remarks about toytown authorities in Luxembourg come ill from a party which purports to be strongly European and I suspect that they will cause strong offence in Luxembourg and possibly elsewhere.

On the hon. and learned Gentleman's substantive point, it will not be necessary to compel people to attend the inquiry. Those who will attend are Government servants or regulators. I have given to the House a commitment that they will all attend and give evidence—that includes members of the security services, if Lord Justice Bingham requires to see them.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): Is it not a fact that this House has imposed on the Bank of England a responsibility for regulating the banks, and that it is not the Government's task to do that? If there is a fault in the system, does it not date back to the codification of the bank's powers which was imposed by the Labour Government in the Banking Act 1979—which on Second Reading I warned would weaken the much more arbitrary powers which the Bank had held? Is it not appropriate that we should proceed via a public inquiry—a suggestion which I made a fortnight ago? Have we not just heard from the Leader of the Opposition one of the most cynical displays of political opportunism that we have seen?

The Prime Minister: I believe that each of my hon. Friend's points is correct. It is an undeniable fact that, under the Banking Acts, the Bank of England is the regulator and is responsible for these matters. The Governor of the Bank of England has made it wholly clear that he will co-operate fully with the inquiry, and he will undoubtedly do so.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): Like many others this weekend, I read a great deal about the BBCI's actions and the suspicions felt about the bank long before the recent revelations. Obviously, we accept that the right hon. Gentleman, as Prime Minister and as Chancellor of the Exchequer, may not have known about definitive acts of fraud, but conversations and discussions take place all the time between the Governor of the Bank of England and the Chancellor and it would be astonishing if he did not know something about that affair. Surely the right hon. Gentleman must have been informed about part of it.

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, the audit reports submitted by Price Waterhouse suggested that there was widespread fraud, which is a substantive point. I did not see the audit reports from Price Waterhouse; nor was I informed about them. As soon as I was informed, on 28 June, we saw the Governor of the Bank of England and the action about which the House now knows was subsequently taken. At no earlier stage was I given the information that the right hon. Gentleman implies that I was given.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Does my right hon. Friend accept that there should be some sympathy with the Leader of the Opposition because of the excellent situation resulting from my right hon. Friend's G7 talks and negotiations? This whole point is meant to cloud those negotiations. Is it not odd that the

party that wants [illegible] to support the Common Market is one reason why we have problems with the BCCI? Is it not odd that the Labour party is not willing to accept a full and independent discussion and inquiry, which will come to the truth without anyone being sheltered? How else can one explain the opportunism and muck-raking involved in raising this matter at this time?

The Prime Minister: I am surprised at that, for the reasons which I set out earlier. The Leader of the Opposition wrote to me on Thursday about the benefit of setting up an inquiry without delay. For once, on this matter the right hon. Gentleman and I were in complete agreement. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor announced such an inquiry on Friday. The Leader of the Opposition then denounced it, and today we have heard what he has subsequently had to say.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): Can the Prime Minister tell us whether his proposed citizens charter, will deal with the growing menace, freshly illustrated today, of buck-passing Ministers in bank scandals?

The Prime Minister: If the right hon. Gentleman and his party will stop devising artificial reasons for preventing us from getting on to the statement on the citizens charter, they will find out.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Will Lord Justice Bingham have the authority to investigate the manner in which so many people's misery has been shamelessly exploited for political ends?

The Prime Minister: The inquiry will be wide-ranging, but I should not imagine that Lord Justice Bingham will investigate that matter.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): Would it not be normal practice for security information linking terrorism and a banking house to be passed to the Prime Minister of the day by the security services?

The Prime Minister: As a former Home Secretary, the right hon. Gentleman knows as well as anyone in the House that I shall not answer questions in the House on security. I reiterate what I said a few moments ago—that any relevant material will be made available to Lord Justice Bingham's inquiry, and that the outcome of that inquiry will be published.

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves (Birmingham, Hall Green): Does my right hon. Friend agree, and will the House accept, that although the BCCI has had a suspicious reputation for many years in banking circles, it was at the prompting of the Bank of England that the Sheikh of Abu Dhabi was persuaded to mount a refinancing of the bank to lead it back to the straight and narrow, and that when that proved to have failed, and fraud was revealed, when the Bank of England considered that it might have sufficient evidence to stand up in court it acted promptly? Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is not the job of the Government or of Ministers to pre-empt the Bank of England in such matters?

The Prime Minister: That is entirely right. The moment that there was evidence of fraud, the Bank of England acted very promptly indeed, and so did the Government.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): How will Lord Justice Bingham be able to compel foreign nationals to attend his inquiry to give evidence?

The Prime Minister: This will be an inquiry into the regulators, not into foreign nationals.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): As we are informed by the press that the shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) is for ever dining or lunching in the City of London, is it not remarkable that he was not aware of the alleged—*[Laughter.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. and learned Gentleman come to his question?

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: —crime, and that the Opposition never once raised the matter, although they say that it was so obvious?

The Prime Minister: My hon. and learned Friend makes his point pertinently in his own way. It is indeed a surprising omission, and I can confirm that, so as far as I am aware, I have received no letter from the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith).

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Is it not the case that none of the big City players or institutions have lost money in the debacle, because none of them has done business with the BCCI for many years, because of its unsavoury reputation? Why was that information kept within a small charmed circle and not made available to my constituents, who have lost their businesses and their savings?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I interrupt the hon. Gentleman to remind him that the statement was about the inquiry and not about the bank itself.

Mr. Leighton: Why was that information kept not only from my constituents, but, apparently, from the Prime Minister when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer?

The Prime Minister: As you, Mr. Speaker, have just said, I have no knowledge of other banks' relationships with the BCCI. The inquiry will concern what knowledge the regulators had, when they had it and whether that knowledge was properly handled.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): As my right hon. Friend will have gathered from a number of questions today, there has been anxiety on both sides of the House about whether the approach of 1992 and all that follows from it will strengthen or weaken the controls over banks registered in places such as Luxembourg. Will the inquiry examine the impact that the European Community will have on such regulations, and can he assure us that it will strengthen them?

The Prime Minister: There are generally very high standards of regulation in Europe. Clearly we shall have to take account of them when we study the report—but these are matters that will need to be considered afresh in the light of the sophisticated but serious fraud that has been perpetrated by the BCCI.

Although people may regard it as entirely right, as I do, that the inquiry should take place, we should never overlook the fact that this was a sophisticated and detailed fraud.

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): Will the Prime Minister confirm that the results of the inquiry will be published before the next election?

The Prime Minister: I shall publish the results of the inquiry as soon as Lord Justice Bingham presents them to me. I hope that he will be precipitate and that he will speed ahead with his inquiry. We shall put no impediments in his way.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): Will Lord Bingham be able to look into the way in which it appears that the BCCI has been able to do so much business with local councils? Will he be able to call a senior Labour councillor from Bradford, who was apparently selling for the organisation for a number of years?

The Prime Minister: I can answer for Government officials, for the regulators and for the Bank of England. They will all be available; others must answer for themselves.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that this is a private notice question. Furthermore, there is a debate on this very matter later today. I shall call for three more from each side and then move on. We have two other statements today as well. I call Mr. Bell first.

Mr. Bell: The House will accept that the Prime Minister did not see the auditors' reports by Price Waterhouse. May we take it that the terms of reference of the inquiry will be as we have heard them today; and will Lord Justice Bingham be able to look at the competence of a whole series of Ministers of the Crown, including the Secretary of State for Employment, who sent the letter to the wrong address, the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who did not get the letter, the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, who claimed that he had no knowledge of it, and the present Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who also claims that he had no knowledge of it? Does not this go to the heart of Cabinet government and responsibility to the House?

The Prime Minister: I repeat that this was a serious fraud. The letter to which the hon. Gentleman referred contained no information previously unknown to the regulator, the Bank of England.

I have already answered the substantive parts of the hon. Gentleman's question several times, but I reiterate that it is clear from the terms of reference that Lord Justice Bingham will consider whether the action taken by the United Kingdom authorities was appropriate and timely.

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): Will the inquiry have powers to concern itself with the knowledge held by a certain number of investment brokers and with their relationship to the BCCI? In particular, will it be able to consider the amount of commission that they were paid by the BCCI to ensnare certain unwise local authorities—they never investigated the position—into investing in the bank?

The Prime Minister: I think that the Government may wish to consider the implications of the point that my hon. Friend raises, but I am not sure whether it entirely falls within the remit of Lord Justice Bingham's inquiry.

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): Is the Prime Minister aware that there is a significant difference between the public publication of the outcome of the inquiry and the public examination under oath of witnesses before the inquiry? Why have we not had the latter?

The Prime Minister: For the very practical reason that I do not want to take any action that may prejudice criminal investigations by the Serious Fraud Office—there is a danger that that would happen. Given the seriousness of the fraud, I am sure that no one would want that.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): The Prime Minister said a moment ago that all relevant information would be made available to the inquiry. Did he know that the United States authorities asked for information from the Bank of England some two years ago and that the bank replied that it could not disclose confidential information because of the Banking Act 1987? Did the Prime Minister agree with that judgment? If he did, and if that excuse is used at the special inquiry, does not that mean that the truth will never be revealed?

The Prime Minister: I have made it perfectly clear, and I reiterate to the right hon. Gentleman, that all the information required by Lord Justice Bingham will be made available to him. I understand that the American authorities are now satisfied with the assistance and information that they have had from us.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I called two Opposition Members, and I shall now balance that.

Mr. Charles Wardle (Bexhill and Battle): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the City of London understands the need for an inquiry and approves of it, but that it does not understand and will not condone the specious private notice question put down by the Leader of the Opposition?

The Prime Minister: I believe that the City of London will make up its own mind about that matter, and I suspect that it will agree with my hon. Friend.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): Will Lord Justice Bingham be empowered to investigate international bank regulation as well as our bank regulators?

The Prime Minister: I think that he may well make recommendations, since the scope of his inquiry may lead him to believe that it would be appropriate for him to do so. Where he does so we shall of course consider those and, if appropriate, take them up with other bodies as well.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Not now. I again remind the House that we are to have a debate on this matter later.

Citizens Charter

4 pm

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement on the citizens charter White Paper.

The Government have consistently extended competition to raise standards and to give the citizen wider choice. We have introduced privatisation and competitive tendering, reforms to give new choice in health and education, and measures to give new opportunities in housing. These have worked to the benefit of the conumer. The White Paper that I am introducing today will build on those measures.

Action will be expected from all public services on a number of fronts. First, I shall deal with standards. We will expect public bodies to publish explicit standards of performance and the results that they actually achieve. Targets will be set for improvement year by year. Secondly, on accountability, full, accurate information must be made readily available, in plain understandable language, about services provided. We will make it simpler to compare the performance of one body against another. That will put pressure on each to emulate the best and provide consumers with a basis for making choice. Except where their safety is threatened, public servants should no longer be anonymous. We will expect them to identify themselves to the public, by the giving of names on the telephone or in letters and, where appropriate, by the wearing of name badges.

Thirdly, in the area of redress, where problems occur people are entitled to an explanation, and to know what to do. Avenues for complaint should be well publicised and simple, and when that does not suffice, there should be clear routes to compensation or redress.

The citizens charter initiative will cover all our public services, as well as those large utilities which are now in the private sector. It is the widest ranging and most comprehensive ever undertaken by Government. It will involve more privatisation, wider competition, further contracting out, pay more related to performance, published performance targets—local and national, comprehensive information on standards achieved, more effective complaints procedures, tougher and more independent inspectorates and auditing, and better redress for the citizen when things go badly wrong. The citizen is also a taxpayer. Public services must give value for money within the tax bill that the nation can afford.

The White Paper is only the beginning of the charter process. Nevertheless, it contains well over 70 specific measures to raise standards in public service. I shall set out some of the main measures in the White Paper, the first of which is on education. I commend to the House two old-fashioned concepts which are the benchmarks of success—reports and results. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I say to the Opposition, particularly those who sit on the Front Bench, that they really should give a lead and set an example to their Back Benchers.

The Prime Minister: They do give a lead—that is the point.

I repeat, I commend to the House two old-fashioned concepts that are the benchmarks of success—reports and results. From the new school year, parents will be guaranteed a school report on their child's progress. Parents have a right to be able to discuss this progress with their children's teachers, and we shall ensure they know how to exercise that right. We shall also require schools to publish in standard format results achieved, and we shall ensure that tables comparing schools on a number of measures are published locally, and not just on exam results.

There will also be significant reform of schools inspection. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) will be publishing detailed proposals later this summer, but I can tell the House today that there will be regular inspection of all schools, carried out with the help of independent people from outside, as well as inside, the education profession. Results of inspections will be distributed to parents. Tougher, more rigorous inspection will be the result.

I move, secondly, to housing. This Government have given new rights to millions of householders, but we are determined that those who remain in public sector housing should secure a better deal. For housing associations, there will be a stronger tenants' guarantee. For council tenants, we shall update and improve the tenants charter that we first published 10 years ago. We shall examine ways to simplify and to strengthen the procedures giving tenants a right to have small but urgent repairs done speedily. We are ensuring that they receive proper information on the standards of service that they can expect. For the first time, we shall consider bids directly from tenants on the worst run estates who want to form housing action trusts. No longer will the improvement of their estates be frustrated by the opposition of the local council.

We are particularly concerned at the low standard of management of housing. We shall therefore bring forward proposals to extend compulsory competitive tendering into public sector housing management. The citizens charter will end, once and for all, the patronising of tenants by incompetent town halls.

Thirdly, on health, we have already introduced new contracts in the health service to raise the standards demanded of hospitals. Under the citizens charter, we shall expect publication of clear standards for patient care right across the health service, and we shall begin by taking two further specific steps for the benefit of national health service patients.

For out-patients, we shall require new procedures on the handling of appointments. This will mean that the practice of calling many patients to an appointment at the same time, which has been widely deplored, will be brought to an end.

For in-patients, there have been substantial improvements in the quality and quantity of care provided. Nevertheless, a minority of people still have to wait too long for treatment. We therefore propose that, from next April, guaranteed maximum waiting times for in-patient or day care treatment should be published. The initial focus will be on those treatments for which waiting lists are longest, and where the pain, discomfort and general reduction in quality of life are most significant. I have in mind hip replacement, hernia repairs, and cataract removals. Guaranteed maximum waiting times are being negotiated now, but could range from only a few months to over a year. If it appears that the treatment cannot be provided in the guaranteed time, the health authority or board will seek provision elsewhere, including, if appropriate, from the private sector.

[The Prime Minister]

Fourthly, I move on to transport. For road users, we will tackle the nuisance caused by road repairs. We will use new powers to make utilities digging up local roads co-ordinate their activity and complete work more swiftly. For large-scale road repairs, we will extend the use of "lane rental" incentives and penalties in order to reduce time taken for repairs. We will end the unnecessary coning off of miles of motorway when no work is being done. *[Laughter.]* I only wish that the country outside could see the Opposition Front Bench.

There are still too many long stretches of motorway without proper service areas. In order to speed up the provision of those facilities, we will end the present system under which the Department of Transport is solely responsible for identifying sites. In future, we will allow developers to take the initiative in selecting sites to provide the facilities that motorists need. We will reduce the delay in getting a driving test, and make it easier to book appointments.

The deregulation of coach services in the early 1980s has enabled a huge explosion to take place in cheap long-distance travel. Outside London, the deregulation of buses has brought in new operators and better value for money. In the light of that better service, we have decided that the time has come to deregulate bus services in London.

Travellers on railway and underground services have in too many cases been expected to endure sub-standard performance. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the Prime Minister, but I repeat that those outside are very interested in hearing about these matters. Hon. Members should not interrupt the Prime Minister in this way when he is making a statement.

The Prime Minister: It is not surprising, Mr. Speaker —they do not care about customers.

Travellers on railway and underground services have in too many cases been expected to endure sub-standard performance. The Government believe that here, too, further competition is desirable. We therefore expect to set out later this year detailed plans to privatise British Rail. British Rail's monopoly of the network will be ended. We will also set up a new independent regulator to ensure fair access to the network and protect the customer.

The Government will expect both British Rail and London Underground to be more open about standards of performance and methods of redress. British Rail will improve its compensation arrangements. It has been asked, as a start, to develop a new scheme, starting with annual season ticket holders. For the first time, where service over the previous year has been poor, passengers will be entitled to discounts when their tickets are renewed.

The Government want to relate pay to performance in all aspects of public service. For example, on the underground and the railways, we shall expect records of punctuality and absenteeism to be taken into account, where relevant, in packages of pay for drivers, guards, signalling staff and others whose service impacts most directly on the public. Dedicated workers should receive a better reward than those who fail the public.

Fifthly, I turn to local authorities. Many of the measures that I have already outlined will help to improve their performance. However, there are two further steps that I wish to announce today. We shall strengthen the powers of the Audit Commission. It will be empowered to publish comparisons which name local councils and education authorities. In future, they will also be required to publish a formal response to auditors' reports. We will also extend the scope of compulsory competitive tendering in local government.

Sixthly, in central Government we will promote more market testing, and extend contracting-out into new areas in the national health service, such as distribution, warehousing and non-emergency transport. We will publish a White Paper on this in the autumn. Government activities should not enjoy immunity from inspection and enforcement on such matters as health and safety. Except where national security is involved, all future legislation will ensure that Crown bodies are subject to the same inspection and enforcement procedures as others.

Seventhly, we have new proposals on the Post Office. We will ensure that clear standards for service to the public are widely publicised. A new regulator will be appointed who will arbitrate on complaints, monitor performance and advise the Secretary of State on setting standards and protecting customer interests. Here, too, we believe that further competition would benefit the public. We will therefore narrow significantly the level under which the Post Office has a monopoly for letter delivery. We will reduce it from the present £1 to a level much nearer the first-class stamp.

All these measures will bring direct benefits to our citizens, but we want to ensure that they have all the support that is needed in exercising the new opportunities the citizens charter will give. We will therefore act to strengthen the powers of the regulators of the public utilities on standards of service. We will ensure that the powers available to each will be brought up to the levels of the strongest. They will thus be able to set guaranteed standards and require compensation to be paid when those standards are not met. We will also enable them to required fixed appointment times for customers, for whom that is self-evidently important. We intend to end the annoyance caused to people waiting in all day for someone to call.

In the public services, effective inspection is the key to maintaining standards. I have already outlined our proposals for inspection of schools. The Government will also introduce an independent element into other inspectorates. As a first step, more lay members will be appointed to the inspectorate of constabulary later this year, and there will be a full review of the independence and effectiveness of the social services inspectorate. Detailed proposals will be published later this year. We will also be consulting on the introduction of a new concept, the introduction of a network of lay adjudicators. These will be people who can help the citizen to get a swift resolution of those small but irritating complaints which cause so much frustration.

Finally, the public are entitled to expect that essential services will not be damaged or interrupted by industrial action, which has not been put to the test of a ballot or which is unlawful in some way. At present, if the employer does nothing, the citizen is powerless. We therefore propose to amend the law. We will give a new right to individual members of the public to seek an injunction to halt unlawful industrial action affecting services covered by the citizens charter.

This White Paper is only the beginning of the charter process. Over the next few months, separate charters for specific services will be published, and we will be introducing a new charter standard for quality in public services. Only those who can meet the high standards that the public expect will earn the right to display a new charter mark.

We will introduce legislation, wherever necessary, to bring about the changes proposed. In addition, to drive the reform process through, I will be setting up a special unit in the Cabinet Office, and I will be appointing a panel of independent advisers to identify new areas for action to help carry the programme forward. I am pleased to be able to tell the House that its first chairman will be Sir James Blyth, director and chief executive of Boots.

The citizens charter initiative will be fundamental to the Government's policies for the 1990s. It is a programme that will carry on through a decade. There is much that is good in our public services. They contain a fund of talent, energy and commitment. Our new measures will release more of those qualities so that we can raise standards up to and beyond the best that is currently available. The charter programme will find better ways of converting the money that can be afforded into even better services. I want the people of this country to have services in which they as citizens can be confident and in which public servants themselves can take pride. I commend the proposals to the House. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have a heavy day ahead of us. I ask the House to settle down.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): For 12 years, the Government have presided over, and often prompted, reductions in the standards and provision of public services. They are still doing so. Having heard the Prime Minister's proposals this afternoon, it is possible to conclude only that they are a mixture of the belated, the ineffectual, the banal, the vague and the damaging.

Where are the practical policies in this White Paper for the action that is needed to tackle our crumbling schools? Where are the practical policies to reduce hospital waiting lists, which are now 40 per cent. higher than when the Government took office? And where are the practical policies, to be implemented now, to make up for the years of under-investment in a transport system that is increasingly congested and increasingly costly? Where are the practical policies for dealing with the growing housing crisis—after 12 years of record high mortgage repayments, a cut of 80 per cent. in the number of houses built for rent, and a trebling in the number of homeless families?

Where are the practical policies in the citizens charter for reducing the number of people living in poverty, which has increased threefold in the lifetime of this Government? Why does the citizens charter not contain a commitment to a freedom of information Act? Why does it not improve access to legal aid? Why does it not provide necessary rights for the millions of disabled people in this country? What is there in this document, or indeed any other Government policy, to improve Government accountability to the people of this country? Where, for instance, is the costing of these proposals? The Prime Minister is sometimes interested in that aspect of things. Is this not yet another Conservative pig in the poke which will be unconvincing?

Will the Prime Minister accept from me that, although any action to improve standards of safety, performance and accountability is welcome, giving people some compensation for poor service is no substitute for developing good services? Where is the commitment to improved training for those working in and managing services in the public and private sectors? Indeed, where is there anything to improve standards of provision and service for the 14 million people who every year have cause for serious complaint about the standards of goods and services produced by the private sector? Where is the mechanism in the charter for improving quality in local services?

The statement, quite correctly, says:

"The citizen is also a taxpayer. Public services must give value for money within the tax bill that the nation can afford."

What value for money did the Government give when they wasted £14 billion of taxpayers' money on maintaining a poll tax that nobody wanted? What compensation will the Government offer for that monumental act of waste and injustice?

Two months ago, the Prime Minister promised that his citizens charter would be a "revolution". What we have is not a revolution but a massive evasion. What is being offered is very little, very late, very limited, very slow and, after 12 years of a Government who have run down so many public services, very unconvincing.

The Prime Minister: What was unconvincing was the fact that the right hon. Gentleman talked about everything except what was in my statement. We know that customers do not matter to Labour Members. The right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) is the rambling rose of politics, but he certainly cannot stick to the subject matter.

The right hon. Gentleman talks of crumbling schools. In which education authorities is the worst education? Labour education authorities. In which housing authorities is the worst housing? Labour housing authorities. The right hon. Gentleman knows that. He talks of costing. He should have read the document and turned to page 38. He would have seen there the difference in value for money between the best and the worst local authorities, and the improvements that can be made within the increasing resources that we have made available. He should look also at all the detailed matters that I have announced in the document which will directly affect the individual lives of people at present facing frustration. They will find those frustrations removed and their quality of life improved.

It is all very well for the right hon. Gentleman to talk about what he would do. He would do nothing. Labour opposed privatisation, opposed contracting out, opposed competitive tendering and opposed every increase in individual rights that we have introduced in the past 10 or 11 years. We want competition in postal services; Labour does not. We will extend performance-related pay; Labour will not, because Jimmy Knapp will not allow it. We will require education authorities to provide the information and education to parents which they want for their children; Labour will not do that and will oppose it. We will strengthen the powers of the Audit Commission; Labour seeks to abolish the Audit Commission. Labour can say nothing to us about public services. Wherever Labour is in charge, public services are a shambles. We are determined to ensure that that will not be tolerated any more.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I suspect that we shall have plenty of other opportunities to debate this matter. Today is a private Members' day, and no doubt these issues can be raised on the motion for the summer Adjournment. I will allow questions to continue until 5 pm, when we will move on to the next two statements. I will give precedence first to those who were not called on Friday.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): May I suggest to my right hon. Friend that he should treat the carping criticism from the Leader of the Opposition with the contempt that it deserves? Does he agree that the charter will be widely welcomed by passengers, parents, patients and post office users because it will give the citizen more rights, more freedom, and more value for money? Does my right hon. Friend agree that the speeches made over the weekend by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) about utilities not being included merely show how ill informed the Opposition are?

The Prime Minister: It certainly does. Some of the widely trailed leaks that we have had from the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) in recent weeks are ill informed. I suggest that our colleagues and friends in the press get a better class of leak in the future. There is no doubt that the proposals will be widely welcomed. What has so piqued the Opposition is that they cannot match our proposals.

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): The Prime Minister was reticent about the privatised industries, notably gas, electricity and water. Will the same criteria apply to those industries as will apply to the public sector? What we have heard this afternoon is not so much a citizens charter as an election address from the Conservative party.

The Prime Minister: If the right hon. Gentleman reads page 44 of the document, he will find that the same criteria are applied to the privatised industries. On the success of privatisation, prices of electricity, gas and telecommunications have all fallen against the retail prices index, to the benefit of the consumer. The taxpayer also benefited from privatisation receipts to the extent of nearly 3p off the standard rate of income tax.

The Opposition seem deeply split on the question of privatisation. Even the Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen apparently recognise that it is a good thing. I remind the House that the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said recently: "I am against privatisation." He was then asked why it was necessary in Liverpool. He said:

"because the Liverpool people deserve a proper service."

If it is right for Liverpool—and it is—it is right for the rest of the country, whether the right hon. Member for Salford, East believes it or not.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): May I first of all congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on his outstanding achievement last week in international affairs? May I also congratulate him on his outstanding statement this afternoon on domestic affairs?

Will the protection for railway passengers be extended to airline passengers? Can my right hon. Friend say something about the consumer in terms of those who travel on British Airways and those affected by the British Airports Authority and the Civil Aviation Authority? Will those people get the same rights as railway passengers?

The Prime Minister: At the moment, different circumstances apply because of the range of competition that exists in attracting airline passengers. To that extent, there is not the same monopoly position—something which I believe has been the subject of some publicity in recent days.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Does the Prime Minister accept that, when the country has time to read this puce paper it will recognise that matters of some importance are contained in it, including proposals to extend competition? If they are to be of benefit to the travelling public, they are to be welcomed. The document also contains many trivial matters, such as lapel badges, and focuses on motorway services when there are parts of the country, such as my constituency, that are living in the mediaeval period in terms of road transport. Other matters are unformed, including the proposals for lay adjudicators. Does the Prime Minister not recognise that the real obstacle to giving citizens redress for grievances is the outdated, overcentralised political system over which the right hon. Gentleman presides, which offers no constitutional reforms to protect the true interests of the people of this country?

The Prime Minister: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman on his third point, but I am grateful to him for drawing the attention of the official Opposition to the many matters of real importance contained within the document. As the hon. Gentleman has said, I believe that those matters will be very welcome to the travelling public and also to the public who are treated in hospitals and to parents whose children use our national schools. They and many others will welcome what is in the document.

As the hon. Gentleman said, there are smaller matters in the document, but I do not agree that they are trivial, because frustrations and difficulties for custromers are not trival. They cause immense difficulty and we in the public service, and those of us who are responsible for it, should be in the business of removing those complaints. If they are trivial, let us get down to dealing with them, and that is what we propose to do. The hon. Gentleman mentioned particularly motorway services under the heading of trivial matters. I think that many drivers who travel many miles along motorways and find no services whatever would not regard the provision of more motorway service stations as a trivial matter.

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): The House knows that the Labour party hates good news, and the leader of the rubbishmongers on the Opposition Benches has confirmed that this afternoon. The charter is excellent news for a great many different groups of our constitutents, and they will welcome it. The House should welcome the charter most particularly because it redresses the balance of advantage in favour of the people who pay for and use public services and against the traditional socialist forces of incompetence, arrogance and indifference which are so well represented on the Opposition Benches.

The Prime Minister: I am not sure whether I need to add anything to what my right hon. Friend has said. The Labour party is officially concerned about the producers of services, whereas we are concerned about the users of services.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Has the Prime Minister noticed the state of disorder and anarchy in social

security offices throughout the country? There are more delays than ever before because the computerised system does not work and the overworked staff are using the two systems—manual and computer—together. Should he not get his own house in order before he advances on the Walter Mitty dreams in his statement?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is singularly ill informed. Otherwise, he would know of the Benefits Agency and its work to improve the service to social security claimants.

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on a charter which gives powers to the regulators of public utilities? Did my right hon. Friend see the article in *The Mail on Sunday* by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), which said:
"the real test will be how he handles the public utilities"?
On the basis of that test, does my right hon. Friend agree that his charter has passed with flying colours?

The Prime Minister: I certainly agree that it passes on the basis of that test and many others. The Opposition have been saying for some time that the test would be whether to increase powers for regulators. They are being increased but, for some curious reason, the Leader of the Opposition neglected to welcome it.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that there will be a general welcome for plans to make public authorities accountable, as they are usually the greatest offenders? Is he further aware that there will be satisfactiion that he has included housing authorities in the list? Housing authority staff will welcome the fact that something is to be done to redress the top-heavy bureaucracy, which exists in housing authorities despite the efforts of many dedicated members of staff.

The Prime Minister: Yes, I am grateful for the right hon. Gentleman's remarks. I believe that they will be widely welcomed throughout the country.

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): Of all the positive and practical proposals that my right hon. Friend has announced, the stripping away of the anonymity of the officials with whom one has to deal on the telephone will probably be the one most welcomed by the ordinary citizen. Will my right hon. Friend ensure that that proposal is not watered down by the public service unions and those whom they sponsor? Personal responsibility, or a measure of it, is the greatest guarantee of efficiency and courtesy to the public.

The Prime Minister: I will, Sir—with the solitary exception of cases where it is judged that there may be some personal danger to the person concerned. Only in those circumstances will we sanction the anonymity that previously existed. In the light of the question asked by the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) a moment ago, I should say that the members of the new Benefits Agency have already started to identify themselves by wearing name badges and ensuring that people are aware of whom they are dealing with.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): Does the Prime Minister agree that the giving of citizens' rights is empty unless those rights can be enforced and unless they are properly understood? Will he therefore reverse the process whereby millions of people have been denied access to legal aid? Will he tell the Lord Chancellor straight away to stop his withdrawal of legal advice and assistance to some of the most vulnerable people, will he end the wholesale closure of law centres and advice centres, and will he place a duty on local authorities to have a comprehensive network of advice centres to assist ordinary citizens?

The Prime Minister: This is a continuing programme, and there are many sectors that we still wish to look at. Those rights will be enforced, and will certainly be understood.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): Does my right hon. Friend agree that many teachers and local government officers will welcome the charter programme? Does he also accept that, because the targets are public, people will be able to see progress, what problems remain and identify the points for action so that everyone may gain? The Labour party makes a mistake in opposing the charter, because many people who vote Labour want to see such improvements.

The Prime Minister: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right about that, and people will see improvements. I am surprised that the Opposition scoff at the sort of additional improvements and rights that will be available to, for example, parents in the education sphere, where there will be independent inspection reports, a detailed prospectus, comparative information on exam, national curriculum and truancy results, summary results in local papers, annual reports on their child's progress, annual reports on the work of the school and comprehensive admissions booklets. Those are the new powers and rights for parents that the Opposition oppose.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Does the Prime Minister accept that some of us would wish to give consideration to the document before offering detailed criticism, much of which I hope will be constructive, particularly during the legislative process? Does he accept from me that a preliminary glance through the document reveals that its terminology is England-based—reference is made to the Department of Education and Science, the Home Office and the Department of Transport, and the illustration given in relation to motorways refers to Watford as the most northerly point? Will he give an assurance that our legal and educational systems will be given further consideration and that a separate document will be produced on those matters?

The Prime Minister: I can give the hon. Lady that assurance. A separate charter will be published for Scotland in the autumn, covering a wide range of matters. I am grateful to the hon. Lady for saying that some consideration would be necessary before reaching a conclusion on what is in the document—a policy that is not widely welcomed. Indeed, it would be a novel principle for some right hon. Gentlemen.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Is not the reaction of Opposition Members due partly to the fact that they have realised that they wished that they had come up with a charter, and partly because they realise that their union bosses would not have let them do so? Is not the lesson of my right hon. Friend's statement the fact that, to have quality control, one must separate the quality controller from the provider of the service? Is that not exactly the lesson of privatisation in the past decade? But has not my

[Mr. John Bowis]

right hon. Friend left out one major plank in consumer protection—ensuring that, after the next election, this Government continue in office?

The Prime Minister: I have some confidence about that, so it was not necessary to state it explicitly in the White Paper. My hon. Friend scores a bull's eye when he makes the point about regulators. It is also exactly true to say that the Opposition could not have come up with the proposals.

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): The right hon. Gentleman must be aware that the parts of the citizens charter that will be most closely scrutinised are those aspects dealing with the national health service. Within the citizens charter that he has proposed today, will the low priority given to people over the age of 65 requiring hospital treatment cease?

The Prime Minister: There is no such low priority for people over the age of 65—the hon. Gentleman is wholly wrong. In my statement, I said that we were going to produce guaranteed maximum waiting times for many treatments where the quality of life is significantly reduced —for example, hip replacements, cataracts and hernia repairs, which often specifically impact on the lives of elderly people. To that extent, there will be a direct improvement specifically, but not exclusively, for them.

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): I welcome the maximum waiting times for operations that my right hon. Friend mentioned, but how practical would such action be if there were no Government health reforms to build on —reforms that the Opposition opposed throughout?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes a powerful point. Such actions would certainly be far more difficult, as the improving service offered by the national health service illustrates.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Does the Prime Minister accept that the carefully packaged statement that he has given to the House today has far more to do with the likelihood of an early general election than with the content of the announcement? Does he also accept that it is one thing to receive complaints, but another to act on them? What we need from the Government, as they are responsible for the public services being run down, is an influx of capital into the public services that will satisfy the complaints that the consumers are making. It is not enough simply to receive those complaints.

The Prime Minister: The purpose is to set up a mechanism to ensure that those complaints are acted on, rather than leave people with the frustrating feeling, which they have often felt in the past, that their concerns are not being dealt with. I detected an air of nervousness in the hon. Gentleman's remarks when he said that he thought that the charter might have something to do with the election—clearly, he thinks that it is an election winner.

Sir Norman Fowler (Sutton Coldfield): Is it not a fact that, for years, the debate on public services has been dominated by the providers of those services, and the significance of this Green Paper is that it redresses the balance and gives a voice to the user? Would not my right hon. Friend also agree that the fatal flaw in the case put by the Leader of the Opposition is that he is controlled by the worst vested interests in the public sector organisations?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend is entirely right to draw the distinction between providers and users of the service. We act very much in the interests of those people who use the services, which is why we are determined to see through the action that I have announced today. As for the Opposition, their position of being in baulk as a wholly-owned subsidiary of the trade unions is well known.

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): Would the Prime Minister recognise that there are millions of citizens in this country who have had to stand 11 years of Conservative government, when all the matters, services and values in which they have faith have been taken away? Has the Prime Minister spoken to the Secretary of State for Education and Science because, as we debate the citizens charter, the recent education White Paper intends to take away the rights of hundreds and thousands of men and women in adult and continuing education, who are writing letters every day telling us that they know that the Government have no concern for their needs? Why should people today believe that the Prime Minister is genuine in what he has to say?

The Prime Minister: On the first point—it is 12 years, not 11 years. Secondly, if people are so dissatisfied, it is curious, is it not, that they keep re-electing this Government to power?

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Bearing in mind that the excellent reforms in the public service can succeed probably only against the opposition of public sector unions, does my right hon. Friend think it remarkable that he should be subject to criticism from a shadow Cabinet —*[Interruption.]*—in which 16 out of the 22 are supported by public sector unions—*[Interruption.]*

The Prime Minister: Over the hubbub from Opposition Members, I did not entirely catch the drift of my hon. Friend's question, but I suspect that it related to the large number of Labour Members who are sponsored by trade unions. Certainly, the Opposition policy owes a lot to that.

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): Although there is much to commend the Prime Minister's proposals, is he aware of the scepticism felt by the thousands of my constituents who have to deal with a council which keeps them waiting months on end for essential repairs, fails to answer their letters, and keeps needy people waiting up to a year for rebates? As none of them benefits in any way from the work of the Audit Commission, contracting out, or the tenants charter—all of which were supposed to solve such problems—why should my constituents have any more faith in the Prime Minister's proposals?

The Prime Minister: The council to which the hon. Gentleman refers is, of course, Labour-controlled—I make that point in case any right hon. or hon. Member had overlooked it. The proposals that will directly affect council tenants in the hon. Gentleman's constituency and elsewhere are the right-to-repair proposals. I understand the frustration that many citizens feel, because for years they have been unfairly treated by their local councils. It is only when improvements begin to be seen that they will

accept the value of the charter. Whatever it takes, and however long it takes, we will get it operating to the benefit of consumers.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the charter will be welcomed by all consumers of public services and that, as usual, Labour has made a fatal miscalculation in opposing it? The charter provides what every parent in the country wants—reports which show how well their children are doing in class, how well that class is progressing relative to others in the school, and how well the school itself is performing relative to others throughout the country.

The Prime Minister: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that the charter will be welcomed. It puzzles me that Labour Members affect to deride the proposals, while the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) kept shouting earlier, "That's our policy." Which is it?

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): Bearing in mind the concern felt by the whole country at revelations of an increase in reported cases of child abuse within the family and at places of safety, the growing number of missing children, and the rising number of those sleeping rough on our streets, how do the Government justify the cut made by the Department of Health in its grant to the National Association of Young People in Care? If the Prime Minister is really concerned about citizens and a charter, why has he failed to take the action that we promise, and to appoint a commissioner for children as recommended by the Gulbenkian Foundation? Is it because children have no votes?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady's last remark is unworthy of her—at least, I hope that it is unworthy of her. The purpose of the charter proposals that I have announced, and of those to come—a great deal has yet to come in the years ahead—is to build up and improve services to ordinary people throughout the country. I know that social services, for example, are of concern to the hon. Lady. The review of the social services inspectorate and the intention to include lay people among its membership show that we are determined to ensure proper inspections and to prevent a recurrence of some of the problems that have arisen in the past. That is a significant move forward.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): Does the provision for guaranteed maximum hospital waiting times mean that a hospital or health authority which fails to provide an operation in time will be required to purchase that operation from the private sector?

The Prime Minister: It certainly can mean that. The option will be there for an operation or treatment elsewhere in the national health service, or, if that is not possible, in the private sector. The guaranteed maximum waiting time will be honoured wherever the treatment is provided.

Mr. Edward O'Hara (Knowsley, South): What redress will be offered under the citizens charter to an applicant to the social fund who is refused a loan not because his needs are not recognised but because the local fund has been spent up for the year? Will such an individual have any redress against the local fund for not managing it well enough? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that that example shows that no citizens charter can compensate for the fundamental problem of underfunding?

The Prime Minister: Were any of the hon. Gentleman's constituents to find themselves in the situation that he describes, the right place for them to go would be to the hon. Gentleman, as their Member of Parliament.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): When the whingeing from the Opposition has died down, will not my right hon. Friend's announcement be recognised as a milestone for this nation? Will his advisory team continue extending the powers and capabilities of the local government and parliamentary ombudsmen, so that their respective judgments against bureaucracy will be given some teeth?

The Prime Minister: It is a milestone for us, but I suspect that it will be a headstone for Labour.

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): Will the Prime Minister help me with his definition of a citizen? Who will benefit from this great charter of his? Will Commonwealth citizens who are not settled in this country benefit from it? What about European Community nationals, or refugees and asylum seekers—from whom the Government removed the right to legal aid and assistance? Will they benefit from the charter? If not, what about a charter for them?

The Prime Minister: Everyone properly resident in this country will benefit from it.

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): Although the charter may not be good news for Opposition Members, it is very good news for my constituents, many of whom have to struggle with miles of traffic cones when driving on the A45 or when travelling to work from Norwich to Liverpool Street every day. It is crucial that those who serve the public should not be allowed to remain anonymous, and I urge my right hon. Friend to try to cut through all the jargon and to remove unintelligible job titles. Finally, is it too much to hope that, one day soon, we may have a matron in every hospital?

The Prime Minister: I missed my hon. Friend's last point, but I will ask him about it later. I agree with his other points, and that the bogus opposition displayed this afternoon represents a grave misjudgment by Labour Members.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): Which page of the charter gives rights to private sector tenants not to be abused by Rachman-style landlords? Which page gives rights to people receiving social security benefits, such as those students who this year will enjoy a zero income between now and returning to college? Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman forgot, in his rush to appear on television this afternoon, to provide any information on those two groups. Is it not the case that the Prime Minister's proposals are not a citizens charter but a privatisation charter? We all know what privatisation brought—higher prices, poorer services, and big pay rises for those who run the new companies.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Member for Gorton is in favour of privatisation, so why is the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) so upset? The hon. Member for Blackburn keeps saying, "That's our policy." Clearly,

[The Prime Minister]

Labour is much more deeply split than I had previously thought. If the hon. Member for Makerfield had listened and understood my previous comments, he would know that this is a charter for the public sector and for public utilities. The hon. Gentleman, like the Leader of the Opposition, talks about everything except the subject under discussion.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): Does my right hon. Friend recognise the important role to be played in his admirable proposals by the Comptroller and Auditor General? Will my right hon. Friend hold discussions with him, to ensure that the Comptroller and Auditor General's reports reflect not only value for money and the efficiency of accounting but those aspects covered by the citizens charter, and that he reports to the Public Accounts Committee accordingly?

The Prime Minister: We plan to discuss those matters with the Comptroller and Auditor General, and I will act as my hon. Friend suggests.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): Is the Prime Minister aware that many consumers of gas, electricity and water services feel that the regulators' present powers are far too weak? Why has the right hon. Gentleman vetoed an increase in the powers of even the strongest regulator—I refer to page 44—and the provision of a consumer ombudsman or of some other form of proper consumer representation?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman was one of those who was leaking inaccurate information before the statement was made. Now that the proposals are public, he cannot continue to produce the same rubbish. If he reads the White Paper, and if he reads what I said earlier, he will find that we are increasing all the powers of the regulators to the level of the most compelling powers they have. That will give them extra powers which go beyond those currently available to them. That is precisely what the hon. Gentleman said that we would not do, and precisely what the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) said was the test of the charter.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Is my right hon. Friend aware that almost everything that he has said this afternoon will be welcomed by most normal people throughout the country? I will give an illustration. An elderly and frail constituent of mine saw me at my surgery on Friday. She has had recently to change her doctor. She has been told by those responsible for the bureaucracy of the health service that she will have to wait three months for her medical notes to be transferred. Is that the sort of case in which action can be taken?

May I add one note of caution on railways? Will my right hon. Friend ensure that the Government do not rush into any decision on railway privatisation until he is certain that at least as good a service will be offered to the public as a result of any changes that might be contemplated?

The Prime Minister: I can give my hon. Friend that assurance. As I announced, we propose to introduce a regulator to ensure that the service is adequate and in the interests of those who use the rail lines.

The first point that my hon. Friend raised is not in the charter at this stage, but it is among the matters that we shall wish to consider.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Some of those hon. Members who have been rising in their places are seeking to participate in the summer Adjournment motion debate, and I shall endeavour to call them. I shall be able to call a great many more hon. Members if their contributions are brief.

Rail Crash (Glasgow)

5 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about the railway accident that occurred at Newton, near Glasgow, yesterday evening, Sunday 21 July.

At about 22.00 yesterday evening the 20.55 Balloch to Motherwell electric multiple unit train collided head on with the 21.55 Newton to Glasgow Central train near Newton station, between Glasgow and Motherwell. I understand that four people were killed, including both train drivers, and more than 30 people were injured.

The House will, I know, want to join me in expressing our deepest sympathy to the bereaved and injured; and our thanks to the emergency services.

British Rail is carrying out its own full technical investigation into the circumstances and cause of the accident, including the signalling, track and trains. British Rail will be holding a formal inquiry, starting tomorrow. The results will be made available to the Health and Safety Executive. The railway inspectorate, now part of the HSE, has already started its investigations. An inspecting officer has been on site overnight and a second inspector with specialist knowledge of signalling electronics has travelled to the scene to assist with the investigations.

After consultation with the Health and Safety Commission, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has today appointed Mr. Robin Seymour, Her Majesty's chief inspecting officer of railways, to carry out an inquiry under the Regulations of Railways Act 1871. His inquiry will be wholly independent. It will be held in public. The report will be published and we have asked him to report to us as quickly as possible. British Rail will, of course, act immediately should the need for any urgent measures emerge during the various investigations.

The cause of the accident is not yet clear. The House will agree that it would be wholly wrong to speculate on any conclusions that the inquiry may reach as to the cause of the accident.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): On behalf of the Opposition, I offer our deepest sympathy to the relatives and friends of the four people who died. Two of them were the drivers of the trains, who are inevitably in the front line when these terrible tragedies occur. I offer also our deepest sympathy to the relatives of those who were injured in yesterday's terrible accident.

Once again, we who speak about our transport industries express our unfailing admiration of the emergency services, which responded so swiftly and with such skill and courage. We pay tribute to their professionalism and dedication.

I express regret that the Secretary of State for Transport, who was here but a few minutes ago, was not here to make an announcement, which is the normal course of events. We recognise that he has many calls upon his time, but it was an error of judgment not to stay to make a statement.

Is the Minister aware that, according to the railway inspectorate's safety reports, significant collisions between passenger trains have increased by over 60 per cent. when comparing the first part of this decade and the last part of the 1980s, and that in 1989 there was a 100 per cent. increase on the average for the previous four years? That is a grave and growing area of concern which has caused me and others concern during the past four years. The increase in these collisions is alarming and I ask the Minister to tell us whether he is aware of it.

Has the Minister read the report of the inquiry into the Bellgrove accident, which took place in March 1989? There are certain similarities between that accident and the one that we are now considering. It involved new track alignment, converting double track to single-track crossovers, which in the event of failure, either human or in the signalling system, put trains on to a head-on collision. Will he recognise the acceptance by those carrying out the inquiry that replacing double crossover points with single ones is a cheaper option and that the justification for doing so relied solely on everyone observing the signal procedures? The Minister must be aware, however, that over 60 per cent. of railway accidents are due to human error. Therefore, the judgment to use the cheaper option is, to my mind, faulty.

Did the Minister note the recommendation in the Bellgrove report that any such changes should be allowed only on the condition that an automatic train protection system should be implemented of the sort that was fitted to some trains in the 1970s? I ask the Minister to tell the House whether the recommendation that the Secretary of State's permission must be granted before any further schemes are implemented will be put into effect. It is clear that the scheme to which I have referred had to be considered. Did the Secretary of State agree that it should be implemented? Was he satisfied with it on safety grounds? Was he concerned to see whether any automatic protection systems were built into it to avoid the inevitable head-on collisions that arise from the changes that I have described?

The Minister has told the House that an inquiry will be undertaken after consultation with the Health and Safety Commission. The inquiry will be headed by the chief inspecting officer of railways. Will the Government now launch an independent investigation into whether British Rail is pursuing cheaper options that are reducing safety standards, which have led to an alarming increase in significant collisions between passenger trains? We should not have to ask the same question after another 12 months have passed. What are the Government prepared to do about it?

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Gentleman asked me four questions. The first one related to the number of significant collisions between passenger trains. He was doubtless referring to the recent report from the railway inspectorate. The table in that report sets out the average number of collisions between passenger trains. For the years 1984 to 1988, the average is six per annum. In 1989, there were 12 collisions. That figure includes six railway trains—the rest of the collisions involved trams. I do not believe, therefore, that the hon. Gentleman or the House can draw any conclusion that there is a deteriorating trend in accidents——

Mr. Prescott: I spoke of a 60 per cent. increase over the 1980s.

Mr. Freeman: The plain fact is that in 1989 there were six accidents involving collisions between passenger trains, and that equalled the average for 1984 to 1988.

[Mr. Freeman]

The hon. Gentleman asked me about the Bellgrove inquiry. He is right to say that there are clear similarities between the tragic accident at Bellgrove and the accident at Newton. I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to paragraph 129 of the inspector's report on the Bellgrove accident. The inspector said:

"We consider that single lead junctions"—

the single-lead junction was the delineation of the track at Bellgrove and at Newton—

"are acceptable in principle of safety grounds and we do not accept that improvements in the efficiency of operation and maintenance are intrinsically at variance with the maintenance of an adequate standard of safety."

So the Bellgrove report did not state that single-lead junctions are inherently unsafe. Clearly their safety depends on proper operation, including the drivers of trains and signalling equipment at single-lead junctions. The Bellgrove inspector's report did not state that such junctions were inherently unsafe.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether permission had been given for the conversion of the line at Newton to a single-lead junction. Provisional agreement for British Rail to operate that single-lead junction had been given by the railway inspectorate. Of course, it said that its final judgment on the operation of the single-lead junction would depend on its subsequent examination, and that has not yet taken place. However, I can confirm that the railway inspectorate specifically gave permission for Brritish Rail to operate a single-lead junction service at that station.

The hon. Gentleman asked about safety, the implication being that in some way BR or the Government did not place safety at the top of their list of priorities. The hon. Gentleman will know that in the year 1990-91, BR spent £140 million on safety measures. For this year, 1991-92, we anticipate that BR will spend about £200 million on safety measures. That clearly shows that BR believes that safety is a top priority of passengers, and the Government support BR appropriately with funds.

Mr. Thomas McAvoy (Glasgow, Rutherglen): As the constituency Member affected, I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to ask an early question. I wish to place on record my strong objection to and resentment of the absence of the Secretary of State for Transport. He was in the Chamber only a few minutes ago, and I regard his departure as an insult not only to those casualties of the tragic accident, but to the front-line services that were involved.

I mean no disrespect to the Minister; I accept his sincerity in expressing sympathy to the relatives of those who died in the accident. I endorse all that he said about the emergency services. I would include the ScotRail staff, who played a significant role. I managed to go to the scene of the accident for an hour in the early hours of the morning, and the emergency workers were doing a first-class job. I also commend the local residents living adjacent to the scene of the accident who, despite risk to themselves, were the first over the fence to try to help those trapped in the carriage. As the local Member of Parliament, I am proud of them.

The newspapers this morning quoted the Secretary of State for Transport as saying that the Newton collision was a tragic accident. How could he say that when he does not have the results of the inquiry? What is he afraid of? His comments are the pathetic hallmark of a Cabinet Minister trying to shuffle away from his responsibilities. The fact is that single tracking is being pushed as a way to reduce costs and a route to privatisation. Can the Minister confirm that, if single tracking had not been introduced, those two trains would have been on separate lines and the collision would not have occurred?

Mr. Freeman: I associate myself with the hon. Gentleman's remarks about the emergency services. Anyone who has attended a railway accident, as I have, will have found it traumatic. We all appreciate the suffering of the 30 injured passengers. We also appreciate the fact that passers-by, third parties and those living nearby did all that they could to help. I pay tribute to the emergency services and to all who rendered assistance last night.

The hon. Gentleman was right to say that if there had been a double lead, the trains would not have run into each other. That is obvious. However, a single-lead junction —which, as the hon. Gentleman knows, should not be confused with a single track—is a feature of British Rail's operations at very many junctions. The inspector, Mr. Robin Seymour, is the same inspector who produced the Bellgrove report. In preparing his report on the Newton accident, I am sure that, yet again, he will examine the use of single-lead junctions. I shall not speculate on the cause of the accident, but I am sure that in investigating the possible cause, and in the light of his Bellgrove report, Mr. Seymour will look afresh at any lessons that can be learned from this tragic accident.

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): Is the Minister aware that we have not yet been given an answer to the reasonable question of why the Secretary of State is not here to reply to our questions? It is a reasonable question, and we are entitled to an answer.

Will the Minister specifically ask Mr. Seymour whether he was correct, at the Bellgrove inquiry, to say that single-lead junctions were inherently safe? In view of the number of dead and injured, the empirical evidence points to the opposite being the case.

Mr. Freeman: On the hon. Gentleman's latter point, I hope that he has not been misled. I did not say that in the Bellgrove report Mr. Seymour had said that single-lead junctions were inherently safe; what I said was that they were not inherently unsafe—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] There is an important difference. I quoted paragraph 129 in full, and I shall repeat it. It stated:

"We consider that single lead junctions are acceptable in principle on safety grounds and we do not accept that improvements in the efficiency of operation and maintenance are intrinsically at variance with the maintenance of an adequate standard of safety."

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): Does the Minister appreciate that many hon. Members represent towns and communities on the fringe of the great city of Glasgow, and that many of our constituents commute daily to that city? Does he accept that the accident, following so quickly after the accident at Bellgrove—and given the incidence of railway accidents to which he referred—perhaps makes the case for a wider inquiry into safety on the railways and the condition of the tracks, the signalling equipment and the rolling stock?

Would not that reassure the travelling public that everything humanly possible was being done to ensure safety on the railways?

Mr. Freeman: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would agree that the railways, compared with almost any other mode of transport, are relatively safe. They can never be completely safe because of the possibility of human frailty. The statistics show that in 1989—the last full year for which we have figures—total fatalities, excluding those who were trespassing or who had committed suicide on the railways, were 69. That figure is close to the average for the previous 15 years, which is the period for which I have figures.

I know that the aim of Sir Bob Reid, the chairman of British Rail, is for total safety on the railways. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman also wants that. Indeed, Sir Bob Reid recently confirmed that aim in a document entitled "Rail Safety", which I commend to the House. The aim might be impossible to achieve, but it is laudable.

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): I wish to offer my deep sympathies and those of my colleagues to the bereaved relatives of those who were killed, and also to the injured. I, too, pay tribute to the rescue services, which I understand worked swiftly, with a calm and determined air, throughout the night.

I welcome the public inquiry. Will it consider the matter of training? With all the new, sophisticated signalling equipment, is it not essential that everyone involved with trains should have proper training? We should know the type of training, its length, and how often it is available. Will the Minister or, indeed, the inquiry tell us whether the signalling system was installed to try to reduce the time of the Glasgow-London trains by four and a half or five minutes?

Mr. Freeman: On the first point, the hon. Lady may know that British Rail commissioned a study, carried out by the Royal Holloway and Bedford new college and by British Rail research staff, of incidents of signals passed at danger and seeking to draw common threads and to make recommendations. British Rail has accepted the report's findings. One of its principal recommendations was on the provision of better driver training. The report recommended that, rather than having a driver afraid of committing the offence of passing a signal at danger, possibly losing his job and being disciplined, there should be a much more positive culture among British Rail staff about signalling and awareness of the dangers in dealing with modern signalling systems faced not only by drivers but by their passengers. I welcome British Rail's response to the report. If the hon. Lady is interested, I shall send her a copy.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): Does not the Minister understand the worry of some Opposition Members at the fact that the person who conducted the Bellgrove inquiry is to conduct this inquiry? If that person made mistakes in the report, he might duplicate them and he might not feel that it was appropriate to recognise any mistakes that were made. It has been said that the present system is not inherently unsafe. That may be all right as a matter of principle, but, although I do not wish to prejudge the inquiry, twice that has proved to be totally unacceptable.

Mr. Freeman: The officer who has been appointed to conduct this inquiry is the chief inspecting officer of British Rail, Mr. Robin Seymour. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and I have total confidence in Mr. Seymour. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is not casting any aspersions on him. He is independent, and the railway inspectorate is now part of the Health and Safety Executive.

As for the wisdom of appointing the same man to conduct an investigation into a similar accident, I should have thought that the House would believe that there were certain advantages in enabling Mr. Seymour to reflect on conclusions that were drawn from the Bellgrove incident. I believe that uppermost in hon. Members' minds is the question: is this a pattern that can be avoided? It is important, and appropriate that the same officer who completed the Bellgrove report should report on this incident. That will allow any lessons learned from the first incident to come much more quickly to the fore.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): I again ask the Minister this question, because the House has still not had an answer: what important business persuaded the Secretary of State for Transport, who represents a Scottish constituency, to be absent from the Chamber during this important statement about a serious, fatal rail accident in Scotland?

Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that the safety recommendations made by the inquiry into the Clapham rail disaster in 1988 included the recommendation to install automatic train protection systems, which would have introduced fail-safe braking for trains? Has that recommendation been implemented; if not, why not? It might have reduced the casualties and deaths that occurred in this terrible accident.

Mr. Freeman: The recommendation to introduce automatic train protection—ATP—followed the Clapham accident. British Rail is trialling automatic train protection on Chiltern lines and on the Great Western railway. When lessons from those two trials have been learnt, British Rail will be able to draw up a standard for the introduction of ATP throughout the British Rail network.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): The Minister seems to be avoiding a question. He should know that it is deeply offensive at least to many Opposition Members, that the Secretary of State for Transport, who was here a short time ago mouthing his ritual "Hear, hears" in statements on other matters, is not here for a statement on deaths in a railway accident in Scotland. In the light of of the Minister's answers, the decision by the Secretary of State becomes all the more regrettable, because there is confusion to be cleared up.

Mr. Seymour's report on the Bellgrove collision recommended:

> "British Railways should submit all proposals for the conversion of double line junctions to single line junctions for approval by the Secretary of State irrespective of whether they are stages of major works."

Is it correct that the Secretary of State did not accept that recommendation? Is it correct that the inspector was told to go away and that it was his responsibility to deal with such transfers? Following a further fatal tragedy, has the same inspector been asked to report on what appear to be similar circumstances and to come back to the Minister with precisely the same recommendations that the Secretary of State has already turned down? If that

[Mr. Brian Wilson]

inspector comes back with the same recommendations, will the Secretary of State accept them? What a pity that the Secretary of State is not here to give us the answers.

Mr. Freeman: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman is not satisfied with responses from me. I have direct responsibility for the railways—I am the Minister responsible for the railways.

To answer the hon. Gentleman's two specific points, while the Bellgrove inquiry was under way, there was a moratorium on conversions to single-lead junctions. Once the Bellgrove inquiry had reported, that moratorium was lifted. Provisional agreement was given for the operation of a single-lead junction at Newton, and the railway inspectorate did not withdraw that agreement—[HON. MEMBERS: "By whom?"] By the railway inspectorate.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): If I ask the Minister courteously whether he can tell the House what business keeps the Secretary of State away from the House and makes him unable to make this important statement, will he have the courtesy to tell the House? That is the sixth time that that question has been asked.

Is the Minister aware that £5 million has been spent on this portion of the line and that the line could not be used for some time after completion of the work? Was that due to twisted or damaged rails, as was reported, or to some other cause? What was the cause? If the problem was rectified, when did that happen and who certified that the line was safe to use?

Mr. Freeman: I am not aware of any report of twisted rail on this section of the track before the incident. It is true that there is a report that the train passed the signal and damaged the junction. Clearly, details will come out in the report.

The hon. Gentleman is right about recent investment in the line. This section of the track has been extensively resignalled, and the resignalling has only just come into operation. The railway inspectorate, an independent body, is responsible for safety on the railways. All the necessary approvals, provisional in the case of the single-lead junction, had been given for the running of the trains.

Mr. Foulkes: What about the Secretary of State?

Hon. Members: Sit down.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Does my hon. Friend agree that most people recognise him in his position as Minister for Public Transport as not only competent in his job but extremely courteous? He has taken more trouble than any other Minister in my recollection to understand the problems involved in railway operations, and he is accompanied on the Government Front Bench by a Scottish Office Minister.

There has been much discussion about single-lead junctions. Does my hon. Friend agree that reversible track may reduce costs, but it cannot increase safety? I thank my hon. Friend for his comments on British Rail's safety record and for confirming that, over the past 15 years, the annual number of fatalities has been less than the three-day average toll of carnage and death on our roads.

Mr. Freeman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments.

Mrs. Irene Adams (Paisley, North): As the Minister seems to have great difficulty answering two-pronged questions, I shall put one simple question to him. Will he do the House the courtesy of telling us what urgent business has taken the Secretary of State for Transport away this afternoon?

Mr. Freeman: This is urgent business. I am the responsible Minister and I hope that I am giving the House clear answers.

Water Supply (North-west London)

5.29 pm

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. David Trippier): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about the failure of disinfection over the weekend in water supplied to the public by Three Valleys Water Services plc.

The company draws water from the Thames for treatment at Iver and supply through two of its subsidiary companies—Colne Valley and Rickmansworth—to some half a million people in north-west London and adjacent parts of Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire. At about 3.50 pm on Saturday instrumentation suggested that part of the chlorination equipment might not be operating normally. It took time to diagnose the fault and assess its consequences, but by Saturday evening it was clear to the company that some 2 million to 3 million gallons of water had been put into the distribution system without the level of chlorination needed for satisfactory disinfection. The company informed the appropriate local and health authorities, and at about midnight began to seek the assistance of the police and the media in order to warn its customers to boil water for at least a minute before using it. An extensive programme of sampling was also initiated within the distribution network on Saturday night.

The drinking water inspectorate in my Department was informed of the incident by the company at 11 pm on Saturday. The inspectorate has already started a thorough investigation in order to satisfy itself that the company responded in a timely and appropriate manner. It will also wish to identify the causes of the incident, and any improvements in equipment or procedures that ought to be made to prevent any possibility of a recurrence. If there is evidence that water unfit for human consumption has been supplied, the inspectorate will consider whether to recommend a prosecution.

The company has told us that, apart from chlorination, the remainder of the treatment process appears to have been functioning normally. The company has also informed us that the preliminary results of its sampling show that, despite the failure of disinfection, residual chlorine was present in all samples tested, and that only a small proportion of samples showed traces of any bacteria. My advice is that boiling the water in accordance with the company's guidance should have been an effective protection against any bacteria present.

I understand that the situation has been reviewed this afernoon by the water company in consultation with the local authorities and the health authorities, and I have just heard that those bodies have unanimously agreed that customers in the area no longer need to boil drinking water. The decision was made in the light off continual satisfactory sampling throughout the area.

The Government have established a system of independent statutory regulation of the water industry. We believe that the regulators have the necessary powers to deal with a situation of this kind. But, if it is shown to be necessary, we shall ensure that those powers are further strengthened.

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): I thank the Minister for his statement, and for giving the House the latest information about what has happened. Unfortunately, the statement leaves many questions unanswered.

I hope that the Minister will explain several matters to the House. First, will he tell the House why, if the incident occurred before 4 o'clock on Saturday afternoon, the public were not notified until the early hours of Sunday morning, and indeed, in many cases not until more than 12 hours after the incident? Will the Minister tell us, too, who will pay for the police time spent patrolling the affected areas to warn people of the dangers of drinking the contaminated water?

Will the Minister tell us more about what has happened in the past 24 hours, and what is known about the health impact of the incident? Will he confirm that several children have been taken to hospital, and that local doctors and chemists have been exceptionally busy?

In connection with the causes of the incident, is monitoring of chlorination not one of the simplest procedures in the treatment of water, carried out on a continuous basis, with continuous assessment, so that any company should know of any problem within seconds of something going wrong? Can the Minister tell us what went wrong not only with the procedures but with the fail-safe devices? Were those devices not adequate, despite the assurances given by the company only weeks ago?

Will the Minister confirm that this is not the first time that the companies forming Three Valleys Water Services plc have had to advise consumers to boil water? Will he acknowledge that Three Valleys is among the companies that were responsible for no fewer than 34 incidents of microbiological contamination of drinking water in 1990?

Perhaps the most serious implication of recent events is the fact that such incidents show that the entire system of drinking water regulation is inadequate. Is it not a fact that the drinking water inspectorate—the so-called drinking water watchdog—did not even visit the company for its inspection, but subcontracted the work to the consulting engineering company Watson-Hawksley?

The drinking water inspectorate report published only last week said that the company's procedures were satisfactory. If the procedures were satisfactory, why did the incident take place? If they were not satisfactory, why did the report not pick up that fact? Does that not prove the need for the drinking water inspectorate to consist of more than a couple of dozen civil servants in the Department of the Environment? We need an independent regulatory body with teeth.

Finally, does the Minister accept that, if the water supplied had to be boiled before it could be drunk, it cannot be deemed to have been fit for consumption, but must be considered unfit? Will the hon. Gentleman, who has the power to prosecute the company, tell us whether he intends to do so? Will he take the opportunity to tell us whether he intends to prosecute the other companies that charge consumers record prices but do not provide the service that all consumers have a right to demand?

Mr. Trippier: I thank the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) for her opening remarks. I should not be making a statement to the House if I were not entirely satisfied with the information to hand. I believe that it was necessary for an inspection to take place, and the investigation is being carried out by the drinking water inspectorate. The hon. Lady would not expect me to prejudice the findings of the report. Clearly, the decision whether to prosecute will be made in the light of the evidence that comes to hand.

[Mr. Trippier]

In reply to the hon. Lady's general question about prosecution, Environment Ministers will not prevaricate if the necessary evidence is available for a court case to be undertaken and won. I must remind the House that, after all, it was the Government who set up the drinking water inspectorate in the first place.

I am not aware of any provision for the company to be charged for police time.

The hon. Lady asked what had happened during the past 24 hours. The most significant event has been a meeting between the local authorities and local health authorities. I am delighted, as the hon. Lady will be, that the unanimous decision has been taken that there is no further need to boil the water. It may seem strange that, within 48 hours of the first warnings being sounded, the company has lifted the restriction, but I understand that it has made a statement this afternoon to the effect that it genuinely believed that, if there were the slightest danger to health—serious or not so serious—it was right to impose the restriction. On that point, I am happy to concur with the company's statement.

I question whether the hon. Lady was right to suggest that a mistake at a plant should or could have been put right within seconds. That is stretching credulity to breaking point.

The hon. Lady was correct about the last visit made by the inspectorate. The inspectorate used consultants—that is quite common. That is the way most of its work is carried out. Such consultants still have to conform to the same regulations, whether national standards or standards imposed on us by the European Community. I do not think that that matters. I can assure the hon. Lady and the House that when the inspectors visited the plant at Rickmansworth during 1990—this was referred to in the report published by the DWI last week—it concluded that the disinfection arrangements were satisfactory.

There seemed to have been a number of questions about delays in informing the public. They are precisely the questions that I hope will be dealt with by the investigation.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): My constituents will be grateful to learn that their water supply, as my hon. Friend said, will be back to normal some time today. They will not be very pleased to hear, however, that the delay still cannot be explained.

My hon. Friend has said that the problem started at 3.50 pm. The expert who belatedly came on LBC yesterday morning said that it started at about 9.30 pm. There are eight hours between 4 pm and midnight, but this expert said that it was dawn before an attempt was begun to contact the media.

I listened to LBC from 8 am to midday, constantly trying to—*[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend will know that I was doing the ironing. LBC said repeatedly that it was trying to contact the water authorities but getting no response. After invitations from the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) and me, a spokesman miraculously appeared to say that he could give some information.

I hope that we shall find out what went on and why. Like the hon. Member for Dewsbury, I am worried about previous instances, and I hope that we shall find out exactly what went wrong. The comments made yesterday by the company chairman on LBC were useless, and one wonders about the quality of management in the organisation when it can put forward someone who bumbles and mumbles like him. I hope that my constituents can be assured that if, God forbid, such a thing occurs again, they and all the authorities involved will be immediately informed.

Mr. Trippier: It is precisely my hon. Friend's last point that concerns me. I am happy to give him the assurance that he seeks: the investigation will be principally concerned with the problem of information and of delay.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): We should already have learnt the lesson of the inability to plan for this sort of incident from the toxic waste pollution in Norfolk and from the Camelford example—we tried to close the stable door in both cases after the horses had bolted. Emergency civil planning and the ability to communicate information failed again, as the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) said, partly because the media could not be reached when needed and partly because the water companies could not be reached when they were needed.

When, eventually, announcements were made, we find that some people were still getting leaflets through their doors this morning—written in gobbledegook for those who speak English, let alone the many in the area who do not. The leaflet described "an operational incident" and referred to

"partly treated water being put into supply".

People needed to be told that the water was not fit to drink and that they should not drink it unless it was boiled. They did not need these sorts of half-truths concealing what they wanted to know.

If people were responsible for polluting, they should pay. If people were harmed, they should be compensated. Will the citizens charter apply to this sort of defect in consumer services?

Mr. Trippier: I concur with a number of the hon. Gentleman's remarks, and I share his worry about delays—no one in any political party has a monopoly of concern in this matter—but I have some difficulty reconciling what happened at Camelford with what happened in this case. I can see many differences, and the hon. Gentleman must forgive me if I do not agree with his parallel.

As for compensation, the hon Gentleman may have heard my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister refer in the statement this afternoon to the role of Ofwat and the responsibilities that it will carry under his initiative. My right hon. Friend said that we will introduce legislation to make sure that the regulators have adequate powers to require the award of compensation in response to legitimate customer complaints.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Is my hon. Friend aware that my constituents take this major lapse at the Iver water treatment works, based in my constituency, very seriously? Is he aware that I only heard about it from the church pulpit at 10 o'clock yesterday morning? It is unacceptable that more than 12 hours should have elapsed before my constituents were notified. There should be proper procedures to ensure that the customers affected are immediately notified. Will my hon. Friend ensure that the inquiry looks into that and sets in place procedures to make certain that such immediate notification is given in future?

Mr. Trippier: I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that, given my statement and subsequent answers, I share his anxiety about this matter and I take it seriously.

We must look at what can be done to improve communications and not expect such information to be disseminated in the form of parish notices from the pulpit.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): What are the requirements by the controlling body governing the numbers of people on duty and the chlorination mechanism? Is the latter automatic or visual, continuous or periodic? Secondly, did the system depend on service reservoirs; was it direct or indirect, or a mixture of the two? Thirdly, is the company wholly owned by shareholders in the United Kingdom, or is it a subsidiary of a large water undertaking outside the United Kingdom?

Mr. Trippier: The answer to the last question is that a French company has a large holding, not that I know what difference that can make. This is not a privatisation issue —the company has been privatised for a considerable time.

I understand the hon. Gentleman's earlier point, and I hope that the investigation will establish whether enough people were available to deal with the problem. I am entirely satisfied that, once the communication was made to my Department and to the drinking water inspectorate, there were enough people in place to notify Ministers and others so that the necessary regulatory action could be taken—which, of course, it was.

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): I very much welcome the decision to set up the inquiry, which is the right way to ascertain what happened. Will it examine what is possibly the most serious aspect of the case? The company had agreed a rectification policy with authorities such as the DWI. Then, just before midnight, it tried to contact the local media and rang local radio stations. Those that replied—not all of them did—were not interested. When the company got hold of the television studios, they said that the matter was not of national interest. It was certainly of interest to my constituents. Fortunately, the problem was not serious in this case, but I hope that the inquiry will see whether there is some immediate way of using broadcasting stations, which must recognise that they have a social duty to the public and my constituents.

Mr. Trippier: I am bound to agree with my hon. Friend's last point. I too have heard evidence to the effect that a number of broadcasting stations said that they were not interested because this was not of national interest. I question whether that is a responsible attitude to take.

Whether or not the drinking water inspectorate deals with this problem in its investigation is irrelevant, because I assure my hon. Friend that I shall deal with it.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): Will the Minister make clear his concern about the obvious ineptitude and tardiness of the water company's response in this matter? We do not need an inquiry to reveal that. My constituents found that they had to inform each other of the danger by word of mouth—indeed, my own household did so. They encountered mind-boggling complacency on the part of the water authority. It is time that the Minister expressed his concern in the clearest and most strident terms, so that those who might be tempted to go down this path in future will be deterred. The inquiry must not become a whitewashing exercise.

Mr. Trippier: Although it is repeating what I said earlier, I am happy to give the hon. Gentleman my assurance that I would not have made the statement or answered questions on it unless I was concerned about this matter. We would not have called for an investigation by the drinking water inspectorate in the way that it will be carried out unless the whole of the Department of the Environment and the drinking water inspectorate were concerned about it. The hon. Gentleman is a lawyer and will appreciate that I cannot say that the company has been dilatory or complacent in the way that he suggests, or make any such comment, until the investigation has been completed.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): Is my hon. Friend aware that this incident has caused great concern to my constituents in Uxbridge and Hillingdon? Will he ensure that the inquiry will look into the means by which these automated systems operate and whether there is a suitable trigger mechanism to alert the company, its management and the emergency services in the event of a failure of this kind? Will he assure the House not only that Three Valleys will learn the lessons but that they will be applied to every water company in the country, because the possibility of much more serious faults than the one that occurred in this instance is very alarming?

Will my hon. Friend join me in congratulating the police, who from the early hours of Sunday morning, did an absolutely first-class job in notifying consumers by the use of loud hailers and leaflets so that the vast majority of people in the area were aware of the incident? They knew by the time they got up in the morning that they had to boil their water. Will he please look at the kind of notification that water companies are obliged to send to consumers to ensure that it is written clearly, so that everybody can easily understand it?

Mr. Trippier: I am happy to give my hon. Friend the assurance he seeks about notification and undertake to look at that. I join him in congratulating the police on the wonderful role that they played in responsibly informing people in the area to the best of their ability. My hon. Friend asked about the lessons to be learned and about an adequate trigger point. I assure him that we shall look at that in particular with a view to replicating throughout the country anything that needs to be done as a result of the lessons learned from this experience.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): I thank the Minister for his detailed statements, which will go some way to reassuring people. None the less, we can all thank the Almighty that a major disaster has been averted: one can only imagine what might have happened. I join him in paying tribute to the police for their rapid response, and I pay particular tribute to the police in Harrow for the way in which they acted and patrolled the streets.

Local health authorities also acted promptly but, as hon. Members have said, we need a cogent and detailed explanation about the company's delay in notifying the public and the media. Will the Minister consider the need for a further statement, bearing in mind that the House is soon going into recess, to deal with that matter? On the assumption that the Iver works, which has been

[Mr. Hugh Dykes]

mentioned, deals primarily or exclusively with Thames river water, may we have a proper explanation to reassure the public about the way in which that water is treated and an assurance that the contamination coefficients will be properly sorted out by the regulatory authorities and the company?

Mr. Trippier: I am happy to give my hon. Friend the assurance that we shall have to return to this matter. I entirely accept that there must be a cogent explanation about precisely what happened in terms of the delay and what went wrong in the plant. My hon. Friend will understand that some of that information might have to be used as evidence if a prosecution were taken out by the Department of the Environment. Therefore, one might have to handle that carefully. I assure my hon. Friend that I intend the report to be made public at the appropriate time.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): I thank my hon. Friend for his statement and for the announcement of the inquiry by the drinking water inspectorate. It is important for the inspectorate to look at what happened and why it happened, at mechanisms that exist to stop it happening again and, in particular, at the matter that has already been raised with my hon. Friend, about informing people about what went on. From what my hon. Friend has said, I am even more perplexed than I was yesterday, and my constituents will also be perplexed.

Every time I listen to a radio or television bulletin, I hear different times being mentioned and different versions of what happened and when attempts were made to inform the public. Apparently, the company was able to inform the drinking water inspectorate at 11 o'clock but started to try to tell people who were likely to drink the water at 12 o'clock. That is unacceptable. Will my hon. Friend confirm that the inquiry will examine that specific aspect? Lastly, but most importantly, may I be assured that the report of the inquiry will be made entirely public so that people can assess for themselves what has been done in their name?

Mr. Trippier: My hon. Friend may not have heard my assurance to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) about the information that has come to light. I repeat that assurance—that it is absolutely essential that the information arising from the investigation should be made public. There is an interim stage at which we shall have to decide whether a prosecution may be necessary or appropriate.

I understand my hon. Friend's concern about information supplied to customers/consumers in this matter, and I assure him that the investigation will be especially directed at that. The timings in my statement are definitive because we have gleaned them from several sources and they have been confirmed and reconfirmed, in contrast to the speculative timings that my hon. Friend may have heard elsewhere.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip, Northwood): May I add my thanks to my hon. Friend for reassuring the House? The investigation should look into the problem of notifying people of such emergencies at weekends, because that was the real cause of the difficulty. Not all members of the public are as assiduous as my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) in listening to the radio, nor are they all as indulgent as I was in going to buy my little son an ice cream, when I found in the shop a leaflet notifying me and other residents of my constituency of the dangers. Will my hon. Friend ensure that the police and other services have the necessary manpower to inform the public of such emergencies at weekends?

Mr. Trippier: My hon. Friend makes a good point. Much of the problem associated with this matter arose from the fact that the incident occurred at a weekend. I hope that the investigation will specifically address the matter of the problems that can arise at weekends.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): My hon. Friend has rightly observed that this is a regrettable incident. Does he agree that one of the main advantages of privatisation of the industry is the complete separation of the provider of services from the regulator of standards, the so-called poacher-gamekeeper relationship? That will stand us in good stead in this and perhaps in any similar matters in future.

Mr. Trippier: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend. I was somewhat surprised by the intervention of the hon. Member for Dewsbury, who did not pay a compliment where I thought that one was appropriate. The regulatory system that we have set up and of which I am enormously proud brought about the separation of the poacher and gamekeeper roles. That is essential. The House and the country can draw comfort from the fact that the investigation being carried out by the independent regulatory body set up by a Conservative Government will be open, frank and of high quality. We certainly did not have such a body when the last Labour Government were in office.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments &c.),

That the draft Magistrates' Courts (Remands in Custody) Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Question put and agreed to.

Points of Order

5.59 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Oh, my goodness. Does the hon. Gentleman want to be called in this debate?

Mr. Madden: I have not applied to speak in the debate, Mr. Speaker. If you remember, I said several hours ago, at the end of the private notice question on BCCI, that I wished to raise a point of order. A number of my constituents have lost their life savings as a result of the collapse of this bank, and others face redundancy because companies have collapsed as a result of the closure of the bank. They will resent the Prime Minister's charge that those who are seeking the truth about the reasons for the collapse of the bank are muck-raking.

You may recall, Mr. Speaker, that during the exchanges on the private notice question, the hon. Member for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce) referred to a senior Labour councillor in Bradford as a salesman for BCCI. I have attempted to contact the hon. Member for Dorset, South by letter and telephone since he made those remarks. It will be known to many in Bradford that he was clearly referring to Councillor Mohd Ajeeb, a former lord mayor of Bradford, who was an adviser to the bank, but severed his links with it in 1989.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That may well be, but what is the point of order for me? I cannot possibly know things like that, especially if names are not mentioned.

Mr. Madden: The point for you, Mr. Speaker, is that it was clearly an inaccurate smear and a slur, in the best traditions of muck-raking. I hope that you will require the hon. Member for South Dorset to withdraw those rather serious allegations.

Mr. Speaker: I cannot be held responsible, as I have said several times, for what is said. The hon. Member for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce) may have been inaccurate—I have no knowledge of that—but he was certainly not out of order.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I apologise to you for causing you offence during the supplementary questions to the private notice question. It was a heated moment, when the Opposition were extraordinarily irritated by the Prime Minister's accusation of muck-raking. I draw your attention to the fact that, in the Parliament in which Lord Callaghan was Prime Minister, when he made a remark that was offensive to the then Leader of the Opposition—the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher)—the Opposition withdrew their facilities and cross-party co-operation. The Leader of the House is here, and in front of him I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that it is not in the service of Parliament that personal insults should be traded between the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. No doubt those who have ears can hear.

Mr. Speaker: That may well be so, but many rough things are said in this Chamber, particularly in July and particularly as we approach the end of a Parliament. These things are often forgotten when we go into recess.

Adjournment (Summer)

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That this House, at its rising on Thursday 25th July, do adjourn until Monday 14th October.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. A great many right hon. and hon. Members wish to participate in the debate. I am not able to impose any limit on speeches, but if speeches could be limited to not more than 10 minutes, and preferably a little less, then every hon. Member who wishes to be called will be able to speak and, I hope, will go away contented for the recess.

6.4 pm

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): I shall do my best, Mr. Speaker, to respond to your strict injunction, and to be brief. Had you not been so stern, I might have suggested that one reason why the Adjournment should be diminished by one day, with the House rising on Friday rather than Thursday, is that we badly need an opportunity to debate the excellent record of the Government and particularly that of the Prime Minister. I do not expect that the bad losers on the Opposition Benches would agree with that, but then they wouldn't, would they?

As I shall not carry the Opposition with me on that subject, I ask my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to turn his attention to a different and rather less important matter, which nevertheless concerns me and I hope him, too. I am sure that my right hon. Friend reads *The Times* and that he will have had a chance to read the leading letter in it today, which calls attention to a matter that I have raised on previous occasions.

That is the strange reluctance of Departments and Ministers to carry through what many of us understand to be their obligation, under the Salmon Act 1986, to prepare and produce a report on the north-east drift-net fishery. The letter, which is signed by a distinguished collection of heads of angling bodies in England and Scotland, focuses on the continuing absence of statements on that subject. There was recently a brief series of exchanges in the House of Lords on the subject, and I asked my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, at business questions on 11 July, whether he expected to be in a position to clear up some of the obscurity that surrounds the matter.

As the letter in *The Times* shows, this is an important matter. The letter begins by stressing that there is an obligation, and by regretting the absence of a positive response by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in particular. In the absence of a Government decision on the matter, England and Wales are virtually isolated in continuing to allow drift-net fishing for Atlantic salmon with monofilament nets. Scotland banned their use as early as 1962 and only Greenland and the Republic of Ireland permit this indiscriminate, wasteful and damaging practice, which entraps and kills sea birds and mammals as well as the creatures at which it is presumably aimed, the fish.

The provisional figures show that in 1990, the north-east drift-net fishery was the only salmon fishery in the United Kingdom to increase its catch, taking more than 51,000 fish and accounting for 60 per cent. of the salmon caught in the whole of England and Wales. As the letter says:

[Mr. Cranley Onslow]

"It is widely acknowledged that over 80 per cent. of the salmon taken by this fishery would otherwise have returned to their native Scottish rivers. There has been a serious decline in the Scottish catch, which was only 145,000 fish in 1990, compared with 278,000 in 1989, itself not a good year."

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I am glad that my hon. Friend has raised this issue. He might like to know that we debated it in some depth on Thursday 11 July in the Scottish Grand Committee. While the decision has to be made by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Scottish rivers are bearing the main brunt of the drift-net fishing. I agree that we should have an early answer from the Government on this point.

Mr. Onslow: I am glad to have my hon. Friend's valuable support. I know what a close interest he takes in this matter in Scotland. I am sure that he will agree that one of the ironies of the situation is that, whereas those who support the north-east drift-net fishery claim that it has a traditional status, as long ago as the 1950s, which is before it began to reach today's serious proportions, it was catching only 2,000 fish a year. The traditional catch from Scottish rivers has been much more than that for many years.

As the letter says:

'There is widespread international concern over the dramatic decline of salmon catches in the North Atlantic, with a drop of over 60 per cent. in the last 20 years. Conservation measures are now urgently required to reduce all forms of indiscriminate interceptory fishing and to restrict the catching salmon to their native rivers, where the level of fishing by traditional net or rod and line can be locally managed.'

Incidentally, the value of the salmon there is many times what it is in the sea.

It is a matter of great regret that at the time when Mr. Orri Vigfusson in Iceland has obtained the agreement of the Faroese fishermen to take a compensation payment in return for not fishing their deep sea salmon quotas, there is an apparent decision vacuum at the ministerial level.

Although the financing of compensation payments might have to come from private sources—principally from owners, tenants and others fishing the rivers most affected by the measures—it will be difficult for anyone to raise money for the purpose as long as there is no serious sign of any attempt by the Government to cut down on interceptory fishing. The immediate danger is that a failure to raise the British share of the finance for the Faroese agreement could cause the whole initiative to collapse. There were signs of that at the recent eighth annual meeting of the North Atlantic salmon conservation organisations in Edinburgh.

The letter continues:

"We now publicly urge the government to come to a decision on the north-east drift-net fishery."

I support that plea. If my right hon. Friend cannot give us much more information today than he gave me on 11 July, I hope that he will at least try to explain the cause of the delay, Is it due to a departmental difference that cannot be resolved? If so, that is a pity; if an arbitrator is needed, I am sure that there will be no shortage of volunteers. The reason may be more deep-seated, however.

If the delay continues, the position will grow not better but worse. We shall find ourselves up against deadlines. The net limitation order must be renewed in 1992, unless the whole arrangement is to become a free-for-all again.

Many of us are worried about the absence of the necessary drive to represent British interests at EC level. I I am sure that Mr. Heinrik Schmiegelow, a Danish EC official, does his best to represent our interests, but a greater impetus is needed closer to home. I hope that we shall see some sign of that soon.

Let me echo the plea that others have already made for the announcment of a date by which a decision will be made—and an early date at that—so that we can see some prospect that this important matter, which should not be allowed to drag on, will be dealt with.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): I am sorry that I missed the first minute or so of my hon. Friend's speech.

I was a member of the Committee that was promised Government action. All too often, my right hon. Friend —and, subsequently, other Committee members—received no proper explanation in response to their requests for information. One reason for our not delaying the passage of the Bill was an assurance from a Minister that we would be given a report and that it would be published. Astonishingly, there has been no hint of a reply to our questions—and certainly there has been no report.

Mr. Onslow: I am glad that I gave way to my hon. Friend; he has enabled me to shorten my peroration. I well remember what was said in Committee, and I believe that Committee members have been disappointed by the lack of progress. I very much hope that my right hon. Friend will be able to reassure us.

6.12 pm

Mr. Stan Crowther (Rotherham): I am pleased to have this opportunity to draw the attention of the House to early-day motion 1035, which deals with disruption of the licensed trade and has the support of no fewer than 121 hon. Members on both sides of the House. I at once declare an interest, as parliamentary adviser to the National Licensed Victuallers Association.

Let me stress immediately that many of the actions being taken by the big brewery companies, which are causing a great deal of distress, were not made necessary by the Beer Orders of December 1989, which followed a report by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the supply of beer. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has rightly drawn attention to that more than once. It is true to say, however, that that legislation acted as a catalyst; and, in that sense, those who signed the early-day motion believe that the Government have some responsibility to take remedial measures, although that may mean new legislation.

The fact is that the MMC, in its report, made a fundamental error, which was reflected in the Beer Orders. It did not appreciate a simple point, which I am sure that all hon. Members who are present will find easy to understand: people do not travel 50 or 100 miles to buy a pint of beer, even if it is a little cheaper there. To the customer, it does not really matter how many tied houses throughout the country are owned by a single brewery company. The degree of choice depends on the number of different breweries that supply beer in the area where the customer lives.

The legislation that was addressed to the national position, which required brewery companies to reduce the number of tied houses that they owned nationally, was irrelevant to competition in the retail market. But, because

the large companies must now divest themselves of about 11,000 tied houses, they are taking steps to ensure that they make more money out of those that they are allowed to keep. They are doing that at the expense of tenants and customers: that is at the heart of the problem.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): The hon. Gentleman has touched on a matter that I may mention later. Not only tenants and customers, but those living in the area surrounding a public house will strongly object to the change of user that will result from the rather shabby way in which the brewers have treated their tenants.

Mr. Crowther: I am sure that that point is valid. There is no doubt that literally thousands of pub tenants are now under notice to quit, and that is causing a good deal of distress. Many are being offered—in place of the traditional tenancy—a long lease at a rent that may be two, three or even four times as much as the present one, with full liability for repairs and renovations, but still tied to the brewery. If a tenant feels unable to accept the terms that are offered, his only option is to get out and to abandon a business which, in many instances, has been built up over many years, leaving his home at the same time. Almost uniquely, in this trade, business premises are virtually always the family home as well.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): As one who signed the early-day motion, I have followed the dispute with interest.

I am advised that notices to quit are merely a technicality under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954. What advice would the hon. Gentleman give individual tenants who find themselves in difficulties and who are offered long leases that are apparently very uneconomic?

Mr. Crowther: This is precisely why I have raised the matter in the House. I hope that, in due course, the Leader of the House will convey all these points to the Secretary of State; action is certainly needed.

I wish to be fair to the Secretary of State. He wrote to hon. Members very recently, setting out his position. I feel, however, that legislation will ultimately be needed. Until now, only one of the major companies has agreed to independent arbitration to assess a fair rent—Grand Metropolitan, which, perhaps ironically, is no longer a brewer, having transferred its breweries to Elders in return for an interest in the former Courage houses. At least it had agreed to independent arbitration. The problem for the tenant is that if—for reasons of age, for example—he does not feel able to accept a long lease, even at a rent fixed by an arbitrator, he will not be entitled to compensation and will be thrown out on the street without a penny. The other companies, however, have not even agreed to any form of arbitration. If, as they claim, the rents that they are demanding are fair, what have they to fear from independent arbitration?

If a licensee accepts a tied lease, at an enormously increased rent, certain consequences must follow. First, he will have to push up his prices to pay the extra rent. The first to suffer will be the customer. However, the tenant will still be competing with managed houses belonging to the same brewery company and with the working men's clubs. Trade is bound to decrease. The loss of trade that will be suffered by the brewery company will be compensated for by the extra rent that it will get out of the pub, but the tenant will be squeezed between customers complaining about his prices and the brewery company charging an excessive rent. In those circumstances, many tenants will inevitably be squeezed out of business.

In other cases, especially in the case of the Bass empire, hundreds of tenants are being abolished and the houses taken back for management. That does not reduce the number of tied houses. A managed house is even more tied. Everything in a managed house—from the wines and spirits to a box of matches or a packet of crisps—will be supplied by the brewery company. Although the number of tied houses will not be reduced, the most profitable ones can then be run by an employee of the company rather than by a tenant in charge of his own business.

Many a Bass tenant, including many in my constituency, have spent years and a lot of money on building up sound businesses. They now face the choice of applying to buy or lease a pub somewhere else, which Bass will be putting on the market, or going out of the trade completely and losing their homes, with very little compensation, or applying for the job of manager, in which case Bass will graciously send somebody to interview them to see whether they are good enough to be appointed as managers of the pubs that they have been running for 10 or 20 years or more. That is literally adding insult to injury.

Unless the position changes dramatically, many tenants who have given good service to the public for years will be out on the street, either with no compensation at all or with the inadequate compensation provided for in the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954. To his credit, when the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry met, at his own request, representatives of the National Licensed Victuallers Association, he undertook to speak to the heads of the big brewery companies and explain to them his views on what he believes to be the stress and damage that their actions are causing. The Secretary of State has circulated a letter to all hon. Members setting out his position, very reasonably and moderately, and I thank him for it. The only problem is that I doubt whether the brewery companies will take any notice of it. Unless we obtain an undertaking that there will be legislation early in the new Session, I fear that nothing will save the tenants.

The stated intentions of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and the Government have been completely frustrated by the brewery companies. We were told that one of those intentions was to give customers a better deal, through more competition. Ministers often talk of "sharpening" competition. When the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report was published the four biggest brewery companies had 58 per cent. of the market, but today they have nearly 70 per cent. of the market. It is difficult to see how competition has been sharpened. Beer and lager prices have rocketed in the meantime, and I am afraid that they will continue to go up for a long time yet.

The second of the stated intentions was to provide better security for tenants. Unfortunately, when the Government were dealing with what is now the Landlord and Tenant (Licensed Premises) Act, they refused to bring forward the implementation date. They left that long gap during which brewers were able to move in and serve their notices to quit. The future of thousands of tenants, I am afraid, is very insecure. With the best will in the world, the Government got it wrong. I do not believe that anybody

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loses credit by admitting that they made a mistake. The Government should admit that they made a mistake and take swift action to repair the damage.

6.24 pm

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): I should like briefly to raise two issues. The first is that the north of England feels that it is not getting its fair share of the Housing Corporation budget. On 3 July, a group of representatives from north-west housing associations came to visit the north-west group of Conservative Members of Parliament. They put their case very well indeed. We felt a great deal of sympathy for them. As chairman of the group, I promised that I would press their case. I thought that tonight's debate would be an ideal opportunity to do so. Little did I realise at the time that today there would be not just a private notice question but three statements before we reached this debate.

Nobody disputes the value of housing associations. All of us agree that they perform a great service in providing affordable housing. Housing associations are funded by the Housing Corporation. I am toid that its budget is due to grow by almost 100 per cent. during the period 1990 to 1994. During the same period, the number of dwellings provided will increase from about 19,000 a year to just under 40,000 a year.

That is very welcome news for those in housing need. However, the concern of the housing associations is that the three regions in the north of England—the north-east, the north-west and Merseyside—will get only a 7 per cent. share of the increased growth, with the other 93 per cent. going to the rest of the country. That flies in the face of urban policy, whereby resources are targeted on those areas in the greatest need. Whatever statistics one cares to examine—whether they be city challenge, the urban programme, the urban development corporations or estate action—the pattern is the same, with the north being awarded the major share. Therefore, these housing associations were at a loss to understand why their housing allocation over this period is so low.

This Government firmly believe in a policy of value for money, which I completely support. The greater the efficiency and the better the use that is made of resources, the more that can be done for those in need. Waste and inefficiency help no one. On the question of value for money, £1 million would provide 20 homes in the north, compared with 16 in the west and only 13 in London. Therefore, more homes could be provided for the same amount of money in the north. There is a desperate need for new housing in the north, because a larger proportion of pre-1919 housing stock is to be found there. Much of that stock is now in need of clearance or major repair.

In passing, may I point out that in the immediate post-war years we made a great mistake by building more and more council estates on the edges of towns and more and more multi-storey blocks of flats. We could have made much better use of what I, for want of a better word, would call the Coronation street type of terraced houses. If we had spent money on modernising them and putting them into better shape, people would have been much happier. They would have remained close to their place of work and within the tightly knit communities to which they had belonged for so many years.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I agree with what my hon. Friend says about housing policy immediately after the war. Is he aware that in Norwich, particularly under the Labour-controlled city council, over-large council estates were built that have led to very serious problems? Due to lack of imagination, the council is not moving on to new policies involving housing associations. Is my hon. Friend aware of that fact, and does he agree that that is not a good policy?

Sir Fergus Montgomery: I agree with my hon. Friend. On every issue, we see eye to eye. In fairness, however, I must point out that what happened in the post-war years is a matter of history. We have to look to the future.

There is doubt in the north as to whether the Government's new policies for housing renewal areas can be delivered. That is because the communities there tend to have low incomes. Their ability to trade up and remain owner-occupiers is limited. Those problems are compounded by minimal levels of capital receipts from asset sales.

Perhaps the greatest remaining challenge in public sector housing is the unused stock of local authority estates, which unfortunately is mainly in northern England. The housing needs index, which decides the flow of housing association resources, does not have an indicator that recognises stock condition problems in the local authority sector.

For many years, housing investment programme allocations enabled authorities to maintain existing stock only, and the amount of finance available has not allowed major repairs to be made. That is why the estate action scheme was created, and housing action trusts were expected to tackle the worst problems. I regret that, for political ends, housing action trusts were not as successful as they should have been.

Housing associations play an important part in the estate action initiative, and adequate resources will be necessary if the problems of local authority estates are to be properly tackled. Hulme in Manchester will have the help of five housing associations in replacing all local authority stock, using the five-year rolling programme of targeted housing association grant. The Government seem to accept that housing associations have an important part to play in regenerating local authority estates in the north, but I wonder how that can be squared with inadequate funding for northern housing associations.

Nobody denies that the major problem is homelessness and that it is most severe in London. After all, it is the capital city and, like all capital cities, it tends to be a magnet. However, should we not be considering the underlying causes and trying to prevent young people from migrating to London from other parts of the country? To achieve that, we need better employment prospects, a better environment and better housing conditions in the north, which surely are the core objectives of urban policy. I am told that 30 per cent. of London's homeless people —the largest single group—come from the north. Therfore, it makes sense to improve prospects in the north, in the hope that it will reduce the number of young people who decide to head for London.

The housing associations that visited our group on 3 July were particularly concerned about the housing needs index. They believe that it distorts the distribution of housing association resources, in contrast with urban policy initiatives by other Departments. They believe that

it is a device of officialdom. It is a set of indicators, however inappropriate, that have been arrived at and will be maintained unless they are challenged, which is the reason for my speech.

I do not want to go on about the north-south divide, because I recognise the problems that homelessness poses in the south. I wonder whether the Government have considered releasing a larger percentage of capital receipts in southern-based authorities, which could be channelled into tackling homelessness.

I pay tribute to the work of housing associations, which have achieved much in improving the quality of life and in tackling housing shortages, but I was asked to draw attention to the distribution of housing association resources because it is feared that the north will be seriously under-resourced at a time of growing need.

The second point that I want to raise is the implementation of the Ibbs report. Will my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House say how many jobs will be lost in the House and which departments will be affected? I am told that many of the Badge Messengers are concerned about job losses. I am particularly concerned about consulting those whose jobs are at risk. I have been told of someone who has worked in the House for more than 20 years and has never been carpeted or warned about his work. That person is concerned about rumours that his job will be advertised. Last week, he sought a meeting with one of the Clerks and was told that his post was to be upgraded, that head-hunters had been asked to do a search and that the post would be advertised nationally in September.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Cruel.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: I agree with the hon. Gentleman; it is absolutely cruel.

Apparently, the interview board will be chaired by a civil servant and will include Officers of the House. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has got the picture. That amounts to a casual approach to the job of somebody who has loyally served the House for many years. If an employer outside the House behaved in such a way, there would be severe criticism from many hon. Members. We would all be indignant, and I am all the more indignant that we are behaving in this way. It shows a complete failure of human relations, and it is unworthy of the House.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will give me satisfactory answers to the two points that I have made before we rise for the summer.

6.34 pm

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): I wish to raise briefly a matter that we should discuss before we rise. On 22 May, I asked the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, whether the Government would be willing to argue in the European Community in favour of the EC taking on a role of mediation in Yugoslavia and perhaps helping to provide part of a peace-keeping force. He said:

"I do not think that the European Community should play such a role."—[*Official Report*, 22 May 199 Vol. 191, c. 919.]

He further said that the only way of pursuing the matter was through the conference on security and co-operation in Europe.

In that respect, the Foreign Office lacked forethought, because that is not what has happened. I therefore raise the matter because I am afraid that the situation has not significantly improved, and we should discuss it before we adjourn.

I lost two constituents in the Gulf war. When I was Liberal foreign affairs spokesman, I repeatedly said that the Government should be much more stringent and critical in their trading and general relations with Iraq. I do not want to see another crisis, such as a war in the Balkans resulting in yet more unnecessary deaths, which is a possibility that one cannot put aside.

I spoke on the telephone last night to a lady in Zagreb called Lidija Jorkovic, who is a Croatian Liberal Democrat. She attended the annual congress of the European Liberal Democrats in Poitiers in June to draw attention to the gravity of the situation. She told me that there was the most enormous fear and anxiety in Croatia about the intentions of the Army and the Serbian hierarchy. There was much killing going on, some of which was not reported in the press.

It is noticeable that, in term of media coverage, the issue has gone off the boil because it is not exciting enough. We are not getting much coverage, but it is going on. The withdrawal of the Army from Slovenia was welcomed by the Liberals in Croatia and by President Tudjman, but it is suspected that the reason for that was to give the Army more freedom to act in Croatia.

The European Community, acting in a way that in May the Minister of State told me it had no business to be doing, has so far made a valuable if limited contribution. It has succeeded in negotiating a three-month breathing space, and has sent in observers to try to monitor it. That is good, but we would be foolish to think that it has solved anything. I want to be assured by the Leader of the House that the Government are taking this matter exceedingly seriously and are doing something positive.

One of the outcomes of what took place in Iraq and Kuwait is that the two basic concepts on which our international relations were founded—non-interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign state and the territorial integrity of all states—are now outdated. We interfered in Iraq because of what was happening to the Kurds. Indeed, we are still interfering and are liable to do so again.

We have reached the stage when all nations can look to the possibility of the United Nations becoming much more involved in breaches of human rights in other countries than it did before. After all, national boundaries throughout the world have been drawn not by consent, but by war and imperial conquest. Yugoslavia is quite a dramatic and tragic example. Many of the lines are in the wrong places, and they will have to be reviewed at some stage.

In the end, it is not a question of just holding things together. The question is what is right, what people want and what is fair. If that question is not put, international justice has no meaning. That is the background against which we are operating.

Immediately now, Britain as part of the European Community must give active consideration to the matter. I do not expect the Minister to declare details, but I want some assurance that the United Kingdom, in co-operation with its Community colleagues, is giving a lot of thought to the matter. We may require to provide a peace-keeping force to keep the two sides apart. People should think seriously, in conjunction with the Yugoslavs, about redrawing boundaries in Yugoslavia. That has all been said to be terribly complicated and awfully difficult, but in

[Sir Russell Johnston]

many places it is not as difficult as all that. If there is to be peace between Serbia and Croatia, and between Serbia and Albania, that will have to be done.

As we go into recess, I hope that the Government are giving thought and attention to those matters, and to the tragedy that is going on in which we might, as a country, be involved at some stage. I want to prevent that happening and I want a peaceful outcome to be achieved. I am still not satisfied that the Government are giving as much priority to the matter as they should.

6.41 pm

Mr. John Ward (Poole): I wish to detain the House for a short time to ask that we consider the role of the present regulations if one local authority—in my case, Dorset county council—seeks to dispose of land that it regards as surplus to educational requirements and says that it is required by Government regulation to sell the land for the best possible price. In practice, this means that Poole borough council would be unable to purchase the land for recreational purposes.

I can best illustrate the problem by giving two short examples. In the Canford Heath area of my constituency, there has been much housing development in recent years and recreational facilities are limited. In the Bader road area of Canford Heath, there is a strip of land some 150 m wide, which for many years has provided a buffer between the houses and industrial development, and it is laid out as a sports area. It is an important green lung for the Canford Heath residents. It has wildlife, wild flowers and hedges, and is much valued by local people.

The county council has declared some 3.8 hectares—about two thirds of the total—surplus to educational requirements, and there is concern that the county council will give itself planning permission for industrial development, thus raising the price of the land to a level well beyond what Poole borough council could afford to pay for it.

Apart from the loss of the open space, the residents of Bader road now have the prospect of industrial development right up to the boundary of their property. If that happens, the recreational land will be lost for ever to the people who are supposed, after all, to own it.

We complain frequently when young people roam the streets and get into mischief, yet here is a proposal to deprive hundreds of youngsters of a place in which to play and to develop their interest in sport. Some 136 football matches were played there last year, in addition to the normal training sessions. The situation is further complicated by the fact that Poole borough council—rightly, in my opinion—has shown the area as a public open space on the local structure plan.

I turn now to the second case. Parkstone grammar school—in my constituency—has taken advantage of recent Acts to reverse the previous fall in pupil numbers and considers that it is now short of playing fields, as calculated by the regulations of the Department of Education and Science. The parents of pupils at the school have recently voted by an overwhelming majority to seek grant-maintained status and it is important to them that they start off with the right and adequate facilities.

An area of playing fields previously used by the school has now been designated by the county council as surplus to educational requirements and, by giving itself planning approval for industrial use, the county council has enhanced the value of the land. With increasing numbers at the grammar school, the governors are of the view that the land in question should be returned to them.

The county council's reply to complaints about its actions in both cases has been twofold—first, that the money is needed for capital expenditure and secondly, that it is required by Government regulation to obtain the highest possible price for surplus land.

The first reason—the need for additional capital—can, in my view, be met by other disposals. The county council's 50 per cent. share in Hurn airport is one thing that comes to mind. To sell would make more sense than depriving the people of Poole of one of the last open spaces in the area available for organised games.

The second reason—the matter of Government policy—is more complex. I understand that the Secretary of State for the Environment can give his specific consent to exempt a local authority from the need to maximise the cash received from the sale of assets. I have already written to the Secretary of State about this, and I hope that he will consider that course of action very carefully, as I have clearly shown that the land is needed by local people, who own it anyway.

I know that the Government already advise local authorities to consider community needs before disposing of surplus educational land for development and that they propose to reinforce that advice in a planning policy guidance note on sport and recreation, which they hope to issue shortly. I hope that the county council will reconsider its position in light of the forthcoming guidance note.

There is, I believe, another reason for the Secretary of State to intervene. There is a feeling—I put it no higher than that—that there is not a universal welcome at county hall for local suggestions that some of the district councils in east Dorset—Poole among them—will seek to become unitary authorities under the proposals for the reform of the structure of local government. In the case of the grammar school, there is concern that the grant-maintained status proposal will not make negotiations over land with the county council any easier.

The House heard the Prime Minister describe the citizens charter this afternoon—a welcome proposal that I fully support. I believe that the Secretaries of State for Education and Science and for the Environment must consider carefully their policy on the disposal of local authority land, especially in urban areas. In the cases that I have detailed, I hope that they will come down on the side of the citizens of Poole. That would truly be the citizens charter in action.

6.47 pm

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East): I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for allowing me this opportunity to raise a matter of great concern to my constituents. I felt that it was important that the House should have the matter before it before adjourning for the summer.

The Rover works at Cowley started its summer recess, as it were, on Friday of last week. Unlike this House, they will be back in two weeks' time. As is often the case just before the works holiday, there were accouncements that cast a shadow over the autumn ahead, in the form of staff

redundancies at Cowley of 180, and the news that production of the Montego and Maestro is to go on a four-day week from 16 September.

The redundancies are part of 1,300 job losses, also affecting workers at Longbridge, Swindon and Gaydon. Those are justified by Rover in terms of the ratio of white-collar to production staff and the need to ensure that the company operates at its most competitive in comparison with Japanese producers.

However, the four-day schedules, which also affect Longbridge production of the rover 200 and 400 from mid-August to October, are a product of the depression of sales right across the industry, itself a direct result of Government policies of high interest rates, the Budget increases in VAT, the other Budget measures that added to the cost of motoring and the special car tax.

It needs to be stressed to the House and to Government just how serious this slump in demand is. In the first six months of this year, new car sales in the United Kingdom were down 24 per cent. on the same period last year, itself a bad year. Sales for the industry as a whole have slumped from 2·3 million in 1989 to an estimated 1·55 million last year. As *The Independent on Sunday* put it yesterday:

"Britain's car industry is in the deepest recession it has ever known."

The particular tragedy for my constituents is that, against that background, Rover has been doing relatively well. In the light of last week's announcements, it is important to put that on the record. The company has some of the best models it has ever produced, and a new model in the top-of-the-range Rover 800 series, produced at Cowley, will be launched this autumn. Industrial relations, quality and the commitment of the work force to efficient production have never been better, despite the painful cuts in the labour force which, in the past 12 years, have seen employment at Cowley fall from more than 20,000 to around 5,000.

As I am sure the House will understand, I am extremely concerned that those remaining workers should have a prosperous and secure future. On the sites that Rover is vacating at Cowley, I am also concerned that there should be the closest co-operation between the company, the local council, the business community and the trade unions to ensure that high value-added jobs, including manufacturing jobs, are provided for those workers who would otherwise have looked to Rover for emploment.

Through the depths of the recession, the company's performance has held out hope for the future. I have already referred to the quality of its cars and their production. Indeed, in the first six months of this year, Rover increased its penetration of the United Kingdom car market from 14·1 per cent. to 15·1 per cent. However, the recession has meant that this is equivalent to a bigger share of a much smaller market, so that Rover's United Kingdom car sales have, in fact, fallen from 150,000 last year to 121,000.

Export sales have been doing well, with particularly impressive performances in Germany where sales were up in the first half of this year by 39 per cent. on the same period last year. Sales were up in Italy by 44 per cent. and by 54 per cent. in Spain. However, as *The Times* reported last week:

"Even buoyant export sales have not been enough to prevent production cuts."

In the same article, Rover was quoted as saying:

"The weak home market is having its effect, so that although we are doing well in relation to our competitors, there are simply not enough sales there to prevent these cuts."

All the signs of a very deep recession are present right across the industry. Other producers' sales are sharply down, and Ford at Halewood has been on a three-day week. Price and advertising wars have broken out, fleet orders are down, and many car dealerships are in desperate difficulty following on the heels of the 340 that went bust in the year to March.

In those circumstances, I think that the very least that is required from the Government is an acknowledgement of the grave slump that they have brought about and a commitment to an urgent review of the impact of their policies on the industry.

The Budget added a £1,480 million taxation burden to motoring costs on the current year, and an estimated extra burden of £1,715 million next year. The VAT increase put up the tax take on new cars to 27·5 per cent. That included the incredible double taxation of VAT being levied on the special car tax itself. That 27·5 per cent. burden compares with the effective rate of tax on new cars of 14 per cent. in Germany and 22 per cent. in France.

The Government are always claiming that lower tax rates can increase the total tax take. Why have they so conspicuously failed to apply that logic to car tax? In present circumstances, the special car tax is a nonsense which the Transport and General Workers Union, in its welcome campaign, and the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders deserve praise for exposing.

That high rate of taxation compared with major competitors puts Rover at a particular disadvantage, because it depresses car sales in its domestic market, which is invariably a crucial foundation for successful performance. As things stand, the Government's policies of recession and high car tax are desperately damaging the entire British car industry. The Prime Minister should change course before still more damage is inflicted.

As for Cowley, I shall be meeting Sir Graham Day this Friday to put the following points. First, faced with the sales position, which is not of the company's making, I applaud the fact that the four-day production schedule in the autumn is to be used to provide training on the fifth day for workers on the new Rover 800 model. One very important lesson we must learn in Britain is the importance of training during a recession so that we are better placed for the upturn. I greatly hope that that training can be organised on the fifth day at Cowley in such a way that the workers do not lose bonus earnings.

Secondly, there must be close collaboration on planning the development of those sites at Cowley that will be surplus to the company's future requirements. That must be done in such a way that former Rover workers, their families and those who would have looked to Rover for employment get their full and fair share of the opportunities that the development of those sites provide.

Thirdly, I repeat the calls that I have made in the past stressing the importance to Cowley of securing investment in new models in addition to the excellent Rover 800 range. In view of the record on industrial relations, productivity and quality at Cowley, the skills of the work force and the available capacity, there is a strong case for another model to be produced there.

That would be a further vote of confidence in Cowley's future following on the investment in the Rover 800. No one at a car plant is ever happy with dependence on a

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single model, however successful, for the very good reason that the whole future of that plant is up for grabs every time a decision must be taken on updating or replacing that model. However, that will otherwise be the case at Cowley when Maestro and Montego production eventually end.

I believe that it is beyond doubt that Cowley, which the company has repeatedly said should be its executive production centre, deserves the vote of confidence that a new model represents. The depth of a recession might seem to some a curious time to be advocating new investment. However, I simply say that history shows that it is those who invest wisely in the recession who are ready to meet demand in the upturn.

That investment will be supported by the economic and fiscal policies of the next Labour Government that will remove the ball and chain at present sabotaging my constituents' hard work.

6.56 pm

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): I want to use the opportunity of this debate to protest here on the Floor of the House of Commons against the abysmal failure of the educational authorities in the North Down area, which I represent, to provide proper facilities for primary school pupils.

Time after time, I have complained bitterly about the abnormally large number of primary schools that have to make do with temporary classrooms in huts or in portakabins. This afternoon, the Prime Minister launched the citizens charter with tremendous fervour and publicity. I fully support such a charter, which may help to give some muscle to the citizens in confrontation with the power of colossal commercial organisations or faceless bureaucracy. What about the rights of parents who are shamefully denied proper educational facilities for their boys and girls?

Every primary school in the North Down area that I have visited has one or more temporary classrooms, usually in wooden huts that were meant as a short-term emergency measure. In the name of the parents in my constituency and their children, I demand decent classrooms for those boys and girls.

I want to refer to one such primary school, Kilmaine primary school in Bangor. That school has an excellent reputation because of the dedication and ability of the principal, the staff and the parents who take an active interest in it. Kilmaine primary school has an enormous number of pupils many of whom have to be accommodated for lessons in portakabins. The primary school has a catchment area that includes Ballycrochan, Silverbirch and Ashbury.

Ashbury is an area of vast private housing developments with a high percentage of young married couples. One of the major reasons why those young married couples bought their homes in Ashbury was that they had been promised a new primary school. I have pressed for such a school for some time. I had also urged the provision of a health centre in Ashbury. A large notice was erected some years ago promising a new primary school in 1990. The notice is still there, but the promise has never been fulfilled. I repeat my demand for a clear assurance from the Government that they will redeem that promise. I solemnly urge the replacement of all portakabins and wooden huts with permanent, purpose-built classrooms in North Down. Furthermore, I call for the building of a new primary school for the boys and girls of Ashbury and the surrounding area. New primary schools are also needed in other areas of my constituency.

Finally, may I make a plea on behalf of those boys and girls who are not of primary school age. There is no nursery school provision in, for example, Ashbury and many other parts of my constituency. Despite the fact that many homes in Ashbury are owned by young people with toddlers or a family on the way, there is no nursery provision there. Something should therefore be done to make provision for a nursery school or pre-school playgroups in Ashbury, other parts of Bangor and the entire North Down constituency.

7.2 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): So that there is a linkage in the debate, may I say that I agreed with the hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) when he referred to the possibility that some people who have been employed in the House for many years—he quoted an example of someone who had been employed for 20 years—could face redundancy. That is totally unacceptable, and I hope that, when the Leader of the House winds up, he will reassure us on those points.

In some respects it seems a little unreal for this Parliament to be continuing. In 1983 and 1987, the election had come and gone by this time in the lives of those Parliaments. The fact that, this time around, no election has taken place after four years is not surprising. Hon. Members on both sides of the House know why. The explanation could not be clearer. The Government have not had the courage or confidence to go to the country, or there would almost certainly have been an election and the date would probably have been June.

We shall go into the summer recess with the recession deepening and unemployment continuing to grow throughout the country. My hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) referred to the redundancies in his constituency. We all share the anxiety about those redundancies, as well as those that are occuring in so many parts of the country.

It certainly gives me no joy to say that, in the west midlands, we are experiencing yet again the large-scale redundancies, closures and dole queues that we saw under this same Government 10 years ago. We were then told that it was a once-for-all operation because we needed leaner industry. Enough people then lost their jobs, and some of the companies that were closed have never been reopened. Unfortunately, the tragedy is happening all over again in the west midlands and causing deep concern to the people there—above all, of course, those directly affected and their families.

Unlike 10 years ago, the present recession is also taking place in the south-east, with more people having to face all the difficulties of redundancies and the tremendous obstacles of trying to find new jobs in the present economic climate. I tried to introduce a Bill, which the Government did not support, which would have made it illegal to discriminate in job advertisements on grounds of age. The present economic difficulties affect not only the young but many people in the age group of many hon. Members now present——

Mr. Tony Banks: My hon. Friend should speak for himself.

Mr. Winnick: With some exceptions. In some cases, those who have been made redundant will know that they are unlikely ever to work again because they have reached the age of 50 or perhaps just over.

The press tell us that the Prime Minister was in an upbeat mood last Thursday when he addressed the 1922 Committee—I see Conservative Members nodding—with all the praise of the Tory press ringing in his ears. The position is perfectly clear: if the Prime Minister feels so confident and upbeat, why does he not call an election? Let us get it over and done with. The Prime Minister should let the electorate decide. With the citizens charter announced earlier today, we would imagine that the Government had been in office for only a few months. They have been in office for 12 long years, and if they believe that they can hoodwink the electorate with a few gimmicks, they will find the situation very different and difficult. I shall not shed any tears for them.

May I deal now with an issue that is far less controversial, if controversial at all? I refer to the three grenadier guardsmen who lost their legs during a training exercise abroad in July 1989. All those who have heard about the case, which has been publicised particularly in the past few weeks, have come to the same view as hon. Members on both sides of the House—that adequate compensation should be paid. I raised the matter again during business questions last Thursday, and asked for a statement from the Secretary of State for Defence before this Thursday. It is important that there should be a satisfactory conclusion to this matter as quickly as possible.

I welcome the talks that have taken place between the solicitor acting for the three grenadier guardsmen and Ministry of Defence officials. Last Monday, *The Times* referred to the case, and the leader said that it supported the campaign for adequate compensation. It also contained a story about the three guardsmen, one of whom, Sean Povey, is a constituent of mine. The article quotes another of the guardsmen, Adrian Hicks, who has now left the Army, as saying:

"They should see the performance I have to go through when it's trouser changing day . . . First, take old jeans off artificial legs. Squat on the bed while pulling new jeans onto artificial legs. Insert stumps into artificial legs. Wriggle trousers into position. You're sat up trying to do this and you're top heavy, unstable, because you don't have the weight of your legs while you're pulling and heaving. I really hate doing that job, I hate it!"

He continues:

It can take 25 minutes and I'm always sweating at the end of it. I'll crawl around half the morning, to and from the bathroom, rather than face up to it."

He says that the frustration occasionally becomes too much and he throws the legs across the room. He also says that, since he was discharged from the Army last December, he has twice tried to get a job but has been interviewed for neither application, and he is still trying to find a job.

We all know, and the Minister of State for the Armed Forces has told the House, that a pension is being paid, but the Minister has confirmed that the three soldiers were in no way responsible for what occurred. They were on a training exercise and a shell exploded while they were digging a trench, causing the three soldiers to lose their legs. My constituent, Sean Povey, is still in a military hospital two years after the tragedy occurred. As the Minister said, whoever is responsible, it is certainly not the three soldiers.

The soldiers joined the Army for the very best of reasons. I have already told the House what the teacher said about how proud Sean Povey was to join the Army, and how he came to the school in his uniform. There is no doubt that he, like the other two, would have continued in the Army for many years to come.

The three soldiers were not victims of a terrorist attack or anything similar, but were involved in a training exercise that went horribly wrong. I believe and, in the light of a number of signatures on various motions, it is clear that the majority of hon. Members believe, that compensation should be paid and justice done. I am reasonably hopeful that justice will be done, but do not let us delay or let the weeks and months drag on, adding to the mental anxiety of the three soldiers who have already suffered so much and are crippled for life. Let us achieve an honourable and satisfactory settlement as quickly as possible—I hope that it can be concluded before the House rises for the summer recess.

7.11 pm

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): As an old Dragoon guardsman, I hope that the Government will heed carefully what the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) said. I think that the whole House hopes that something can be done for those unfortunate soldiers. At the same time, I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will totally disregard the first part of the hon. Gentleman's speech, which we could well have done without.

I am grateful for this opportunity to raise a matter that started in my constituency and has wider ramifications. In 1987, the Department of the Environment effected a change in the planning law that had considerable adverse effects. I refer to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 and the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988—in particular, the new class A3 on food and drinks. The effect of the orders was to put what were previously different activities into the same class. They placed restaurants, public houses and takeaways in the same class, which meant that planning permission was not required when the use of a building changed from one purpose to another within that class.

The reasons for the orders are obscure, but may have something to do with speeding up development. When someone tells me that the reason for a change is to speed things up, I am profoundly suspicious and certain that something unpleasant will follow, and so it has. It is interesting that the change has never been debated in the House. It was ordered under delegated legislation and we never had a chance to consider it. The results have been all too apparent, as I can illustrate by explaining a case in my constituency.

My constituency contains the lovely village of Shelford, with which my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) is familiar, and with which you, Madam Deputy Speaker, are not wholly unfamiliar. The case was brought to me by Councillor Mrs. Brenda Bishop and a large number of other constituents. There is a pleasant rural pub called The Chequers, which the brewers sold. The purchaser proposed to change it into a Chinese fish and chip takeaway, which caused an outcry among all those in

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Shelford who had fears about smells, litter and parking problems. They made representations to the local authority, but, as a result of the change in the law, it was absolutely powerless even to consider the representations and anxieties of the citizens that it represented.

The residents would much prefer to have the public house. Not all public houses are wonderful; where I live in Cambridge there is one pub that I would willingly exchange for a Chinese takeaway. However, pubs generally, certainly in my constituency and I expect in many others, are part of the village scene and contribute to the character of a rural community. I have 57 villages in my constituency.

There was a Monopolies and Mergers Commission report into the shabby treatment by brewers of licensees—a case powerfully made by the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther), with whom I wholeheartedly agree, and whose early-day motion I signed. As a result of that shabby treatment, I believe that there may be many more pubs in the same position and many more villages, not only in my constituency but in many rural constituencies throughout the country, which will be adversely affected as a result of the change in the planning laws, which have wide repercussions. I support my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry who has—as the hon. Member for Rotherham said—written to all hon. Members to urge brewers to have more consideration for their licensees. I hope that that pressure will continue.

There has been concern about the issue. The Department of the Environment ordered an inquiry into the effect of the changes in the Use Classes Order. A firm called Wootton Jeffreys, Consultants, investigated the problem. I do not know how or what that firm did, but my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning answered a written question by saying:

"Although the researchers found some evidence of increased traffic generated by more intensive use of former industrial land, no other adverse effects on amenity or the environment were associated with the business use class. I am therefore satisfied that there is no case on environmental grounds for amending the business use class."

I am not satisfied. My hon. Friend continued:

"I have concluded that to amend legislation which applies uniformly throughout England and Wales in response to these concerns would not be justified."

My hon. Friend continued:

"The research revealed evidence of some local controversy resulting from changes of use involving fast-food and take-away outlets within the food and drink use class. I am also aware of some misgivings over changes of use to and from public houses within that use class. I am not persuaded that a case has been made for adjusting the present scope for changes of use in the high street sector, where the researchers found that market activity has been generally subdued"—

whatever that means—

"since 1987 . . . There is some very localised evidence of harm to amenity, through increased traffic and general activity, associated with the conversion of hostels into hotels, but this is insufficient to merit amending the Order . . . However, the Government propose to continue to monitor closely the effects of the Use Classes Order and General Development Order and we are minded to commission further research in another three to five years."—[*Official Report*, 13 June 1991; Vol. 192, c. *619-20*.]

I am fond of my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning, who is an excellent fellow and does a marvellous job, but that was a remarkably complacent reply, and I am not satisfied for one moment. I do not think that the response is good enough, particularly as that case occurred in a conservation area. I do not believe that the consultants' inquiry considered the effect of the change in the law in conservation areas, for which special consideration should be given.

There has never been an opportunity to raise the problems on the Floor of the House, as the legislation was done through ministerial order and written answer. I have no objection to written answers, but this was too important a matter to be swept away. My hon. Friend should look at the matter again, and I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will convey my strong views to my hon. Friend the excellent Minister for Housing and Planning.

7.18 pm

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): I wish to speak on the effect of the Government's so-called education reforms. I took the trouble to contact local primary school heads in my constituency for an end-of-term report on the effect of implementing the Government's education changes, especially those in relation to local management of schools and the standard assessment tests. As a consequence of the many replies that I have received, I have written to the Secretary of State for Education and Science asking for a number of changes to be made.

There is an urgent need for the Government to reinstate the salaries of staff to be paid from the central funds rather than schools having a devolved budget, which contains only average salaries. Although schools with fewer than 200 pupils are protected from the damaging and unpopular salary rule, the comments that I received from many head teachers make it clear that protection should be extended to all schools. Far too many of those letters read as follows:

"Because of pupil-driven funding, we are having to lose two full-time members of our teaching staff",

or:

"The final situation regarding this school means that it has to reduce its staffing level by 1·5 teachers by redeployment."

I wholeheartedly agree with the head teacher who wrote:

"Pupil-led funding will inevitably lead to the employment of younger, less experienced staff because of the need to cut costs. A single small school unit is too small to create a proper staff-cost distribution."

Another head wrote:

"You will appreciate that all heads have a high regard for those experienced and dedicated teachers who have given loyal service and still have a great deal to offer, and it is their contribution that is being denigrated in that their actual salaries are not a composite part of the formula. We feel that we are being penalised for the quality and experience of our staff."

Yet another head teacher wrote:

"We did, however, take finances into consideration when making recent appointments"—

although he quickly qualified that by adding:

"but I can assure you all other aspects were equal"—

ending ominously with the rider,

"on this occasion."

The same head teacher added:

"I agree that to have to consider finance first would be a very sad day for this profession. We have a very generous special needs budget at this school, which we had to deploy, in part, to support this year's staffing. It is very wrong not to have actual salaries allocated to schools."

I agree. Those statements are moving and desperate. The effect on special needs budgets especially gives food for thought, and that head teacher's comment was not unique.

Another head teacher laid bare the real impact of local management of schools so eloquently that it is worth quoting him at length:

"This school is in an area of social disadvantage and deprivation and high unemployment, and the majority of our children could be said to have special needs: emotional, behavioural learning difficulties. To meet those needs, we need to be able to employ experienced and therefore expensive teachers. We had more than £20,000 put into our budget for special needs, although that has been subsumed in staff costs, and as far as practical usage is concerned, it does not exist. Our main concern is that although we have successfully integrated children with special needs, and statemented children in the past, we shall be unable to continue to do so. Staff are now having to cope with large classes in a deteriorating environment and with constant external vandalism. We feel as though we are in a downward spiral, which can only result in the limiting of educational opportunities for our disadvantaged children and greater stress for our staff."

That reveals a sad state of affairs, and one that the Government should seriously consider. It is a damning indictment of their reforms.

What is the justification for devolved budgets with only average salaries? Recently, the Department of Education and Science stated:

"Pupil-led funding is one of the key principals of LMS because it ensures that schools have a clear incentive to attract pupils by offering the best possible education."

In the light of the letters that I received from head teachers, that sounds like meaningless rhetoric, and it bears no relation to the facts. The Department's letter added:

"It is misleading, to say the least, to say that schools are funded on the basis of average teaching salaries; the LMS formula does not fund the teachers, it funds the pupils."

That is such a weasel-worded argument that it adds insult to injury for those head teachers who took the trouble to write to me. It appears that indifference and ideology have taken over from common sense and compassion.

I question whether a systematic attempt is being made to create a two-tier education system in which schools are tempted to opt out by the lure of a better system of resourcing. Is the aim to have good and bad schools, not just for those aged from 11 to 18, as was the case under the old grammar school system, but for children from the age of five? That is a chilling and unhappy prospect. The question of actual salaries centrally funded, as opposed to average costs within a devolved budget, requires urgent review. If it is thought necessary and right to protect schools having fewer than 200 pupils, why is it not thought necessary and right to protect all schools?

The standard assessment test seems to be constantly under review—if not by the Department of Education and Science, then at the personal instructions of the Prime Minister. This comment was made by almost every head teacher who wrote to me:

"They were completely successful but involved a great deal of disruption for the children, who have as a result not been educated for a full school year due to the inordinate time spent on testing. They also caused unnecessary worry for the teachers. When the aggregations were finally resolved and the results obtained, it was evident that they provided no more information about the children's progress and development than teachers already knew from their own assessment and recording practices."

Another point mentioned was the availability of national curriculum books in local bookshops at a cost of around £200 for the full set. Clearly, the children of parents who can afford to buy their own enjoy an advantage. That is something that the Department should also consider.

The Government's so-called reforms are a sham and they are damaging the education of many children. It would be a good idea if the Prime Minister turned his attention to the serious problems that I described, instead of messing about with his so-called citizens charter. If the right hon. Gentleman really wants to be the pooper scooper of the Thatcher years, I suggest that he takes a good look at what has been done to our schools.

7.26 pm

Mr. Michael Spicer (Worcestershire, South): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise a matter that has been perplexing me for some time. Over the past few months, and virtually unreported by the world press and therefore unnoticed by the public, President Gorbachev has quietly been signing a series of defence treaties with the Heads of Government of the leading nations of Europe—in particular, Germany, France, Italy and, two weeks ago, Spain.

Article 3 of the Soviet-German treaty signed on 9 November 1990 between Chancellor Kohl and President Gorbachev reads:

"Should either side become the object of an attack, the other side will not afford any military support or other assistance to the aggressor."

That wording is almost identical to that included in the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact of 23-24 August 1939:

"Should one of the contracting parties become the object of belligerant action by a third power, the other contracting party shall in no manner lend its support to this third power."

Article 2 of the 1990 Soviet-German pact reads:

"They"—

that is, the Germans and Soviets—

"regard and will continue to regard as inviolable the frontiers of all states in Europe as they exist on the day of signature of the present treaty."

One must assume from that Germany's agreement to the present status of the Baltic states. It, too, has echoes of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact—specifically, the first of their secret protocols.

Article 8 of the Soviet-French treaty signed on 29 October 1990 reads:

"In the event that one of the sides wishes to establish relations of co-operation with an international organisation of which it is not a member, the other side shall lend it its assistance."

Does that mean that France was bound by treaty to act on President Gorbachev's behalf for a seat at the G7 summit? That might be one reason why France and Italy do not want their treaties with the Soviet Union to be in the public domain.

Many issues are raised by the treaties, which have been signed bilaterally by some of the most ardent proponent nations of a federalist Europe. Time permits me to focus on only one of the issues, and that is the extent to which the Soviet-German and Soviet-Italian treaties undermine the NATO charter. My view is that they undermine it seriously. If, for instance, the Soviet Union were to attack Norway, Britain would be bound under its NATO obligations to go to the assistance of the Norwegians. In that event, and under the terms of the Soviet-German treaty, might not the Germans be inhibited from assisting us? *[Interruption.]*

One view is that under the terms of article 5 of the NATO charter an attack on one NATO state is deemed to

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be an attack on all the allies, and that it would therefore be possible to argue that, in the example that I have just put before the House, Britain would be engaged in a defensive action and that the terms of the Soviet-German agreement would not then be activated. *[Interruption.]*

There are now two treaties that govern Germany's response to military tension, and that must weaken the deterrent value of NATO. Given the enormous—this is an answer to the sedentary interjections of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks)—qualitative and quantitative improvements in the Soviet armed forces in recent months and the generally unstable nature of that country, surely these matters cannot be taken lightly.

I ask my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House whether he will arrange, before the House adjourns later this week, for a full analysis of the Soviet treaties to be placed before the House so that we can judge whether they affect any vital British interests. It is important that their full implications can be assessed in the context of the intergovernmental conference discussions leading up to the Maastricht meeting in the autumn. I shall be grateful to know what treaty overtures have been made to the British Government by the Government of the Soviet Union and the response of our Government if, as I have cause to believe, such overtures have been made.

7.32 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): We have just heard a blast from the past. The hon. Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer) must be one of the few who is determined to try to keep the cold war alive. His questions—I agree that they are pertinent—could have been directed to Mr. Gorbachev last week. After all, the Prime Minister was walking up and down the Terrace introducing Mr. Gorbachev to hon. Members. The hon. Gentleman could have obtained some pretty direct information from Mr. Gorbachev. He has raised matters that no Opposition Member is especially worried about at this stage, and I suspect that that goes for many Members on the Government Benches. We must all be grateful for that. We must be particularly grateful to Mr. Gorbachev and for the monumental changes that are taking place in eastern Europe.

I wish to register my protest that we are having such a long summer recess. It is well understood by hon. Members that the recess is not a holiday, but that is not understood by some outside this place. It is certainly not understood by those malevolent, brain-dead journalists who insist that the summer recess is a long holiday and that as soon as we finish on Thursday we shall all decamp to Caribbean islands where we will stay until we are summoned back to this place on 25 October. It is—[HON. MEMBERS: "14 October."] I shall probably miss the first week back as I shall be continuing to sip my pina colada on a Caribbean beach.

For regular attenders of the sittings of the House, such as myself, the summer recess provides an opportunity for hon. Members to catch up with all the work that perhaps we wanted to do that does not relate directly to our constituencies. The theory goes, however, that our job is to hold the Executive to account. I know, of course, that that is only a constitutional theory. In practice, things do not work out quite like that. We can, however, make life difficult for the Government.

That can be done as well by some of the more stroppy Conservative Back-Bench Members. For example, the Government were forced to announce that there would be an inquiry into BCCI. Another example was the private notice question tabled by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition. These examples show that it is possible for hon. Members on both sides of the House to put pressure on the Executive.

It is absurd for the House to shut down for about 12 weeks, especially when we know that the Government will not be shutting down for that period. Many of my right hon. and hon. Friends and I wish that they would shut down permanently. We know that the announcement has gone out from Conservative central office and No. 10 Downing street that there will a summer of great political activity for Ministers. That will undoubtedly ruin any holidays that they might have arranged.

The political programme started today with the citizens charter. It is described as a White Paper, but in reality it is a plum paper. The Prime Minister put in his thumb, pulled out a plum and said, "What a good boy am I." Certainly that was how the right hon. Gentleman behaved this afternoon.

I look on the document as a long confessional note, not as a White Paper. We have had about 12 years of Conservative Government and it is a bit rich for the Prime Minister to tell us that a host of things will be done because of the rundown in the public services, when Conservative Governments, of whom he has been a prominent member for some time, have been active in running down those services. We are getting the flavour, however, from the Prime Minister's statement this afternoon and from all the other things that are going on. It is clear that the Government will be extremely active during the summer recess.

The House exercises no real check on the Government's actions. Surely it is important that we should exercise some control through questions and speeches and by securing statements from Ministers. When the Leader of the House replies to the debate, I hope that he will say whether he is personally in favour of a more evenly spaced legislative year, which would be appreciated by many Members on both sides of the House. When the Select Committee considers sitting hours, I hope that it will look into Sessions as well.

During the summer recess, and perhaps beyond that, there will be endless speculation about the date of the general election. We are coming towards the end of the 1987 Parliament and people are becoming restless and, at times irritated. We are at the fag end of the Parliament. There are many who are experiencing difficulty when planning. It is a debilitating process, and not only for hon. Members. In this context, I am not bothered about the convenience of hon. Members. I am more concerned about the climate of uncertainty throughout the country, which is experienced by members of the business community, those who are involved in commerce and by the public generally when it comes to taking decisions. Often their decisions will be based on which party will be in power and on the date of the general election. A climate of uncertainty is created at home and abroad, and it is about time that the practice was brought to an end.

It would be naive in the extreme for me to expect the Prime Minister to announce the date of the general election. I suspect that it will take place after Christmas. No doubt the Prime Minister does not want to run any risk of not being at the intergovernmental conference in December, and that is a legitimate position for him to take. I have made my estimate of when the general election will take place, but who knows? Only one person knows, and that is the Prime Minister. It is unsatisfactory.

We need fixed election dates. Other countries have managed their affairs effectively with fixed-date elections, and we have fixed dates for local elections and EEC elections. The principle should be extended to general elections. It would ensure that Governments of whatever colour do not create windows of opportunity by manoeuvring mini-booms in the knowledge that difficulties will arise in the following two months. If a Government know that conditions are due to worsen, there is every likelihood that they will make a rush for the polls in the hope that they will gain an electoral advantage.

The ability of a Prime Minister to decide almost alone when there will be a general election gives him or her enormous power. It is far too much power. The House should always be jealous of giving too much power to any Prime Minister, whoever he or she happens to be. Such power keeps the Opposition on the run and guessing, and perhaps that is fair enough, but it keeps members of the governing party guessing as well. Great pressure can be put on recalcitrant Government Back-Bench Members if there seems to be the threat of a rebellion and an election is hanging over them. Nothing concentrates the minds of Members of this place more wonderfully than the idea that they and their party might lose a general election. That demonstrates the enormous power of a Prime Minister, who can call an election when he decides that it is right to do so.

It is time that we moved towards fixed election dates so that we can ensure that party-political advantage is not put before the interests of the country as a whole. If my arguments curry any favour, I hope that hon. Members will support me when I introduce a ten-minute Bill in October, subject to there not being a general election in the meantime.

7.40 pm

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): I agree with the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) that there should be fixed election dates. However, I am not sure that the choice of an election date gives tremendous power to a Prime Minister. It is often a great burden because they invariably get it wrong. Lord Wilson of Rievaulx in 1970, my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) in February 1974, and Lord Callaghan of Cardiff in 1979 are three recent examples. Prime Ministers might actually be glad to be relieved of a choice which so often turns out to be a burden. It certainly does not give them immense power because they so frequently get it wrong.

I wish to make the speech that I had hoped to make during our Army debate three weeks ago today. This will be my last opportunity to do so before my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence makes his statement on Army restructuring, which is expected tomorrow afternoon. I support the Government's planned reductions in the armed forces in response to the tremendous changes in eastern Europe and the fast-declining threat from the Soviet Union. The plans to reduce the strength of the Army from 156,000 to 116,000 by 19 battalions are both desirable and necessary. However those reductions must be carried out sensibly and fairly. That is my concern, and that is the basis of my speech.

The task of selecting regiments for amalgamation or disbandment was passed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to the Army Board, which in effect delegated the decisions to the councils of colonels of regiments at infantry division level. It would appear that, within the Prince of Wales division, the seven English regiments outvoted the two Welsh regiments, and it is believed that the colonels decided to recommend the amalgamation of the Royal Welch Fusiliers and the Cheshire Regiment. That recommendation was encouraged by the chief of the general staff, General Sir John Chapple, who by saying that regiments should not be called upon to undergo a second amalgamation in the same military generation, immediately targeted those 12 regiments that had survived earlier reductions.

I want to argue against the recommendation for the amalgamation of the Royal Welch Fusiliers with the Cheshire Regiment—or, indeed, with the Royal Regiment of Wales—on four grounds. The first ground is recruitment. The Royal Welch Fusiliers and the Cheshire Regiment are the most strongly recruited regiments in the Prince of Wales division. It is those regiments that find it hardest to recruit that should be amalgamated. That is the logical action that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State should take.

Wales provides 8 per cent. of the Army's infantry recruits, although it comprises only 5 per cent. of the United Kingdom's population. In fact, it provides almost 50 per cent. more recruits than its percentage of the population warrants. I understand that the Principality produces more recruits proportionately than any other part of the United Kingdom. Wales has no difficulty in providing manpower for its three regiments. In fact, it subsidises other regiments in the Prince of Wales division that do not attract sufficient recruits on their own merits.

Cross-border amalgamation with an English regiment could have a serious impact on recruitment from Wales. The traditional territorial recruiting link would be broken. That point was made effectively by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) during the Army debate three weeks ago, when he referred to the last major Army restructuring, in relation to the Cameronians, and the subsequent detrimental effect on recruitment from Lanarkshire. Currently, of the 150 new recruits a year to the Royal Welch, 100 come from north and mid-Wales. There is an especially strong bond between the Royal Welch Fusiliers and the county of Clwyd, where my constituency is, and the county of Gwynedd. Young men could be put off embarking on an Army career if they have to join an English regiment.

A further argument for retaining the Royal Welch as an independent regiment is its professionalism and morale, which is extremely high. Some 67 per cent. of the soldiers are serving on engagements of nine years or longer, with a further 19 per cent. committed to serve for six years. Even with the reduction from 55 to 36 battalions, the contribution of Wales to recruitment justifies the retention of all three Welsh regiments. In recruitment terms, it would not be fair to amalgamate the Royal Welch

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Fusiliers, and it could seriously damage future recruitment from the Principality, especially from north and mid-Wales.

The second ground on which the Royal Welch Fusiliers should not be amalgamated is territorial fairness. I am looking quickly around the Chamber to make sure that no Scots are present—*[Interruption.]* I am referring to Members of Parliament representing Scottish constituencies. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will remember my last speech in an Adjournment debate, when he made clear his dismay that I had forgotten his nationality.

There is a feeling that Scotland is likely to be treated more favourably than Wales, although we will not know that until tomorrow. Scotland provides 11·6 per cent. of infantry recruits, compared with Wales's 8 per cent., although Scotland's population is twice that of Wales. Scotland has nine battalions, including two battalions of the Scots Guards. I understand that the plan is to reduce the Scots Guards to one battalion and to reduce the remaining battalions by two. That would leave Scotland with six battalions, but on its recruitment record and potential, it should have only four.

I am not asking for more Scottish battalions to be disbanded or amalgamated—that would be a brave thing for me to do. However, there is a feeling that Scotland may be treated more favourably than the Principality. Under the plans envisaged, Scotland will be left with 50 per cent. more than its fair share, whereas Wales, if it loses one regiment, will be left with 26 per cent. less than its fair share.

The third ground is the economic and employment impact of the amalgamation of the Royal Welch Fusiliers. Obviously, the amalgamation or disbandment of any regiment has a potentially serious impact on the local economy wherever the regiment is based. Up to 1,000 people, including civilian personnel, could lose their jobs in this case. The Royal Welch Fusiliers has its headquarters at Hightown barracks in Wrexham, so amalgamation or disbandment would hit an area where unemployment has increased by 35·7 per cent. in the last year. That area—like my constituency, which is adjacent to it—has suffered tremendous structural unemployment during the past few years.

I want to say how glad I am to support the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) on this issue. Sometimes to our mutual embarrassment, we have seen eye to eye and campaigned together on several local issues. Whatever our political differences, I have the highest respect for the hon. Gentleman as a constituency Member. I have been glad to work with him and, indeed, with members of other political parties in Wales to try to preserve the Royal Welch Fusiliers as an independent regiment.

The fourth ground is historical and cultural. The Royal Welch Fusiliers is the senior regiment of Wales, with the longest and, arguably, the strongest connection with the Principality. I shall not relate its history to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, as that would take rather a long time. It was raised in 1689, and in the 300 years since it has been involved in almost every British military campaign. As I said, in recruitment it has a strong connection with north and mid-Wales, and with Clwyd and Gwynedd in particular. The Royal Welch Fusiliers Comrades Association is the strongest regimental association of its kind in the United Kingdom, with more than 2,500 active members.

My constituency is a case in point, demonstrating the strong connection between the regiment and different parts of the Principality. It was granted the freedom of the borough of Delyn in April 1976. I was present twice in the towns of Flint and Mold in my constituency when the regiment exercised its right to march through the borough with bayonets fixed.

It is also important to remember that almost 40 per cent. of the regiment is Welsh-speaking. That proved useful when trying to outwit the Japanese in Burma and, more recently, when the regiment was stationed in Northern Ireland.

There is a strong historical, cultural and linguistic bond with Wales that should be preserved, not just for sentimental reasons but on the practical ground of recruitment.

Cross-border amalgamation with the Cheshire Regiment is viewed by many people in Wales as an insult to the Welsh people. Even my right hon and noble Friend Lord Crickhowell, a former Secretary of State for Wales, has described the potential amalgamation in those terms. I have said in the House several times that the Conservative party in Wales appears too often no more than a branch of the Conservative party in England, with no distinctive identity of its own. If the Royal Welch Fusiliers are amalgamated, that unfortunate impression will be underlined and perpetuated. Like all Welsh Members, I am prepared to let the case rest on recruitment and retention in particular, because if they are the paramount criteria, the Royal Welch Fusiliers will have nothing to fear.

The campaign in and outside the House to preserve the Royal Welch Fusiliers has been an all-party one. The Welsh Conservative parliamentary group, like groups in other political parties, has worked hard to preserve the regiment. It has met my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Wales and the Minister for the Armed Forces. We have done all that we can through correspondence and meetings with Ministers to put the regiment's case.

Every such campaign has its hitches, especially when it must be organised—as this one was—at extremely short notice. I regret that we as a group were not informed some weeks ago of the lobby of the House by the Royal Welch Fusiliers Comrades Association because, had we been, we would have attended to give our strong support to the regiment.

Last Wednesday, I was glad to receive from the mayor of the borough of Delyn a petition with no fewer than 11,500 signatures—by far the largest petition I have received in my eight years as a Member. I was glad also that I was able to arrange to receive that petition with colleagues from the three other political parties in the Principality. It emphasised, if that were necessary, that the Royal Welch Fusiliers are seen by all of us as part of the Welsh family—one symbol, among many, of the distinctive identity of the Welsh people. If Ministers ignore the logic and common sense of retaining the Royal Welch Fusiliers as an independent regiment—let alone the emotional attachment of the Welsh people to the regiment—they will do so at their peril.

7.51 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): The hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) put the most novel argument I have ever heard for bilingualism. He adverted to the great advantages that the ability to speak Welsh apparently gave Welsh prisoners in the last war. That was a short-lived advantage. The Japanese have caught on to it, and the welcome Japanese residents of the Principality are learning the language. I understand, however, that they have set themselves a target of achieving full articulation with 10 per cent. less vocabulary.

Like Welsh Members from all parties, I agree with the comments of the hon. Member for Delyn about the Welsh regiments. As he will confirm, it is an unusual course that can attract 100 per cent. support among the parties involved in Welsh politics. Self-preservation leads me to dissociate myself from the hon. Gentleman's comments about the Scots.

I wish to pursue the argument put by my hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) about the problems created in the brewing industry by the brewers' attitude to their tenants. Again, in this matter, hon. Members on both sides of the House supported the arguments against the brewers' actions.

To put this matter in a slightly wider context, one should understand that the brewers are responding to the fact that they have been rumbled on what was once a tax concession and is now a great tax fiddle. Duty on beer is applied early in the production process. That feature was introduced in 1880 by Gladstone. It was recognised that 6 per cent. of the beer was wasted during refinement. Throughout the intervening years, brewers enjoyed a marvellous tax gift of 6 per cent. of the amount of tax that they should have paid. This year, it amounted to about £125 million.

The National Audit Office, which conducted an investigation and reported to the Public Accounts Committee, discovered that the biggest brewers, using expensive new equipment, could reduce that 6 per cent. wastage to 3 per cent. That may not sound a lot, but we are talking about £125 million of tax concessions—the big brewers account for £100 million of that tax benefit. According to the Brewers Society, all the top brewers use the same technology. For much of this decade, the brewers have been ripping off the tax man and the British public to the tune of up to £15 million a year, because technology has overtaken the concept of the relief on the old duty given for wastage.

I come to the main subject of my speech. Although this is a constituency issue, I wish to ask colleagues to consider the way in which they would react if there were identical circumstances in their constituencies. A quango in my constituency decided to close the night casualty unit at my hospital. Despite enormous opposition from the city council, the county council, local Members, 82 per cent. of local voters—as revealed by a survey in the *South Wales Evening Post*—and the 30,000 people who signed a petition which I organised and presented to the Secretary of State, that quango said, "We will close the casualty unit." There is enormous anger in my constituency and neighbouring constituencies, yet it is ineffective, because the quango is virtually doing what it likes.

That same detested quango, West Glamorgan health authority, closed the casualty unit in the early 1980s. For a couple of years, it consulted about changing casualty from a major to a minor unit. Overnight, it closed the unit, without any consultation on that option. Even the Welsh Office was horrified. With the support of Ministers, we worked to thwart the authority's proposals and the unit was reopened—although only on the basis of having a minor casualty unit, operating during the day.

The health authority is now at it again. It is in the middle of a fraudulent exercise of so-called consultation before it goes ahead with a decision that it has already made. I describe that exercise as "fraudulent" because the health authority is deceiving the public and is withholding or wrongly presenting information.

The health authority said to the people of West Glamorgan, "If you let us close the night casualty unit, we will be able to carry out 400 more cataract operations a year." To pensioners and the elderly, that is clearly an important consideration, but the health authority has not explained that it will cost £333,000 to introduce the extra ophthalmic capability. The authority will save only £74,000 from closing the unit.

The health authority is telling the people of West Glamorgan, "Save £70,000 in the casualty unit and we will give you £333,000-worth of cataract operations." Everyone can see that that is nonsense. The saving about which the authority talks would provide about 80 extra operations a year.

During the past week, the health authority ran a full-page advertisement in a newspaper promoting its measure as a health gain for the community. It said that cataract operations represented a health gain compared with the casualty service. Although 1,460 people used the casualty unit last year, it will disappear shortly if the health authority has its way. The trade-off—if this is to be seen as a trade-off—is that a mere 80 cataract operations will be funded by the closure of the unit.

Of course, the health authority does not explain that the Welsh Office is establishing a cataract unit 20 miles away, at Bridgend, to deal with the backlog of cataract patients on waiting lists in south Wales.

Something else has come to my aid today. I noticed that in his statement on the citizens charter the Prime Minister said that dealing with the backlog of cataract operations was to be one of the elements in the White Paper. Naturally, we assume that the right hon. Gentleman realises that that can be done only if the resources are there, so we assume that the Government will provide resources. That is another reason why there is no need to close the casualty unit.

Furthermore, the health authority does not point out that, since it counted the number of people using the casualty unit overnight, two major departments—paediatrics and gynaecology—have been transferred from another hospital. It is absurd that, under the proposed new system, if a 999 call were made, for a spontaneous abortion, for example, the patient would have to be taken to another hospital in Morriston where there will be a casualty unit, and then brought back to Singleton, where the gynaecology department now is, and where there is now a casualty unit—but that unit is about to disappear.

The same consideration applies to children's illnesses, too. Children with major complaints will have to be taken out of Swansea and then brought back again.

It is especially galling to us in West Glamorgan that the Welsh Office recently produced a formula under which each health authority is given a percentage of the total budget available for Wales determined by the size of the

[Mr. Alan Williams]

population and by need. On the Welsh Office's own admission, West Glamorgan already receives £2·2 million less than it is entitled to in the current year. We are to lose a night casualty service for the sake of saving £74,000, yet the Minister admits that the Government owe us £2·2 million for this year and will owe us the same amount next year, because that deficit will not be put right in the short term.

I said that the so-called consultation was fraudulent because the health authority had already made up its mind. That much is clear from the fact that the authority has already advertised in the *British Medical Journal* for a consultant to fill the ophthalmic post whose existence is supposed to be contingent on the decison to close the casualty unit.

There can be no doubt in anyone's mind that West Glamorgan health authority has already made up its mind. In the meantime it is sending officials to other parts of the county—to Neath, for example, where there is a casualty unit, and to Aberavon, which uses the Neath unit. The officials say to pensioners' groups that if they support the closure of Swansea casualty unit—the unit that those people do not use—the health authority will be able to give people the eye operations that they need. That is cynical and contemptible, and it is happening in the name of a quango that ignores local public opinion.

We believe that that distortion of a consultation process should be exposed for what it is. Ministers should tell West Glamorgan health authority that it is clear from all the evidence that the consultation is a sham, and that when the decision goes on appeal to the Welsh Office, as it most certainly will, Ministers will throw out the health authority's case.

8.7 pm

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): As a native of Cheshire, but with English parents who reside in north Wales—I shall visit them next week—I believe that I have sufficient historical knowledge of the rivalries between those two tribes to support what my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) said about the Royal Welch Fusiliers and the Cheshire Regiment.

One general reason why the House should not adjourn is that both sides of the House, expecially Conservative Members, would welcome a debate on my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's citizens charter, produced today. Conservative Members would especially like to explore the motives underlying the churlish and sterile response of the Labour party to my right hon. Friend's statement. I welcome my right hon. Friend's personal commitment to providing decent standards in public education, public health and public transport—that commitment is an essential part of his political philosophy.

I shall discuss two aspects of that commitment—first, standards in the teaching of English. I am conscious that my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) eloquently pursued the same subject in Friday's debate, but I hope that neither my hon. Friend nor the House will mind if I now support his case. It is a sufficiently important subject to be worthy of support by more than one hon. Member.

My attention was drawn to concern over the teaching of English a few weeks ago, on 30 June, by an article in *The Sunday Telegraph*, which quoted from the vexed £20 million document produced under the auspices of the Department of Education and Science on the teaching of English language and literature. My hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham effectively took the document to pieces on Friday, but he did not refer to the following quotation from it:

"grammar should be seen as 'a series of options from which the speaker or writer should make choices dependent on context and intention.'"

It is worrying that

"this study is already being used to train English teachers in state schools how to implement the national curriculum. That does not mean, of course, that all English teachers"

support the "progressive" intentions of the document, but

"merely that all are got at by the thought police".

as described by Nicholas Farrell, in *The Sunday Telegraph*. Chief among the "thought police" is

"Terry Eagleton, the Marxist recently appointed Professor of English at Oxford University. He describes himself as the 'barbarian in the citadel' . . . At a conference two weeks ago at Ruskin College, Oxford, attended by 400 like-minded progressives and called to discuss the struggle for English"—

as they call it—

"He said: 'There's an enormous amount to play for and we're the only people in the arena.'"

We understand that

"21 of the 25 regional co-ordinators of the suppressed English teaching study are members of the . . . left-wing pressure group"

supporting this approach.

In connection with the implementation of the citizens charter, there is considerable concern about standards in state schools. Conservative Members are committed to maintaining standards—my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House had his own spell seeking to raise standards and thus to fulfil our commitment.

I must commend a study known as "English, our English" published by the Centre for Policy Studies a few weeks ago. It states in its introduction:

"When children leave English schools today, few are able to speak or write English correctly. Even fewer have a familiarity with the literary heritage of England and it is not hard to see why, because among those who theorise about English teaching there has developed a new orthodoxy which regards it as a conceptual error to speak of correct English and which rejects the idea of a literary heritage. And this new orthodoxy has now come to influence every aspect of English in schools."

I welcome the Prime Minister's announcement today about the introduction of outsiders to the inspection of schools. They will replace the insider HMI system because Her Majesty's inspectors have made reports that endorse and carry forward these somewhat subversive thoughts about English. Hitherto, they have said how it should be taught and what the aims of teaching should be, and the recommendations of Her Majesty's inspectors have largely reflected the tenets of the new orthodoxy.

Equality of opportunity, to which Conservative Members are committed, is facing one or two difficulties and distortions in Taunton. Because of the way in which the town and the school structures have grown, 62 per cent. of pupils in Taunton live south of the railway but only 28 per cent. of secondary school places—at Castle school—are to be found in the south. As I have learnt from recent constituency cases, that has left many families unable to have the first choice of school and it has generated dissatisfaction with the service and created difficulties for the schools in the north which have to receive pupils from disaffected families. Inevitably there

are many cross-town journeys and more children have to be transported by car who would walk or cycle if their schools were close enough to home.

For some time the education authority, the county council, has been pursuing a scheme to build a new school in the south of the town and it was envisaged that the scheme would obtain substantial support from the DES —as well as from the Church, because it involved a Church school. The announcement in April that the DES would not support the scheme caused dismay among members of the county council. The chief reason given by the DES was the size of the sum required, but that would have been apparent to the DES from the start of the project, yet it was not mentioned until late in the day. So my constituents and those in the education system in Taunton and in the county have some reason to feel aggrieved about the lateness of the DES's decision.

I have made Ministers aware of this problem and I have raised it in the House. I hope that the DES will be as supportive as possible of the efforts being made to rectify the imbalance in school provision in Taunton—for educational, social and environmental reasons.

The second matter that I want to raise has consequences for the environment. I welcome the new approach of the Secretary of State for Transport to transport of freight, and his new emphasis on the role of the railways. I welcome his recent announcement on section 8 environmental grants for environmentally sensitive roads. My right hon and learned Friend and I had an exchange on the matter on 11 July at column 1103. I commend to him and to the House a study produced some time ago by Somerset county council on the consequences of moving, within the EEC, to a 40-tonne upper limit for heavy lorries. That will have consequences for many counties. In Somerset, almost all bridges on minor roads would have to be strengthened to take the extra loads—one reason why the 40-tonne limit is not to be introduced until January 1999.

I understand that the Department of Transport is carrying out a bridge survey which it expects to take another two years to complete. The Department estimates that 10,000 bridges need to be strengthened, but we understand that it is not prepared to estimate the cost of the operation. It is estimated that in Somerset alone 400 bridges will have to be strengthened at an approximate cost of £8 million, at 1990 prices.

In my constituency the small towns of Wellington and Milverton are both outstanding heritage settlements. Five hundred HGVs will pass through Wellington every day, and 70 through Milverton.

I know that other Members want to speak—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, Hear."] I am glad that Somerset county council has produced proposals to resolve this problem —[HON. MEMBERS: "Get on with it."] The right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) spoke for well over 10 minutes.

Somerset county council recommends that all lorries over an agreed weight and length should be restricted to motorways and A roads, and it proposes the development of lorry parks, warehouses and trans-shipment parks at motorway exits—that will assist the trans-shipment of freight to smaller vehicles. I hope to return to this matter in the autumn on an Adjournment motion, but it merits the attention of the House today.

8.16 pm

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): We have heard many good reasons why the House should not adjourn, not least those, including the subject of education, mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson). I too want to discuss education this evening.

This afternoon, when the Prime Minister introduced the citizens charter, an excellent document which I trust has the full support of the whole House, he raised the question of educational standards. Earlier, the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) referred to brain-dead journalists. I shall not take up his subject or pursue his line about how journalists nearly always get matters wrong, except to say that Members and journalists also get it wrong far too often by emphasising the negative. Just for once, and in the space of three or four minutes, I want to discuss something that has gone well——

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): One minute will do.

Mr. Thompson: Two or three minutes will be quite enough.

Between 1 and 9 July this year, the international physics olympiad was held in Cuba. It took place in Britain back in 1986 and it began in the eastern bloc in 1967. It is an opportunity for young people from this country to achieve in science, especially in physics. In *The Times Educational Supplement* of 28 June, Dr. Cyril Isenberg, secretary of the British physics olympiad, was quoted as saying:

"The competitive spirit in education, despite what we hear, is not dead."

The physics olympiad is a way of ensuring that our young people can compete and achieve excellence in education.

Earlier in this debate, we heard about the importance of ensuring that education is good for all children, an idea that I support. What I want to say in no way contradicts the principle of a good state education service for all. Last year, Alexander Barnett, who attended Manchester grammar school, at which I was privileged to teach for five years, was awarded the gold medal in the international physics olympiad. Thirty-two countries took part. We did not do quite as well this year in Cuba, but K. Reavell of Bedford school won the silver medal, and we obtained four other awards. This year, a Russian student gained the top placing. I am sure that that pleased President Gorbachev, and I would have spoken to him about it if I had had the chance last week to meet him on the Terrace.

The achievements of these young people are marvellous. In this country, about 500 students from some 200 schools compete to become members of the five-strong team which will take part in the international physics olympiad. This year's British winners who will go forward to the olympiad took part in a presentation ceremony at the Royal Institution, at which the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science, my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) was present.

The competition generates enthusiasm for physics and science generally, and the number of A-level standard entrants to the competition increases by 30 per cent. a year. In this country, there are six times as many state schools as independent schools, but the number of entrants to the competition from independent schools is equal to the number from state schools. That supports the point made

[Mr. Thompson]

by some hon. Members, that we must encourage excellence in our state schools more than we do, so that the number entering the competition from state schools is six times as great as the number entering from independent schools. When that happens, we shall be able to say that we have achieved what we set out to achieve.

I have raised this subject to give publicity and encourage support for real scientific and educational achievement. In the press, and perhaps even in the House, too much attention is paid to the trivial and the way-out, astrology rather than astronomy, and it is important to put good scientific achievement on the record. Parliament should hear about such achievements as well as about achievements in other spheres.

While improving overall standards, we need to encourage competition and excellence in education. I know that the Leader of the House, who is in his place, agrees. I was grateful for his support when he was Secretary of State for Education and Science and we were trying to make sure that single sciences were still taught in our schools. Therefore, I do not need to take any more time trying to persuade him of my argument. I urge the Government to support the principles of the British physics olympiad and the House to take every opportunity to support such activity and our young people who do so well.

8.22 pm

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield) *rose*——

Mr. Patnick: Oh.

Mr. Haynes: The Government Whip should not sound surprised. I am entitled to contribute to the debate.

I feel as though I have not been to bed because, not many hours ago, I was speaking to the Leader of the House. He has been a fair Leader of the House, and I hope that he will be fair on many of the questions put to him in the debate.

A few weeks ago, I put a question about Cyprus to a Minister in the Department of Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and asked him to get stuck into the job. He is new to the post; he was appointed by the right hon. Lady who used to occupy No. 10, who hoped that he would do a good job, especially on the quesiton of Cyprus. Last week, we had a first-class meeting in Room 14, which was packed solid with Greek Cypriots. Many others could not get in. Turkish troops from the mainland invaded northern Cyprus in 1974, and the only attempt to sort out the problem has been gas-bagging. There has been no action whatever.

I was a little disappointed to hear the President of the United States say that Turkey was a good boy for the way that it helped to overcome the problems in the Gulf. That lot invaded northern Cyprus and created a big problem. Many people are missing and many of us want to know where they are. The Government are one of the guarantors of Cyprus, and they should take some action instead of sitting round a table and gas-bagging, as they do in the Chamber. We want the Government to make some concrete decisions about how to solve this problem, but they have not done very well up to now.

The 1974 invasion was allowed to happen. I accept that, at that time, Labour were in power, but this problem has gone on for 13 years, and talking for that length of time is not good enough. We need some action to remove the Turks from the island, because the Turkish Cypriots and the Greek Cypriots want to live together in peace.

The population of northern Cyprus is growing by the day. People have been flittered there from the mainland to take over the place. We have a base in southern Cyprus in the Greek Cypriot area, and if matters are left for too long, the Turks will cross the green line and decide that they want the whole island. I hope that the Leader of the House will have something to say to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and especially to the Minister of State who is responsible for that area. I hope that he will also let the Foreign Secretary know.

Perez de Cuellar, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, has been doing a lot of talking. He has been trying to help, but he cannot make the decisions. Other people have to make them and he has to carry them out. The Leader of the House should take some action and the Government should sort out the Cyprus problem, because it has been going on for far too long.

8.27 pm

Mr. William Powell (Corby): As always, this debate has so far raised a fascinating range of topics, to which I have listened with considerable interest. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) thought that our break to 14 October was far too long. I disagree. I think that it is far too short, and would prefer to have more time with my constituents than will be possible because of the fact that we shall return here immediately after the party conference season.

If I had longer, I should like to have developed four points, but I shall merely articulate them and allow time for other hon. Members to speak. On 22 October last year, at about 8.20 in the evening, a young constituent of mine, Miss Susan James, was travelling with a friend in a taxi in Corby. The taxi was involved in an accident, and Miss James and the driver of the taxi were killed and the passenger was very seriously injured. The driver of the taxi, who quite coincidentally was well known to me, had been driving continuously for some 16 hours. That cannot possibly be right.

In all circumstances, drivers who are conveying the public in coaches or lorries—but apparently, not in taxis—are governed by regulations setting out how long the driver is allowed to drive. This accident gave rise to issues apart from the length of time for which that driver was driving. My hon. Friend and neighbour the Minister for Public Transport is conducting an inquiry into the various regulations, but it is important for members of the public to be assured about all aspects of safety when they travel in taxis. That must include the hours that taxi drivers work.

I do not think that taxi drivers are, in general, working for anything like that period of time, but it cannot be right that, after this case, this lack of restriction should be allowed to continue. I hope that my hon. Friend will reach a conclusion urgently. He is perfectly aware of my feelings on this matter. It is so clear that it cannot be right for taxi drivers to work continuously for 16 hours, and that it is a danger both to their passengers and other members of the public if they do, that this anomaly must be corrected as soon as possible.

The House is aware of the scandal of timeshares and the way they are sold. If I had had longer, I should have set out the evidence that comes to light almost every day. The House will agree that, in all categories of junk mail that our constituents receive, the most junk-like is that for timeshares. I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will be able to come to the House as soon as possible after we have returned with proposals to put an end to this scandal.

I have two other short points to make, both of which are rarely raised in the House. In recent years, there has been controversy over the quality of our judges. One aspect of this controversy is the retirement age. Under the Judicial Pensions Act 1959, High Court judges are allowed to retire at 75. Under Courts Acts, Crown court judges are allowed to retire at 72 and magistrates at 70. The burden that our judges, particularly our High Court judges in the Court of Appeal, carry, with the huge weight of appeals going through, is immense. I cannot help feeling that there should be serious discussions to review whether that retirement age is any longer appropriate, given the conditions in which judges have to do their work. I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends, and my right hon. and noble Friends, will give urgent consideration to this matter.

My final point is about the payment of parish clergy of the Church of England, which is a matter of concern to the House. There have been reports that clerical stipends will be reduced in the coming year because of the financial difficulties that the Church of England is having in meeting its stretched budget. However, we should pay some attention to the costs of bishops and suffragan bishops. It is estimated that the cost of a diocesan bishop is £100,000 a year. That includes salary, staff, a home, a car and so on. For a suffragan bishop, the cost is nearly £100,000 a year.

The Crown has the task of nominating bishops to the dioceses of Wakefield, Bradford and Gloucester. I hope that nominations will be postponed for as long as is possible, perhaps even a year or two. Furthermore, there is no need for suffragan bishops in this day and age. They exist to confirm people, but confirmations are down to only half a dozen candidates—a world away from the days when Archbishop Wakefield confirmed 4,000 people at a time. The cost of sustaining suffragan bishops is immense. If some savings could be made by the Crown delaying appointments to sees and to suffragans, it is possible that money will be made available for the parish clergy, who are the people who really matter in staffing the parishes of the Church of England.

8.32 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): I hope that before the House adjourns for the summer recess, we shall consider the case for hospital radio to have its own broadcasting frequency. Each year I suggest that hospital broadcasting equipment should be zero-rated for VAT. I have been disappointed on that, but I was led to believe that hospital radio would be granted its own frequency. There has been a delay of six months in setting up the pilot scheme with 10 hospitals. I hope that, through the good offices of the Leader of the House, we can chase up the Radio Authority to make sure that this experiment goes ahead and that, when we have the annual meeting of the hospital radios in my constituency later this autumn, we can celebrate being given our own frequency.

Secondly, my constituents are hard pressed with the Fenchurch Street line, as are other Essex Members of Parliament, so much so that, tomorrow evening in the House, we shall be forming the Basildon commuter group. There are continual complaints about delays, lack of communication and a tardy service. I hope that we can do something about that.

I support what my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) said about timeshares. About seven weeks ago, I initiated a debate on this matter to which one of the Ministers in the Department of Trade and Industry responded. It would appear from the literature that I continue to receive that I and my wife will be spending the whole of the summer picking up our cars, televisions and cheques for £2,000. There will be a short delay while she has a baby, but I promise the House that I shall come back with all these goodies, and perhaps we can share them out and have them as prizes at fetes.

Finally, I hope that before we adjourn for the summer, a cure can be found for hay fever, because I should like to hear about it.

8.35 pm

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): As usual, the debate has covered a breathtakingly wide range of subjects. I can encapsulate what hon. Members have been asking for by saying that it all adds up to a demand for a citizens charter, but one that I fear bears no relationship to the document that was presented earlier today.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) was concerned about conditions in the licensed trade and the way in which the brewers operate. He made a powerful argument for a citizens charter for tenants.

My hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) has a great deal of specialist knowledge of the motor industry, about which he spoke. If there was a citizens charter message in his comments, it concerned the need for some respect for the desire of people to have security in the industry in which they work. There is not much of that in the Government's citizens charter.

My hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) touched on a number of subjects but specifically raised the question of the three guardsmen who were crippled in Canada. Mercifully, he was not wearing a top hat when he spoke, and his points were all the more effective for that. He also raised the most important need of a citizen—his right to vote rapidly in a general election.

My hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) touched in particular on the requirements of children with special educational needs—another subject not mentioned in the citizens charter, as far as I could discover from a brief reading of it.

I am not sure that there was anything in the citizens charter that related to the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). For once, I disagreed with him. I must admit that I find the prospect of American-style four-year-cycle fixed Parliaments, when two of those years are spent conducting an election campaign, pretty horrendous. However, there are "swings and roundabouts" arguments on all those matters.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) spoke powerfully about the absence of a citizens charter for the rights of NHS patients—something which the Government have long neglected.

[Mr. Bruce Grocott]

My hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) —the only Labour Member to speak about foreign affairs, although the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) spoke about them—raised the continuing problems facing Cyprus.

One would expect many requests for citizens charter-type benefits from Labour Members. I found it intriguing that Conservative Members made continuing demands for Government regulations and controls, and rights to benefits, after 12 years of Conservative government. I will not go into them all in detail, but the hon. Member for Poole (Mr. Ward) spoke about the need for stricter regulations on the sale of educational land. The hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) was concerned about education, particularly nursery school provision. The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) spoke about changes in planning laws and the need for greater protection there. Many of these subjects related to new rights for citizens, new Government intervention and additional Government resources.

I make no apology for concentrating on the citizens charter, which I looked at when not listening to this evening's speeches—although, like most hon. Members, I have not had much time to read it. I find it deeply ironic that the Government should introduce such a charter just when an inquiry into the BCCI scandal is taking place. One of the central issues is, of course, the failure of Government Departments even to respond to citizens' letters.

When the Government start lambasting local authorities, publicly owned bodies and privatised monopolies about the services that they provide, I think, "Physician, heal thyself." The Department of Trade and Industry, the Department of Transport and the Treasury—in the days when the present Prime Minister was there—failed to deal with serious queries about the way in which a bank was operating. Let us have a better response from Government Departments and a bit of ministerial accountability. Let us end this business of blaming a secretary who did not deal with a request from the public. Let us see Ministers take some responsibility for a change: that would be a welcome innovation. Although the citizens charter suggests that junior officials should name themselves, it does not mention ministerial accountability.

I think that the Leader of the House fancies himself as a bit of a number cruncher. We should be very interested to know how much the proposals in the charter will cost to implement. So far, the Government seem very vague about that. We know that they have the resources to give precise costings very rapidly; every time we issue a policy proposal, they put their civil servants to work spelling out the cost. Let me ask the right hon. Gentleman some specific questions: no doubt he will get out his calculator and give me some answers. Page 10 of the citizens charter refers to "a charter for patients". One of the crucial aims is the provision of a maximum waiting time for operations. We would all say amen to that, but how much money is being committed to it?

Page 13 refers to "a charter for parents". One of the key promises is

"to raise standards in education for all pupils".

That is an excellent objective, but how much will it cost? I am sure that the Leader of the House will tell us.

Page 15 talks about "a charter for tenants". We would all subscribe to the charter's desirable objectives, such as speedy repairs, but what additional resources do the Government plan to make available to local authories so that they can implement those promises?

Page 17 deals with transport, and mentions, for example, rebates for season ticket holders who do not receive a proper standard of service. It is a bit difficult for British Rail to provide such a service when it has not the money to refurbish trains and coaches. How much additional money will it be given?

Page 19 lists some laudable objectives in connection with driving tests. These are good, common sense proposals: the Government suggest driving tests in the evenings and on Saturday afternoons, for example. But what will be the cost, and who will pay?

Page 20 contains one of the richer parts of this thin document, "a charter for jobseekers". The only sort of charter that job seekers need is a charter that would provide jobs. Hon. Members on both sides of the House know all about the scourge of joblessness: at any rate, Conservative Members are slowly beginning to learn about it. If last week's unemployment figures provided one grim consolation—and, my word, there were very few; I take no pleasure in saying that, because I do not wish unemployment on anyone—it was the news that the biggest rise in unemployment had taken place in the south-east. As those of us in the midlands, the north, Wales and Scotland are well aware, the region has often been cushioned in the past. I hope that that brings home the true meaning of unemployment to Conservative Members.

Of course we all want people to look for jobs in

"pleasant, well-designed office interiors",

but those people want jobs. There is no point in being interviewed in a pleasant, well-designed office interior if there will be no job at the end of it. What a ludicrous citizens charter this is.

Even more absurd is the section on social services, on page 21. It speaks of the need for "nationally promulgated quality standards". No one would disagree with that, but I do not know how the Government can deliver social services other than by providing local authorities with the necessary resources. We are all in favour of benchmarks and we all wish to improve standards, but the question remains the same: how much additional money will be made available?

The charter mentions the Benefits Agency, and the need for better social security provision. There is more silliness here. The charter refers to the need for "a clean office environment". No one is arguing with that, but what really counts is the level and availability of benefits.

I have heard Prime Ministers give a few pathetic answers, but I was struck by the answer that the Prime Minister gave my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. O'Hara) today. I shall repeat the question in case the Leader of the House can do any better than his boss did. My hon. Friend asked what redress would be available under the charter to someone who, towards the end of the financial year, asked his local DSS office for a benefit payment under the social fund and was told that the social fund had run out, but that he undoubtedly deserved the benefit and qualified for it under any reasonable criterion. The Prime Minister replied that the claimant should go and see his local Member of

Parliament. What a fatuous answer! I hope that the Leader of the House can do a little better.

Page 24 of the charter deals with a subject beloved of Ministers, the police. We all know that crime has soared under the present Government, but everyone in my constituency—and, I suspect, everyone in other constituencies—would support the following laudable objective:

"We will expect all police forces to set and publish target times for answering telephone calls, and arriving at the scene of incidents which require rapid reaction".

How much will police authorities be given so that they can accomplish that?

I am not surprised that the document is a peculiar plum colour. At least the Government had the sense not to make it blue; they knew that, if they did, the citizens would rip it up. Perhaps they hoped that they could usher in a Tory manifesto in the hope that some people might mistake it for a Labour manifesto. They may have thought that a few more people would read a document of this colour, because they would have more faith in a citizens charter delivered by the Labour party. The Opposition feel deeply grateful to the Prime Minister—as, I suspect, do the citizens of this country—for spelling out so eloquently the result of 12 years of Tory failure to deliver citizens' basic requirements.

We are at the end of a Session. This fag-end Government are well past their sell-by date. The only charter that the citizens of this country want is a general election.

8.49 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): One difficulty of this debate is that, in order to enable as many hon. Members as possible to speak, those who sum up give themselves a very short period in which to do so. I cannot, therefore, cover all the points, but those that I fail to cover will be passed to the appropriate Minister.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow), and my hon. Friends the Members for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) and for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) asked about salmon fishing. They know that I have more than a passing interest in the subject. May I point out to my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking that I have been in touch with my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food following our previous exchange on 11 July. The Minister told me that he will be in a position to make a statement during the overspill period. One problem is that the latest figures are not available now. If, therefore, a statement were made this week, it would not include the latest figures. I hope that my right hon. Friend will feel that the fact that a statement will be made when the House returns after the summer recess is an advance.

The hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) and my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) referred to publicans. The hon. Gentleman fairly said that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry had set out his position in a recent letter, so I shall not waste valuable time by quoting it again. He will know, however, that my right hon. Friend said that he has already urged the brewers to keep to a minimum the number of notices to quit and to explain that the notice to quit is simply a technical step which is designed to open up negotiations on new leases, which I understand is one of the problems. The hon. Gentleman also made it clear that he is to have a meeting with the brewers, in the light of the representations made to him.

The hon. Gentleman asked for an undertaking that legislation would be introduced early in the next Session. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has made the position clear: legislation on the subject was enacted only recently. The Beer Orders have not yet been laid before Parliament. Therefore, it would be premature to expect new legislation in what I can assure hon. Members will be a busy and crowded fifth Session of Parliament.

My hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) referred to housing associations in the north-west and the Housing Corporation's programme. That is set to rise significantly, from about £1·1 billion in 1990-91 to over £2 billion in 1993-94. My hon. Friend referred to the north-west's share. He will know that resources are now being distributed between regions on the basis of need, as measured by the housing needs indicator, not on the basis of past expenditure. That is a fairer way to distribute the increased resources.

Although the northern regions stand to gain from the Housing Corporation's expanding programme, their share of it may fall. However, the gain is the important point. This year, the north-east, north-west and Merseyside regions received allocations that enabled them to approve new schemes for rent and for sale worth £346 million. The Housing Corporation's projections show that next year that figure will rise to £502 million, and in the following year to £564 million.

My hon. Friend also asked about one part of the follow-up to the Ibbs report. There will be consultations with representatives of the staff who work here about any implications of the Ibbs reforms for staffing in general, which the House has welcomed. I do not want to refer to the specific case that my hon. Friend raised, but I shall write to him about it.

The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) asked about Yugoslavia. He knows that last week the economic summit participants supported the Community's involvement in the Yugoslav crisis. We must hope that all the parties can use the breathing space provided by the ceasefire agreement on 8 July to reduce the tension and begin talks on Yugoslavia's future. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman knows that British representatives are included in the European Community monitoring that is taking place. I can assure him that the United Kingdom will play its full part. I am also sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that in the longer term it is for Yugoslavia to decide its own future.

My hon. Friend the Member for Poole (Mr. Ward) asked about a number of local cases. I appreciate the issues involved in the sale of land. My hon. Friend showed that he is well informed. I noted that he has written to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. Local authorities have powers to dispose of land in whatever manner they wish, but where they are selling for less than the best price reasonably obtainable they will need the Secretary of State's consent under the Local Government Act 1972. That is reasonable. It is important that the best prices are obtained for land which has been

[Mr. John MacGregor]

acquired with public funds. Planning status is a different question, but I am sure that my hon. Friend is well equipped to follow up that point.

The hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) asked about Rover and its decision to lay off staff and go to a four-day week, which reflects its desire to reach productivity levels similar to those of the Japanese and also the great pressures in the car market worldwide. I fully share his disappointment about that, but I hope that he recognises the improvements that are taking place in the car industry. It is to the credit of our car industry that the volume of car exports is 45 per cent. up to the previous year. In particular, the hon. Gentleman will have noticed in the latest trade figures, out today, that, compared with May, car exports are up by some 22 per cent. Therefore, the car industry is doing extremely well by improving its exports.

That enables me to refer to a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson). He referred to the fact that we do not concentrate enough on the good news. No Opposition Member drew attention today to the fact that the June 1991 figures show a small current account surplus and a surplus in manufactured goods. The export performance of the car industry is particularly impressive. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer pointed out today, there is every prospect, given present trends, that we shall be running a surplus in car exports by the mid-1990s, compared with a deficit of about £6 billion in 1989. Therefore, I join my hon. Friend in paying tribute to the performance of the car industry. Had I the time, I should have liked to say much more about it.

The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) again referred to the three Grenadier guardsmen. He knows that I have frequently expressed great sympathy for the three guardsmen concerned. He knows that there was a full and useful discussion of the merits of the case at the meeting on 9 July to which he referred and to which I have referred before. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that Ministers are continuing to give this matter their urgent attention. A further meeting with the solicitor took place last Friday. The discussions are continuing and we must hope for a successful outcome.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West referred to use class orders, with which I recall having something to do myself. I understand that the purpose of the change is to enable businesses to respond to the changing patterns of consumer demand. As my hon. Friend requested, I shall draw the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister of State to his particular lack of satisfaction in this case, but I shall also draw his attention to my hon. Friend's considerable tribute to him in every other respect.

The hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) raised two points about the education reforms. I totally disagree with her views about them. I believe that the education reforms are excellent and that they will contribute greatly to the improvement of standards. They are much welcomed in many respects by the schools.

The hon. Member for Halifax mentioned local management of schools and actual salaries versus average salaries. There is no doubt that the greater freedom and responsibility that LMS gives schools is broadly welcomed. It leads to better funding decisions and to a considerable improvement in morale. Pupil-led funding is an important part of the citizens charter, because it enables parents to express their views, and schools can respond to them. Listening to the hon. Lady, one would not think that resources for education had been increased. What is important is how they are deployed by schools.

Testing and the standard assessment tasks at the age of seven are important for schools, pupils and their parents. This has been the first year of national testing. I knew when we were conducting the pilot survey of 2 per cent. of schools that we could not expect to get everything right from the outset. I share the view of many schools—I still visit many schools—that there have been some problems in managing tests in the classroom and that the work load was too heavy. This summer's tests are being evaluated extensively. We acknowledge that next year the tests must be more straightforward for teachers to administer and mark. I am sure that the principle is right.

I detected a note of desperation in the voice of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) at the thought that we might be rising very shortly and that that would enable Ministers to make much play over the summer. We shall not be on holiday for the whole period. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman does not wish to take a holiday, but quite a lot of hon. Members wish to go on holiday with their families. The party conferences take up much of September and October, and that must be taken into account.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West asked whether the timetable for the parliamentary year could be considered by the Procedure Select Committee. The answer is yes, the Committee can consider that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) commented on hay fever. I read in one of the Sunday newspapers that research suggests that hay fever is something to do with sexual excitement. I do not know whether that links with his earlier comments or whether there is any validity in the argument, but I could not resist saying it.

The hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) made much of the citizens charter. He ignored the tremendous strides that have been made in the past 12 years by contracting out and privatisation in increasing choice and in lowering costs and prices to consumers. Many other initiatives have been taken in the past 12 years. The 70 measures in the citizens charter, which the hon. Gentleman ignored, are building on that record. We shall develop that firmly over the summer.

In this Parliament, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has firmly established himself on the national and international stage. His leadership during the Gulf war——

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman has not been here; he can sit down.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister led this country to a successful conclusion of the Gulf war and dealt with so many other issues, including the leadership of last week's successful summit. He has developed our approach to the two important European negotiations. Inflation is coming down and he is presiding over so many other successes on the economic front.

We believe that this has been a successful Parliament. The morale of Conservative Members is high. In the coming months, we shall be drawing attention to the enormous defects that have emerged in Labour's policies in the past few months.

Mr. Grocott: What about the costings?

Mr. MacGregor: It is rich of the hon. Gentleman to talk about costings when he does not cost his programmes. That is why we heard a commitment worth another £35 billion from him.

We shall be pushing all those points as well as the merits of the citizens charter and our other policies. On that basis, we are happy to have this adjournment, but look forward to coming back shortly.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House, at its rising on Thursday 25th July, do adjourn until Monday 14th October.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With permission of the House I will put together motions Nos. 2 to 7.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

Companies House

That the draft Companies House Trading Fund Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 25th June, be approved.

Patent Office

That the draft Patent Office Trading Fund Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 25th June, be approved.

Forth Ports Authority

That the draft Forth Ports Authority (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 27th June, be approved.

Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd.

That the draft Caledonian MacBrayne Limited (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 27th June, be approved.

Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland)

That the draft Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 10th June, be approved.

Statistics (Northern Ireland)

That the draft Statistics (Confidentiality) (Northern Ireland) Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 4th July, be approved.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Question agreed to.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Mr. Speaker: With permission of the House I will put together motions Nos. 8 and 9.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees).

Oil Crisis Measures

That this House takes note of European Document No. 10445/90 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of Energy on 8th July 1991 relating to oil crisis measures and contingency oil stocks; supports the Government's intention to ensure that member states can retain their existing stockholding arrangements; and urges it to resist the proposed increase in the Commission's powers.

Polybrominated Biphenyl Ethers

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4658/91 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of the Environment on 8th July 1991 relating to restrictions on the marketing and use of polybrominated biphenyl ethers; and supports the Government's objectives of ensuring more than adequate protection for human health and the environment and a flexible and positive approach to the adoption of alternatives.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Question agreed to.

Orders of the Day

Consolidated Fund (Appropriation) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Question, That the Bill be now read a Second time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 54(1) (Consolidated Fund Bills), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Latin America

9.4 pm

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): I am especially grateful to have the opportunity to initiate this debate on relations between this country and Latin America. I express the gratitude of all of us, expecially those of us on the all-party Latin America committee, for this opportunity, which is the fourth annual debate we have had on Latin America. The debate is much valued by our committee, and we believe that it is greatly valued by the Governments in Latin America.

We all recognise that the affairs of Latin America are not prominent in the affairs of the House. The exciting times in which we live draw attention to many other areas of the world. Before I go further, I welcome to our deliberations today my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones). This is his first appearance in this capacity. A rounder peg has never been found in a rounder hole. The contribution that my hon. Friend has already made to relations between this country and Latin America is well marked and demonstrated, and we much applaud that.

What has happened over the past two years in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the sad developments in Yugoslavia, the developments in the middle east and the hopes that we all now have of the possible outcome of a middle eastern conference have been exciting and headline-grabbing. They have accentuated the absence of attention that we and western Europe as a whole pay to Latin America. It is important that, from time to time, the attention of the House and of Britain generally should be directed towards that important continent.

In the 1980s in Latin America, it was conventional to say that it was the lost decade. In economic terms, that is probably, and sadly, a fair description. However, it was not a lost decade in terms of democratic development. Anyone who is in the least aware of what is happening in Latin America will understand that the implant of democratic processes and democratic change has taken firm root in virtually all the countries of Latin America.

We members of the Latin America committee have been privileged to entertain a stream of Latin American parliamentarians who have come through London to exchange views and experiences with us in the working of democracy. We were especially gratified that only a week or two ago, parliamentarians from Paraguay visited us. Only a short time ago, Paraguay might have been thought to be the last on the list. Through the auspices of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, we had a happy exchange. We like to think that they took away from the House, in an all-party context, an important experience of what we can offer—the pluses and minuses of a functioning democratic system.

It is important that we should ensure that our constituents understand what is happening, including the positive things, in Latin America. I was especially struck recently by the recent report of the United Nations Development Programme on the human development index, or HDI. It is a complex attempt to measure the economic progress of a country by per capita product, also taking account of other factors such as longevity, access to education and many other complex indices. It is important to recognise how highly Latin American countries scored in that register. The report recorded that the progress in those general areas of human development in Latin America was "impressive". However, it was not universally impressive, and we all understand that, in too many Latin American countries, the gap between the very rich and the very poor is still too great. However, progress has been made.

Another area in which one should recognise the progress that has been made is in the stability of the democratic regimes. I applaud the decision taken a month ago in Santiago by the Organisation of American States. In effect, they agreed to joint action should there ever be an anti-democratic military coup or whatever against any American regime.

I believe that the wave of democracy in Latin America is strong. The concentration on freedom and on the rights of the individual has now been firmly established. In historical terms, that is a relatively new development in Latin America. We all have a duty to do what we can to ensure that that wave of democracy, which encompasses the establishment and entrenchment of human rights, is sustained. That can only be done, as we already know from experience of other countries, if the right economic conditions are developed. In that regard, the United Kingdom on its own and as a member of the European Community has a part to play.

The economic progress has been good and exciting. Inevitably, the human condition being what it is, that progress is not without its blemishes. However, just as so many other parts of the world, notably eastern Europe, have finally come to understand that socialism does not work and that the market economy produces wealth as well as freedom, that lesson has also been accepted by virtually all the Latin American countries.

In economic terms, Chile has led the field, but a raft of privatisations are also taking place in Peru, Argentina, Brazil and other Latin American countries. Some Opposition Members may seek to unlearn that lesson—some people are impossible to teach—but that lesson has now been learnt in Latin America, as it has been in eastern Europe.

That economic progress has also been reflected in the handling of debt. We all know that such debts were a serious overhang of the old economic conditions of Latin America. Although we are by no means out of the wood, progress has been made. The Brady approach has been accepted, and Chile, Colombia and Venezuela are now part of the international commercial market. Companies

and loans are being floated on straight commercial terms. That shows that economic health has returned to those countries and to the continent.

The economic progress has given rise to great optimism as it is felt that, with that progress, it will be possible to cement the democratic progress that has already been achieved. The best international estimates suggest that, next year, the rate of economic development in the continent will grow by about 3 per cent.

A further phenomenon is the regional centres of economic co-operation, such as the Andrean pact, the Mercosur and the free trade area between Mexico and the United States and Canada. I welcome those developments, but with two caveats. First, those of us who are familiar with Latin America will understand that, to some extent and depending on the region, we have been here before. In the past 20 years or more, many attempts have been made in respect of such regional groupings. Although there are still many hurdles to be overcome, I believe that this time they will succeed.

Secondly, as we mentioned to the European Community, it is important that those regional economic groupings do not become blocs that create trading wars with other blocs. We should all favour free trade, and I am optimistic that that lesson is well understood. Latin America has a strong mercantilist-protectionist tradition, but that has led to the frustration of trade and the denial of economic growth. An increasing number of people throughout the world understand that, the freer the trade, the greater the growth and prosperity for all who participate. That message is now increasingly understood in Latin America, and Europe has a duty to foster and develop that understanding. That means that our particular duty is to ensure that we get the negotiations right for the Uruguay round of GATT.

I was delighted with the outcome of the G7 meeting in London last week, thanks, to a significant extent to the important role played by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. As my right hon. Friend said—this is one of the more significant points that emerged from the G7 meeting—

> "All the summit leaders recognised that the world cannot afford a failure in the Uruguay round of trade negotiations. We committed ourselves to completing the round by the end of this year. Crucially, we committed ourselves to remain personally involved to ensure that that happens to resolve any disputes."—[*Official Report*, 19 July 1991; Vol. 195, c. 663.]

That is indeed crucial. I am delighted that that development took place, because we must promote the essential partnership between the United Kingdom and western Europe on the one hand and Latin America on the other, because it will be to the advantage of us all.

The United Kingdom has a particular role to play in the European Community. Most hon. Members will recognise that there has always been a suspicion and fear that, in creating a single market in 1992, we shall create the old cliché of a fortress Europe. One of the prime contributions that the United Kingdom has made and will continue to make is to ensure that we create not a fortress Europe but a dynamic market of 320 million people, which is politically stable, makes a contribution to world peace and creates the opportunities for greater trade among all the countries of the world, not least Latin America.

I am delighted that the Community has taken yet further steps to increase our collaboration. The Asian/Latin American programme, which has recently been granted 2.75 billion ecu, of which 1 billion ecu is to be spent in Latin America in the next five years, is a welcome development.

The United Kingdom has stepped up its technical co-operation for the next three years. That is significant because, in global terms, the per capita gross national product of Latin American countries is relatively high. The demands of Africa and countries of the Indian sub-continent have a much stronger claim to our necessarily limited aid funds. The Government's decision significantly to increase—albeit from a low level—technical co-operation funds for Latin America is to be applauded.

My hon. Friend the Minister of State needs no hectoring or cajoling from me to make him understand the importance of our developing relationship with Latin America. That has been demonstrated. The participation of a number of sectors in British society in the life of Latin America is increasing. I particularly commend the work of Canning house, which is supported by the Government. I hope that those companies that are aware of what is offered in Latin America will continue and increase their support of Canning house, which is a splendid example of how a British institution can achieve great effectiveness at a low cost.

However, there is one issue that I shall put to my hon. Friend the Minister of State in the hope that he will pass on to his right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department of Education and Science: the need to increase the teaching of Spanish in our schools. The issue is an old hobby horse, not just of mine, but of all of us who are enthusiastic about developing contacts with the Hispanic world in general, and we keep knocking on the door of the Department of Education and Science. However, I am not convinced that we have got very far.

I wrote to my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Education and Science on the subject three years ago, when only 1·5 per cent. of schools in Britain offered Spanish. About 90 per cent. of the language teachers in schools taught French. There were 22,950 teachers qualified to teach French, 74 per cent. of whom taught the language, compared with only 3,200 who were qualified to teach Spanish, of whom only 46 per cent. taught Spanish. The British Government could take quick action on that. The framework of the national curriculum creates a setting in which action could be taken sharply.

Argentina, of all the countries of Latin America, is perhaps the most difficult, given the position in the Falkland Islands. During the past 12 months, relations between our two countries have developed well. The important step of establishing diplomatic relations has much more than justified itself in the development of trade, cultural and sporting contacts, and the exchange of ministerial visits.

I hope that, as we proceed, it will be possible before long to work with the Buenos Aires Government to find an outcome to the problem of the Falkland Islands that will provide a satisfactory resolution of the problem, for the islanders, Argentina and Britain. I realise as well as anyone how difficult that is, and I hope that that problem will not be put in the margin or forgotten. It needs to be solved and, given good will and statesmanship, of which the Government are capable, it is susceptible to resolution in the medium term.

I remind the House, and, I hope, the country, that we are talking of an exciting subcontinent of 422 million

[Mr. Ray Whitney]

people, which even two years ago had a gross domestic product of $900 billion. It is not an area that we ought to neglect, but one in which we should take an increasing and positive interest. I am certain that, under the leadership of the present Government, Britain will continue to do so.

9.24 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): This debate has become almost an annual institution, which I welcome because it is important to debate a continental issue—and such occasions are rare.

I take a different view of Latin America from the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney)—and I am sure that he would be shocked if I did anything else. The hon. Gentleman conveys the image of a subcontinent that is booming economically and where everyone is deeply in love with market forces, and that we have only to look to the future, to the day when that mystic belief in market forces will bring relief to all concerned.

I remind the hon. Gentleman that it was not very long ago that the Workers party of Brazil lost the presidential election by a hair's breadth, after allegations of corruption against the Government, in preventing supporters of that party from voting. Lula Ignacio, the Workers party presidential candidate, is certainly not someone who is in favour of market forces, but represented the aspirations of their victims—who can be seen begging on the streets, sleeping in the slums, and selling trinkets around the airport and tourist hotels. In the forests of Latin America, and particularly in those of Brazil, the victims of market forces see their homes destroyed by the voracious appetites of the multinational mining companies. That is the lot of millions of people throughout Latin America.

There is a thirst for a share in the great prosperity that exists in Latin America, but it cannot be achieved merely by pumping in more multinational capital, when it only flows out at a faster rate. I remind Conservative Members that the Latin American people's contribution to the rest of the world represents an enormous bonus. It takes the form of the profits of multinational companies, debt repayments, and deliberately low prices for the subcontinent's primary products. The people who suffer for that are the very poor, who are represented by the Workers party of Brazil and similar organisations throughout the subcontinent.

No one denies that the past few decades have seen enormous changes. Haiti is a little outside Latin America, but I include it as part of the subcontinent for the purposes of this debate. At least the legacy of Papa Doc has been removed and there is hope for the survival of a democratically elected government in Haiti. However, if that is to happen, and if there is to be real change for the people of that country, a literacy rate of 35 per cent. does not provide much of a basis—and Haiti must be given a great deal of economic assistance. Otherwise, poverty will continue there in its awful grinding way.

Not all the changes of the recent past have been so wholesome. The United States invaded Panama and dragged away President Noriega to face trial in the American courts, but I fear that his deep knowledge of the workings of international finance, and his numerous past meetings with former CIA heads—including George Bush—make it extremely unlikely that General Noriega will appear in televised United States court proceedings revealing the truth about the Iran-Contra scandal, the region's drug trade, and the banking links that go very deep.

It is a fact that the war continues in El Salvador. The killing continues and the lack of conclusive negotiations continues to be a problem.

The hon. Member for Wycombe used the Group of Seven conference as a sort of springboard for what he had to say towards the end of his speech. The G7 conference of last week has been hailed as a great success for the Prime Minister, but it is extremely unclear to me what the great success for him is. He obviously got through the conference extremely well. No doubt he enjoyed all the lunches and dinners, and he probably behaved well at the dining table—no one has faulted his table manners anywhere—but what was achieved at the conference for the mass of the world's population? The issue of the world's environment took up 15 minutes of the conference; 15 minutes for the most crucial issue facing humankind. Debt is a major issue for two thirds of the world's population, but the matter was merely referred to the Paris Club.

We were told that the Brady and Baker initiative is working well and that the Trinidad round would be extended. The Trinidad round sounds all very well, with some write-off of debt, but the reality is that it is not removing the debt burden or the causes of the burden. In fact, it is making the indebted countries even more deeply indebted. There is talk about debt for equity swaps, but the result is a loss of national self-esteem as countries are forced to cut public spending if they are to go along with the plans that are imposed upon them by the International Monetary Fund.

The views which were expounded by the hon. Member for Wycombe would not be especially popular in the barrios around Lima, where people are dying of cholera. They know that the World bank has blocked a scheme of water purification plants for that capital city. They would not be particularly happy to be told that market forces are their salvation and therefore they must cut public spending as they see their hospitals programme cut, the programme for medical dispensaries cut and the living conditions in the shanty towns around Lima becoming worse and worse. That is the reality of life for many people throughout the region.

In his initiative for the Americas, George Bush talks about giving economies a clean bill of health or otherwise. Presumably his main adviser is Dan Quayle, who is noted for his economic expertise. He flies around the continent telling people whether he thinks that their market forces are working adequately. I draw the attention of the House and that of Vice-President Quayle to an interesting speech that was made recently by Noam Chomsky. He said:

> "In the international order the South is assigned a service function. Its role is to provide raw materials, cheap labour, investment opportunities, markets. High level US planning documents emphasise that the major threat to the US is independent nationalism, Governments that respond to popular pressure for the raising of living standards and diversification of production for domestic needs."

It seems that Chomsky has quite a good understanding of what many United States policies are all about in Latin America.

All those who are likely to speak in the debate know Latin America quite well and have visited it quite frequently. There is the opportunity to talk to people who

are living in great poverty in countries such as Honduras. There are children who are under-nourished. Behind their shacks, or nearby, are enormous barbed wire fences that protect fruit plantations that are ready to export their produce. Other fences protect beef cattle that are ready for export.

The economic plan that has been put to Latin America in the name of market forces is to produce for export and to cut public spending. Those two objectives mean that many children go undernourished while good food is exported to those who perhaps do not need it so much. The balance of payments assumes a god-like mysticism over the needs of people in the regions.

The unity that developed against debt in the early 1980s resulted in desperation in the United States. There was an attempt to break up the unity of Latin American countries against debt, but that unity basically still exists. There is still a great desire to see an end to the system of indebtedness of poor countries to the richest countries. Latin America is not as badly off as Africa in comparative terms, but if someone is living in poverty in a slum near a major city with no possibility of growing his own food, and no possibility of doing anything other than hawking goods or going into the drugs trade because that provides a way out of the problem, or choosing to live in great poverty in the countryside with cash crops producing a very small return, one can understand that person's position and the power of the durgs barons in those circumstances.

We can understand why people end up producing for the drug market, and why the drugs end up with the desperate kids on the streets of New York, Paris, my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant). That is the nasty, sorry circle. We must think a little more about the complexity of the situation and the need for a different approach to the needs of the very poorest people in what are potentially the richest countries in the world.

I wish to make a number of specific points. The first is Nicaragua. Before Conservative Members start cheering about the election result some time ago, when the Frente Farabundo Mari de Liberacion Nacional lost the election and the Unión Nacional Opositora Government were elected, I remind them that the FMLN brought democracy to Nicaragua. The elections would not have taken place without the FMLN. Had the policies of the United States continued, Somoza would never have been defeated. That same dictatorship, that same oligarchy, would have remained in power. The FMLN brought about enormous changes in the lives of the people of Nicaragua. It brought the hope of a universal education, a universal health service, a universal self-respect, and a respect for the people's own culture.

The UNO Government are not finding it easy to bring in the concept of free, unfettered market forces because the people of Nicaragua have other views. What I find astonishing is the pressure now being put on the UNO Government by the United States—which is reneging on its promises of aid given during the election campaign—to drop the International Court decision in favour of Nicaragua over the mining of the harbours. That is disgraceful. I hope that the Government will show their support for the International Court's decision and its belief that the United States should pay compensation for the damage that it did to Nicaragua during the terrible years of the Contra war.

In neighbouring El Salvador, where so many lives have been lost and so many families destroyed by the civil war, there is pressure not to increase military aid to the army in El Salvador, but for negotiations with the FMLN, which alone can bring peace and social justice to that country. The two go together.

On other occasions, Conservative Members have been keen to point out that Cuba is somehow a complete anachronism within the region. I have had the opportunity to visit Cuba—at my own expense, I hasten to add—and I have spoken to many Cuban people and seen much of what happens there. We should take Cuba as a whole over the past 30 years and recognise that a country that was extremely poor, extremely corrupt, and where the livelihood of most people was rather thin, to put it mildly, now has a universal education service, a universal health service and a better level of food productivity. It is no longer an American playground dominated by drugs and prostitution. it is a place of which many Cuban people are now extremely proud. The fact that its relationship with the USSR has changed considerably suggests that there should be greater trade and trade preferences between the EEC and Cuba. We should not continue to be part of what is, in effect, a United States embargo against Cuba, which has been in place for the past 30 years.

Chile has known the horrors of a fascist dictatorship since 1973, when Pinochet came to power and murdered Salvador Allende and many thousands of other people. The removal of Pinochet as president was achieved by a mixture of international pressure and the demands of people on the streets of Chile. Many died in prison and many are still missing because of the activities of the Pinochet regime.

There have been enormous changes. Many hon. Members who are present for this debate were in Chile when the Government changed in March last year. We saw the limits of the power of the new Government and the new presidency. We saw the determination of the Ministry of Justice and others to free political prisoners. I hope that, if nothing else, this message will go out from the debate: we do not want political prisoners in Chile and we want full democracy restored there.

There is more to be done. Pinochet still retains enormous power. It is a great shame that this country allowed him to buy arms from British Aerospace. If ever anything lowered this country's esteem in the eyes of the world, it was when we allowed the butcher of Santiago, who used British planes to murder Salvador Allende, to come back into this country to buy more arms. That man should be shunned throughout the world and admitted nowhere because of all that he has done.

In essence, the continent faces issues involving justice, liberty and the livelihood, of poor and ordinary people. Some issues, particularly the environment, span the continent. Those who promote market force economics should remember that, in the long run, those forces mean the destruction of forests, savanna grassland and the environment. Dr. Luzenberg, who has been appointed head of the Environmental Protection Agency in Brazil, has made enormous efforts, but the Brazilian rain forest is being destroyed at a terrifying rate—12 million hectares on the continent have been destroyed this year, the majority of it in Brazil. There must be stronger policies to defend the rain forests and to use them as a renewable, recyclable resource, rather than destroying them rapaciously.

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

This is an important debate. I look forward to the British Government taking a view that takes more account of the poor of the continent than of the mystic economics of market forces, which the Government seem to believe offer the solution to problems everywhere in the world. If they are such a solution, why are so many people starving or sleeping on the streets?

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham) *rose*——

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I should like to be able to call the Back Benchers who are rising. If they speak for 10 minutes each, they will both be able to speak in the debate.

9.42 pm

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) on leading this important debate. He did so as chairman of our British-Latin American parliamentary group, which does so much to develop relationships between the Parliaments of the new democracies of Latin America and our Parliament.

The debate is relevant to the United Kingdom as a major trading nation. The House should never overlook the size of Latin America. Latin America's gross domestic product is more than twice that of Africa—it is larger than that of Africa, the Indian subcontinent and south-east Asia combined. In Latin America, the two largest economics—Brazil and Mexico—together eclipse those of east Europe, in which the House takes such a close interest.

Latin America is a vital area of opportunity for Britain. It has a free enterprise economic tradition, management expertise and an economic infrastructure to go with it. In common with us, it has a European cultural and linguistic heritage and a historical and sentimental reservoir of good will and friendship towards this country.

We should never forget that Britain was the midwife of Latin American independence. In the debate on the Address on 12 December 1826, our Foreign Secretary, George Canning, said that he had

"called the New World into existence to redress the balance of the old."

Illustrious Britons fought alongside the freedom fighters in the war of independence in Latin America. Admiral Lord Cochrane played a vital part in the independence of Brazil, Chile and Peru, and O'Higgins became the first President of Chile. A British legion of veterans of the peninsular wars made up the backbone of Simon Bolivar's liberating armies in Venezuela, Colombia and Ecuador. For many years we have been closely involved in the development of that part of the world.

I venture to add another, contemporary advantage: the Minister of State responsible for United Kingdom relations with Latin America, my hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), speaks fluent idiomatic Spanish, has a good knowledge of Latin America and appreciates the region's importance. The combination of his responsibilities for Latin America and for the European Community has an added advantage for us, because perhaps the most vital issue before us this year is the Uruguay round of the general agreement on tariffs and trade. That will be vital for Latin America's economic revival, and the European Community will play a pivotal role in the outcome of those negotiations.

Many Latin Americans worry about the development of the European Community and its common agricultural policy, and many have expressed their concern that a new protectionist wall may be erected around the Community to create fortress Europe. We should be reassured by the emphatic and clear statement by my hon. Friend the Minister to the conference on Latin America in the City on 10 May:

"The Community has repeatedly made clear that there will be no 'Fortress Europe'."

The single European market was a British initiative based on our belief in free trade and in the dismantling of barriers. I wish my hon. Friends on the Front Bench well in continuing to press our European partners for the widest possible access for all—especially the Latin American countries—to that huge market of some 320 million people.

There will therefore be no fortress Europe, but Europe remains an obstacle to the successful conclusion of the GATT Uruguay round. The Community must put its agricultural reforms into order and then into effect. But Europe is not alone—Japan's rice farmers and the United States farm lobby also represent massive obstacles. Despite the undertakings given at last week's G7 summit in London, the prospects for a GATT settlement do not look rosy.

If we fail, the fear is that that would let loose the forces of worldwide protectionism and GATT, which settles disputes between its members, would lose influence, and free trade would gradually give way to protected blocs. We can already see that developing in Latin America. President Bush is developing his "Enterprise for the Americas", taking in Canada and Mexico. The Caribbean Latin American states will be tempted to apply. In the south of the continent, the southern cone countries are developing Mercosul, a market consisting of Brazil—the industrial giant—Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay. The Andean pact is developing along the same lines. Those arrangements reflect a commitment to international co-operation, but they could become a base for protectionism with high barriers around each bloc. The perils for British trade are clear. We have a challenge to fight for worldwide free trade.

The 1980s were the decade of democracy in Latin America. Peru, Bolivia, Argentina and Brazil all put their military dictatorships behind them. Chile and Nicaragua, from opposite poles, followed suit. All the Latin American republics, with the notable exception of Cuba, have returned to democracy. That is a regional example of worldwide significance.

Colombia, despite the onslaught of political terrorism and powerful drug barons, has preserved and indeed strengthened its democracy. I pay tribute for that achievement to the courage and determination of former President Barco—now the Colombian ambassador in London. In a speech last week in London, he called the 1980s the decade of democratic renewal and the 1990s the decade of economic renewal.

That renewal is already under way. Increasingly, the problems of debt are being coped with, and debtworthiness is returning to an increasing number of Latin American countries. Last year, private companies in Venezuela and Mexico were securing loans in the

Euro-bond market, Colombia has completed its fourth refinancing, and Chile has obtained the first fully voluntary unsecured bank loan to a Latin American country.

All those factors point to massive opportunities for British business. I look forward to hearing from my hon. Friend about the steps being taken to assist British business men to grasp these opportunities. I also echo the plea of my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) that my hon. Friend should encourage the Secretary of State for Education and Science to widen the teaching of Spanish and Portuguese in our schools. Conversely, I hope that my hon. Friend will give even greater emphasis to the work of the British Council and to its offshoot, Cultura Inglesa, in Latin America, in its efforts to teach good "English" English to the future leaders of the region.

Over the past 10 years our relations with Argentina have been severely strained as a result of the south Atlantic crisis in 1982. We should record our high regard for President Menem's political courage in putting our disagreement over the Falklands to one side in order to re-establish the long-standing warm relationship between our two countries. The rapid growth in bilateral trade and in exchanges of many types is testimony to the success of that approach. Credit is due not least to the two ambassadors concerned.

Latin America is again on the move. I hope that this debate will ensure that Britain sees that movement, and that this country will again play a major role in the progress of that region.

9.51 pm

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): I, too, pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) for introducing this important debate and for his experience and knowledge of Latin America, born of his time in Government service in Buenos Aires and then of his parliamentary endeavours on behalf of Anglo-American relations through the British-Latin American parliamentary group, of which he is chairman. My hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) has also made a notable contribution based on personal experience and his work as secretary of the group.

Parliament is fortunate in having in another place my noble Friend Viscount Montgomery, president of Canning house, who also has great personal experience of south America and who introduced an important debate on it in another place on 19 December last year.

I wish to add my special appreciation of the recent visit by the Paraguayan delegation. It was well organised and the delegation members enjoyed it and learned a great deal. We benefited a great deal from it, too. We hope to deepen the burgeoning relationship with the parliamentarians of Paraguay. The Costa Rican deputies who came here a few days ago also enjoyed a worthwhile visit.

We look forward to the Inter-Parliamentary Union conference in Santiago de Chile in early October. Those who go will be extremely fortunate and I am sure that members of the delegation on their return will understand, if they did not fully appreciate it before, the great importance of Anglo-Chilean relations and of British parliamentarians contributing to the development of good understanding between the United Kingdom and Latin America. Our British-Chilean group of which I have the honour to be chairman, has more than 20 members already; when the delegation returns, we hope to have a few more.

Interest in Chile was heightened by the successful official visit to the United Kingdom by President Patricio Aylwin and his ministerial team. Such official Head of State visits from Latin American countries should be encouraged by the Government. I know that the Minister of State does good work in that regard, but he needs back-up and encouragement from all Her Majesty's Ministers. If it is possible to organise them in the near future, I look forward to visits from the Venezuelan, Uruguayan and perhaps also the Costa Rican Heads of State, because the comprehensive programmes organised for such official visits are extremely useful to incoming heads of state.

The United Kingdom has not only an historic interest in south America and good relations with Latin America as a whole, but an interest of strategic importance which should not be neglected. The Falkland Islands and their dependencies are of strategic interest to us and are symptomatic of the way in which we have always developed our relationship with Latin America—through sea power and commerce. We must not neglect that maritime dimension. That is why our strategic interest in the Falklands and their dependencies and in Antarctica is fully compatible with our interests in Latin America as a whole.

The Government's support for free trade through a more liberal policy, which we hope will emerge from the Uruguay round, deserves to be backed. I know that the Government will back it and I hope that they can persuade the rest of the European Community to do the same. In terms of the Community, it would be a mistake for the United Kingdom to look to the two Iberian peninsula countries, Spain and Portugal, almost alone to develop relationships with Latin America. It is necessary for their historic interests, balanced by ours, to be carried forward into the next decade. That is why it is important for every assistance to be given to British trade and investment in south America.

Chile is newly democratised, as it was bound to be, and everyone takes pleasure from that. It now has a strong and diversified economy which it did not have during the Allende years. There are great opportunities for investment in Chile's manufacturing sector and not just in the more traditional sectors of mining, communications and agriculture.

I hope that those who are timorous will take heart from the achievements of the Chilean economy. Those who wish to test the waters of south America could make their first tentative or trial investments in Chile and could do so with confidence. The Government must effectively support our business men and our strategic aims to maintain a fruitful relationship with Latin America as a whole. That is difficult to do if, at the same time, the Government are reducing our diplomatic presence and cutting posts in our embassies. Too many posts in south America have been cut to the bone and some south American countries do not have a fully manned British post. That is also true of central America. I hope that the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, my hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) will be able to persuade other members of the Government of the importance of maintaining a good British diplomatic presence throughout Latin America.

[Mr. John Wilkinson]

While there are good grounds for optimism, the House and the British people must be alerted to persisting risks, some of which are extremely grave. I emphasise the risks of terrorism, insurgency and guerrilla warfare, which put in jeopardy the economies and the whole way of life of some south American countries. The insurgencies in Guatemala and El Salvador are like grumbling appendices. Insurgency in Colombia is, of course, strongly linked to certain aspects of the drug trade, but there are also ideological dimensions.

For the past 11 years the Sendero Luminoso insurgency in Peru has put at risk the state itself, and we should not underestimate the dangers there. A report in *The Independent* of 28 June states:

"A rocket-propelled grenade smashed into Peru's economy ministry. A car bomb killed a civilian and wounded six marines. A letter bomb blew off the head of a politician. A yacht was dynamited and a naval base attacked. A factory manager, an army officer, a student activist and a trade union leader were assassinated. Peasants were massacred. Scores of rebels and troops died in ambushes. Three men were killed by police in anti-rebel sweeps around Lima. Guerrilla strike decrees paralysed many towns.

Last week's political violence, in which at least 60 people died, was the climax of a two-month offensive by the Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) guerrillas."

That is the sort of risk that threatens Latin America. The Latin American people deserve our support. Their parliamentarians deserve the closest possible liaison with us. I am sure that they will get it. I am pleased that Her Majesty's Government, through my hon. Friend the Minister, are taking an increasing interest in this region.

10 pm

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): I join in the congratulations to the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney), who requested, and then succeeded in getting, this debate. We both participated in an historic debate on South America one Saturday in early April 1982, a debate that neither of us will ever forget. I agree with his description of the Minister as a round peg in a round hole. The hon. Gentleman sounded surprised that the Government had managed to do that. That does not mean to say that I agree with all the Minister's analyses of the situation in Latin America, but it is helpful to have someone who understands the problems.

I agree with the hon. Member for Wycombe that one of the problems is getting attention for this subject in the House. That can be shown by the lack of attendance not just today but on other occasions. Paradoxically, as greater peace and democracy are established in Latin America, and as stories slip out of the headlines, it becomes even more difficult to get attention for this important continent, as the hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) so rightly said.

I can understand why many of the ambassadors and representatives at Latin American embassies become frustrated as they try to draw attention to the problems and needs of their area. That is particularly so when winning democracy and peace, as they have in so many countries, and establishing trade and economic reform are only the start of the task, as they so rightly say.

There has been relatively little coverage of the Guadalajara summit in the press in Britain and western Europe, but it was one of the most significant events in Latin America in recent years. It was perhaps more significant and constructive than the media circus of the G7, which took place in London at about the same time. This historic two-day summit, attended by 23 heads of state, focused on the integration of Latin America. As the hon. Member for Gravesham said, the catalyst was principally the integration of Europe in 1992, together with free trade area talks in North America. Both have aroused great concern about trading and co-operation.

The final declaration of the Guadalajara summit was both constructive and notable. It emphasised the importance of human rights, something that is still a problem throughout the continent. It called for a united war against drugs. We have heard little from Conservative Members about that, although my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) raised the subject. The important problem of the war against drugs is preoccupying many of our friends in Latin America.

Another important factor was the establishment of the fund for indigenous people—the forgotten people. Christopher Columbus was supposed to have discovered the new world, but it was there a long time before the Europeans arrived, and many of the indigenous people have been persecuted by those who came from the old world. It is right that this fund has been established.

The Ibero-American chamber of commerce was set up. A great deal of progress on the economic front was emphasised. It is ironic that, at the same time that the United Kingdom Government are neglecting our Commonwealth, notably in the Caribbean with its exports of sugar and bananas, as my hon. Friends have said, Spain sees the benefits of establishing a good relationship, along similar lines, with Latin America. It has pledged $7 billion of credit and $7 billion for investment in Latin America. It sees the advantages of co-operating with its former colonies.

I want to concentrate on the development of democracy in Latin America. As Carlos Menem said at the summit:

"What is essential at this very moment is democracy—for which all Latin Americans have suffered."

The hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) mentioned Paraguay. It is significant that the democratic revolution has extended that far. Notably, the mayoral elections in Ascuncion resulted in the election of an independent candidate. That shows that the power of the ruling party is loosening as democracy develops. I, too, was pleased to welcome the parliamentary delegation from Paraguay.

In Mexico, on 18 August, an interesting test will take place: we shall see whether the Permanent Revolutionary party—that name always strikes me as a contradiction in terms—has introduced real democracy. It is often forgotten, especially in the United States, that until now, the Opposition have not accepted that real democacy has existed in Mexico.

Let me express the hope, especially to Conservative Members, that the conditions in Cuba will soon allow a move towards pluralism. I strongly deplore the continuing confrontational attitude of the United States, which is hindering such a development.

The hon. Member for Gravesham and I have visited Colombia. I am sure that he agrees that its new constitution deserves to succeed. For far too long, the drug barons have blackmailed and bribed their way to power;

many brave people have stood out against that, especially in the judicial system. President Gaviria's bold move must receive our full support.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Foulkes: No; time is short.

Above all, I want to mention Chile, which has experienced a wonderful transition to democracy under President Aylwin. I had the privilege and joy of witnessing that transition at both the plebiscite and the presidential and congressional elections. As my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) said, it is marred only by General Pinochet's continuing status as head of the army. The affront of the general's visit was alleviated only by the fact that it had to be short and clandestine, because he was so manifestly unwelcome even to his hosts, British Aerospace.

Already, Chilean politicians are positioning themselves for the next elections in 1992. What could be a better illustration of the fact that democracy is now well established in that country? Our relations with Chile are improving in a number of areas, especially trade. We feel very strongly, however, that the arms trade is the least appropriate area for development. There are many other ways in which we can improve bilateral relations. I pay tribute to the important part played by Ambassador Cerman Riesco in improving relations between our two countries.

Following the aberration of the Falklands war, diplomatic relations with Argentina are now fully restored. Visas are no longer required and the traditionally, historically good bilateral links between our countries have been re-established. Ambassador Camporo has played a distinguished part in that process. Argentina is now in its second term of elected government, and, although—like us—it is not without its economic problems, there are signs that democracy is firmly established there.

It would be a great pity if unilateral action by Britain on the draft legislation on oil exploration submitted by the Falklands Islands Council to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office disrupted this process. Any proper attempt to exploit Falklands offshore oil will require great co-operation with Argentina in terms of surveying and drilling operations. Multinational oil companies are unlikely to want to invest billions of pounds in disputed waters, especially with the horrendous weather conditions there. I urge the Government to go slowly and warily, and to remember British interests as well as the legitimate interests of the Falkland Islanders.

Further progress towards democracy in central America depends to a great extent on the successful outcome of the peace talks in Guatemala and El Salvador. My recent discussions lead me to believe that in El Salvador there are now real hopes for peace. I have been impressed by the sincerity of some of those on both sides in the talks that I have had with the Frente Farabundo Marti de Liberacion Nacional and the El Salvador Justice Minister, who made the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) look like a real right-winger. I think that the Justice Minister was pleased to be seen to be moderate compared with the hon. Gentleman.

Although there are some who clearly have a vested interest in the continuation of the conflict, I think that there is now real hope for progress. It is, however, regrettable that President Bush has overriden the congressional freeze on military aid to El Salvador. I want to repeat and underline the urgency of the successful prosecution of the killers of the six Jesuits. We provided Scotland Yard help in that investigation. We should urge the American embassy to obtain testimony from the 10 American citizens. Their testimony is vital if the killers are to be brought to justice.

After the second set of democratic elections in Nicaragua, which I also had the privilege of observing last February, we in Britain hear much less now about that persecuted country. It still needs a great amount of assistance if it is to recover not just from the earthquake damage of so long ago, let alone the ravages of the American-sponsored aggression.

The Nicaraguan Foreign Minister came here seeking assistance. I told him that I wanted Britain and Europe to help Nicaragua's recovery in every possible way but that he should also get off his knees and remind the American Government in no uncertain terms that they have still to comply with the judgment of the International Court in The Hague and pay the $17 billion reparation for the damage inflicted.

Mrs. Chamorro may not have fulfilled the American ambitions. She may not have become the puppet that the Americans would have liked, but she deserves the support of all of us in her policy of conciliation—conciliation pursued, despite the reactionary forces within her own Administration. The Sandinistas also deserve our support and encouragement in their transition from a revolutionary party—essential in the 1970s to get rid of the dictator—to a modern democratic party of the 1990s, towards which they showed they were moving at their recent congress in Managua.

I have two other points to put to the Minister. If he cannot reply to them now, I hope that he will say that he will do so in correspondence. The first point relates to HMS Endurance, which has been raised persistently in another place by Lord Shackleton. When the Minister of State was in the Falkland Islands he gave a pledge—not to the council, as I mistakenly put in a question to him, of which he took advantage by giving a clever reply—but, I gather, to a public meeting in Port Stanley, that HMS Endurance would remain. That assurance is important for the Falkland Islands and also for Antarctica. I hope that he will repeat tonight the assurance that, if HMS Endurance is not serviceable, a replacement for it will be found. It is important to the whole of the south Atlantic.

In the discussions on the defence budget, now taking place, the Government must maintain their commitment to the garrison in Belize, which is still performing a useful role. As long as it is required by the Government of Belize, the garrison should remain there. If the Minister cannot give us that assurance tonight, I hope that he will do so on another occasion.

I should like to mention many other matters about this important continent, but time prevents me from doing so. I want to give the Minister adequate time to reply to the important points that have been made.

Democracy has been achieved in almost all Latin American countries. The lives of ordinary people were lost fighting against dictatorships, some of which were supported from time to time by some Conservative Members. Those achievements should not result in increased poverty and increased unemployment because of unfettered market forces. Like us, they need a balance of

[Mr. Foulkes]

economic and social planning and a free market tempered by social concern. That will give hope to the people of Latin America. That is what Labour will bring them when we form the Government after the next election.

10.15 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones): I join hon. Members in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) on initiating the debate. I pay tribute to his work not only as a diplomat in Latin America but as a Minister in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. He is one of my more distinguished predecessors. He and his parliamentary committee, many of whose members are in the Chamber, do much not only to draw the House's attention to Latin America but in the important work that they, the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) and others do in travelling to Latin America. Many of them supervised elections and now receive an increasing number of parliamentary delegations from many Latin American countries.

I join my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe in highlighting the importance of the teaching of Spanish. As he and others will know, Spanish is the second most widely spoken language in the free world. Three or four years ago, the teaching of Spanish in the United Kingdom was in serious danger. Thanks to the efforts of my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Education and Science, however, we have begun to turn that around. Next year, Bushey Hall school, an important school in my constituency, will begin to teach Spanish, which is being well received by people in the area. I hope that that will be repeated throughout the country.

My hon. Friends the Members for Wycombe and for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) mentioned not only our history in Latin America, but the importance of our cultural affinity. It is extraordinary that, for 10 or 15 years, a continent which produced writers of the calibre of Octavio Paz, Garcia Marquez and Vargas Llosa should have pretended to be part of the third world. Essentially, hon. Members have welcomed the way in which democracy and market economics have returned to Latin American countries and brought them back into play.

I hope to be able to answer most of the points that have been made by hon. Members, but I apologise if I do not cover them all. I shall write to hon. Members about the points that I do not answer.

If I may say so, the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) is a sort of parliamentary Sandinista. He seems to support almost any lost cause. I shall not answer all his points, but he mentioned General Pinochet's visit to this country. I remind him that no Minister in this Government fawned on General Pinochet in the way that Ministers in the previous Labour Government fawned on the dictator Ceausescu. Nor did we advise Her Majesty the Queen, as that Government did, to pin a medal on his breast.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley takes a considerable interest in Latin America and has attended many of the elections. He cannot resist the odd swipe at the United States of America or joining the hon. Member for Islington, North in supporting the Sandinistas. In the course of this year, the Government have authorised the Commonwealth development corporation to open up shop in Nicaragua, and it is enormously excited by and interested in the prospects there. It is giving the kind of aid that Nicaragua wants, by helping business men to set up businesses and to create jobs in the economy. I only wish that the Sandinista party would give Mrs. Chamorro's Government the support that we in the House feel that it should have.

I now pick up points made by all my hon. Friends. The political and economic changes that have taken place in eastern Europe, which we all welcome so much, have in many ways drawn attention away from the hugely important revolution and transformation that have taken place in Latin America. All my hon. Friends have referred to that. One by one, authoritarian regimes have given way to constitutionally elected Governments. Concern for the rule of law, respect for human rights and participatory political structures has now become a common feature across Latin America.

Only Cuba holds out against the tide. I am happy to pay tribute to the steps made in education and in health in Cuba. If a country has been receiving $5 billion of annual aid from the Soviet Union, it is not surprising that it should have made progress in one or two areas. Even Mussolini managed to get the trains to run on time in Italy. It does not alter the fact that a substantial number of Cubans, intellectuals and others, have had to flee that country, a substantial number of people remain imprisoned there and the country's leader continues to deny his people the opportunity of free elections and open democracy, which we believe hold out hope for the whole of Latin America.

Of course the problems of poverty to which the hon. Member for Islington, North referred exist, as do the environmental problems; but if one looks to eastern Europe and to the regimes with which the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends travelled along for so many years, one can see what the failure of socialism can do not only to the morale of the people and in creating real poverty, but also in destroying the environment.

Conservative Members and many Opposition Members believe that it is the combination of freedom provided by liberal democracy together with market economics that will deal with the cardboard cities and with the appalling poverty——

Mr. Foulkes: It has not done so far.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I know that the hon. Gentleman also follows Latin America closely. He will be aware that it is only very recently that we have been able to say that the whole of Latin America is now under democratic rule and that all the countries there are following market economic policies. The problems of that continent have been built up over many decades of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes which often pursued economic policies that no Conservative Member would wish to support.

One of the latest examples of the commitment to real democratic practice is Colombia. A number of my hon. Friends, and the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley, referred to that. A new constitution broadening the democratic process was endorsed earlier this month. We applaud the courageous efforts of President Gaviria in that respect. I am confident that the change will make a significant contribution to representative Government in that country.

In parallel with the trend towards greater democracy, the newly elected Governments are increasingly adopting more pragmatic economic policies to reduce the role of the state, to lower tariffs and to give more scope to market forces, including foreign investment. We should recognise that the scale of the adjustments required by societies with limited social infrastructure, which are still burdened with debt, calls for a great deal of courage, commitment and ingenuity. I will say a word about debt later.

Nowhere is the political transformation more marked than in central America. The region is now barely recognisable to anyone who had dealings with it 10 or even five years ago. The presidents of the central American states from Guatemala to Costa Rica recently held their latest summit meeting, with Panama taking part for the first time as a full member. When their predecessors met in 1986, central America was a region synomomous with civil war, east-west rivalry and political repression. The only feasible objective of regional co-ordination seemed to be damage limitation. Yet now peace is consolidated in Nicaragua and I share hon. Members' optimism about the prospects in El Salvador. Peace negotiations are well in train in Guatemala under the wise guidance of President Serrano.

The Central American focus has shifted towards more forward-looking if less eye-catching themes of economic integration and trade liberalisation. Britain and its EC partners can claim a modest share of the credit for those improvements in central America. The San José dialogue, begun in 1984, provides a forum for both political and economic co-operation between the EC and central American states. The seventh San José conference, which I attended last March in Managua, agreed on EC involvement in regional programmes to promote human rights. Where abuses occur, whether in central or south America, we naturally have no hesitation in condemning them. But now we are starting to go beyond condemnation, by helping to create the conditions that should prevent human rights violations in the first place.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley referred to the Jesuit murders and to the sterling work done by Scotland Yard on that matter, which was much appreciated by the Government. My hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe referred to the increases that we have managed to find in our aid programme for the next three years. It is a rolling three-year programme. I must emphasise that those increases do not represent new money. They are a deliberate decision taken by the Government to support the efforts for good government in Latin America.

To put it bluntly, those moneys are taken away from other parts of the world whose efforts in that respect we do not believe come up to the mark. It is important to stress that the Government have deliberately moved to support good government in Latin America. Many of the programmes that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development has set up through the Overseas Development Agency are deliberately focused on attempting to work with our friends in Latin America to reinforce systems of justice and the very backbone of a liberal and democratic society.

Our condemnation of human rights abuses is now tempered with the knowledge that we are dealing with democratic societies whose leaders condemn those abuses as strongly as we do. We must bear in mind the fact that those countries often do not have the institutions to enable them to attack those problems in the way that they would wish. We must help them to reinforce those institutions.

As we approach the 500th anniversary of Columbus's landfall in the new world, it is appropriate that the EC's economic support for and co-operation with Latin America continues to increase. My hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe also referred to that.

I recognise that the debt burden still lies heavily on many Latin American countries. Most Latin American debtors are in the middle income category, and owe their debt largely to commercial banks. While arrangements for dealing with this debt must be a matter for banks and debtors to negotiate between them, Her Majesty's Government welcome the increasing willingness of banks to include a measure of debt reduction in the agreements they reach with debtor countries under the Brady plan.

A century ago, this country enjoyed a pre-eminent position in Latin America, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham referred. Over the years, that situation changed with the arrival of more nationalist, authoritarian regimes which were intent on putting up barriers. Britain, for its part, was simultaneously defining its own new, less expansive role in the world.

It is particularly felicitous that my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe, who is a staunch defender of market economics in this House and in the rest of the country, should lead this debate and carry the banner of free trade between Britain and Latin America on which our so successful relationship was based more than 100 years ago. I am absolutely convinced that the way forward for Britain in its relationship with Latin America is based upon free trade.

Mr. Foulkes: My hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) has said that I am unduly optimistic in hoping that the Minister will deal with one or two of the points that I have raised. Could he deal in particular with the issue of HMS Endurance? He gave a specific assurance on that when he visited the Falklands. My noble Friend Lord Shackleton has also raised the issue elsewhere. Could the Minister try to deal at least with that point?

Mr. Garel-Jones: The hon. Member may recall—I am sure that he will have been in his place at the time—that I answered a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Boscawen) on that very matter. The position on the Endurance remains exactly as stated —it is scheduled for replacement in about 1996. As for the hon. Gentleman's other question, there are no plans to reduce the garrison at present.

It is particularly significant that my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe should be leading the debate because the prospects for Latin America and our relationship with it depend so much on trade. All my hon. Friends who have spoken in this debate have underlined the achievement of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in extracting from each leader of the G7 a personal commitment to ensure that the GATT round reaches a successful conclusion this year. All hon. Members who visit Latin America will know that no issue matters more to the countries of Latin America than the ability to sell their products, particularly agricultural products, in this important market.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the Minister accept that there must be an increase in the basic commodity prices paid to most Latin American producers if the drug war is to be defeated and real poverty eliminated?

Mr. Garel-Jones: Yes, of course I accept that. That is why the GATT round is so important to Latin America. Many of its food products would be enormously well received by British housewives, who currently pay approximately £16 per week over the odds for their food. The ability for Latin America to send its products into the European market is extremely important.

The Government are giving political support and recognition to the progress that has been made. We have significantly increased the funding available for aid, co-operation and good government in the region. High-level contacts between this country and Latin America are becoming more frequent. The visit of the Prince and Princess of Wales to Brazil and the visit of President Aylwin of Chile to this country, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) referred, are just two recent examples.

It is especially gratifying that so much progress has been made in little more than a year in re-establishing our traditional links with Argentina. In many ways, Argentina represents the new mood in Latin America. The isolation of the past 20 or 30 years and the pretended third worldism were dramatically brought to an end when President Menem took the courageous decision to join the international coalition in the Gulf by sending two Agentine naval vessels. He is to be congratulated on that decision, which may symbolically have underlined Latin America's desire to join the mainstream of world politics again—and how very welcome they are. Argentina is pursuing courageous economic policies, too.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) asked about prospecting for oil in the Falklands. On that subject, as when we were discussing the fishing round in Argentina, we intend to ensure that the Argentine Government are not faced with any surprises.

The wind of change that is sweeping through Latin America has brought with it a renewed urgency for the process of regional economic integration. My hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe touched on that subject and I share his optimism that groupings which are now coming together will succeed. Those groupings may finally realise Bolivar's dream of a united Latin America. In that process, the continent of Latin America can rest assured that Britain will use every effort available to us to support its democratic processes and build up our trading relationships with the continent. We shall bear in mind the fact that Latin America did better 100 years ago when it had an open trading relationship with Europe and with Britain in particular, and we shall use every effort to recover that and to support Latin America in its efforts to sustain its democracy.

Cambodia

10.34 pm

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): I am grateful for this opportunity to discuss a contentious subject, which has not been debated in the House for a considerable period.

There can be few countries in the world which have suffered as much as Cambodia in the past 20 years. The Labour party has repeatedly called for a reversal of British policy towards that country, but to no avail. It is to our great shame, 11 years after the Khmer Rouge's devastation of Cambodia ended, that the west has continued to punish one of the poorest countries in the world by denying it both bilateral and multilateral aid. Only after repeated pressure from the Opposition has a small amount of aid been channeled to Cambodia through non-governmental organisations.

The Khmer Rouge was driven from Cambodia in 1979 by the Vietnamese after the Khmer Rouge had murdered up to 1 million of Cambodia's people. Since then, the military factions opposing the Cambodian Government have, at various times, been given United Nations recognition, supplied with sophisticated weapons, food and even military training. At least 20,000 people are said to have had limbs amputated as a result of mines set by the Khmer Rouge inside Cambodia. Thousands of others have been killed.

Over the years, the British Government have repeatedly denied supplying military training to any of the factions fighting the Cambodian Government. Many questions have been tabled by hon. Members in an attempt to get at the truth, and hundreds of letters from constituents have been passed to Ministers for answer. Now, after years of denial, Her Majesty's Government have finally admitted, in reply to a question from the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) on 25 June this year:

> "From 1983 until 1989 Her Majesty's Government provided training to the armed forces of the Cambodian non-communist resistance, that is the Khmer People's National Liberation armed forces and the Armée Nationale Sihanoukienne."

They said:

> "There has never been and will never be any British assistance or support, military or otherwise, for the Khmer Rouge. Since 1989 Her Majesty's Government have not been involved in any way in training, equipping or supplying the forces of any of the Cambodian parties. In accordance with normal practice no further details about this training or any information about the nature of this training will be given." —[*Official Report*, 25 June 1991; Vol. 193, c. *454*.]

We hope that tonight the Minister will give further information in answer to a number of questions from my hon. Friends and me. If the Minister is not prepared to give that information, he should say why.

Over the years, at least seven Ministers deceived Parliament. The former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), told my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clywd) in a letter dated 10 October 1990:

> "There is no British Government involvement of any kind in training, equipping or co-operation, with the Khmer Rouge forces or those allied to them".

My hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley had asked the then Prime Minister for an inquiry into repeated allegations that the Government were involved in such training, but the ex-Prime Minister dismissed that suggestion as "unfounded". But for a case that was due to go before the High Court the following week, in which three Ministers—the right hon. Members for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton) and for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), and the hon. Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Mr. Lennox-Boyd)—were served with subpoenas, the truth might never have emerged.

Why were the Government so reticent, and why were they prepared to gag witnesses in court? To ensure that neither of the two Defence Ministers could be called as witnesses, the Secretary of State for Defence, the right hon. Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) issued public interest immunity orders. The Government continued to deny that they ever assisted the Khmer Rouge, and in a written reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley, the hon. Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale admitted that the three factions—the KPNLF, Sihanoukists, and Khmer Rouge—

> "co-operate on an ad hoc basis."

In other words, British soldiers taught terrorists mine laying and guerilla techniques, and the Khmer Rouge benefited from that training.

After being inundated with letters from my constituents, I wrote to the then Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Lord Brabazon of Tara. He replied on 22 Febraury 1990:

> "We have never given any form of support to the Khmer Rouge. We were one of the first governments to expose their brutal regime when they were in power. We are now doing what we can to prevent Pol Pot and his cronies from returning to power."

It is strong language for a Minister, to refer to

> "Pol Pot and his cronies".

The KPNLF and the Sihanoukists are indeed the cronies of the Khmer Rouge, and the British Government have admitted to training them.

I will conclude shortly, as a number of my hon. Friends who are much greater experts on the subject wish to contribute. The Government should apologise for deliberately misleading the House for at least eight years. Most of all, they should apologise to the innocent men, women and children of Cambodia who suffered as a direct result of the Government's policies in that region of the world. We want answers to a number of questions tonight, and I hope that the Minister will provide them.

10.42 pm

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): I congratulate the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) on securing this debate, which concerns a subject in which right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House have taken a close interest over the past few years. We certainly ought to examine British policies and those of the international community, as we seek to learn the lessons of the past and to secure a peaceful and stable future for the peoples of Cambodia.

We shall not achieve that objective simply by seeking to trip up British Ministers. Britain has a role to play in that part of the world, if not a major one. As the only permanent member of the Security Council that does not have a great past there, we at least can play a part in the region's future. We should look beyond the narrow issues raised by the hon. Member for Tottenham, such as the comparatively marginal question of the training of Khmer Rouge allies acknowledged in a parliamentary answer.

The House, the country and the international community should never forget what occurred in Cambodia. As monstrosity follows monstrosity around the world, and as tyrant succeeds tyrant, it is all too easy

[Mr. John Bowis]

to put Cambodia to the back of our minds as someone else captures the headlines—be it Saddam Hussein, or someone from the South American continent that was the subject of the previous debate. Somebody will come along and people will seek to talk about that rather than the great horror of world history to which the hon. Member for Tottenham has referred.

We must never forget 1975-78, during which, as I think history will show—partly because of ancient rivalries and hatreds between the peoples of Thailand, China, Vietnam and Cambodia, and partly as a result of American foreign policy and disagreements in the post-Vietnam war period between the State Department and the White house—the Americans decided that it was more important to seek reconciliation with the Chinese Government than with the Vietnamese Government. As a result, the Khmer Rouge were given free play by their paymasters, by their gurus in Peking, to wreak havoc on the people of Cambodia. We saw Cambodia, that ancient, proud and civilised country, torn apart by the Khmer Rouge. As the hon. Member for Tottenham said, it was torn apart by Pol Pot and his henchmen. The wheels ceased to turn, towns were emptied, the fields were made barren, and even bicycles ceased to roll around Phnom Penh.

Then there was the period when the Vietnamese came to the rescue of the Cambodian people, and in so doing they brought some stability. No one suggests that they came in without their own atrocities and breaches of civilised law, but they enabled a sad country to pick itself up again. We should pay at least some tribute to the Vietnamese who enabled that to happen, even if we are critical of some of the practices employed.

We have now moved on to a period when we can begin to look forward to a solution of the problem, even though there are many question marks attached to it, through the promising getting together in recent weeks and months of the Phnom Penh Government with Sihanouk, and with some of the other members of the Khmer Rouge coalition —but not, one hopes, with Pol Pot, Ieng Sary or the worst of those—who are seeking under the Supreme National Council to find a way forward with the assistance of the international community.

The world is taking a gamble, but if the hon. Member for Tottenham is right, as I think he is, and there has been a world conspiracy against the people of Cambodia—it is not east versus west, north verses south or communist versus non-communist, but the world as a whole, including the United Nations community, China and the Soviet Union, developing and developed countries and many Asian countries—but that the world is saying now that it will learn from the past and try to ensure that peace can return to Cambodia. We should say that we shall give the gamble a try.

The hon. Member for Tottenham is right to raise questions about the gamble, as I have described it. We must ask questions of the international community. We must ask how we shall ensure that the ceasefire is monitored. If we can monitor the ceasefire in Yugoslavia through the European Community, we can surely find ways of doing that for Cambodia, whether through the United Nations or through some other international grouping. If there is to be confidence, it is crucial to ensure that the ceasefire lasts.

We must also ensure that there is confidence that the Khmer Rouge will be disarmed. It is clear that some of their leaders and groups are entering Phnom Penh—not Pol Pot, but some of the others—having left their arms outside. How can we be sure that, if things go wrong for the Khmer Rouge, they will not leave the conference table, dig up their arms and resume murdering people from their bases in the jungle? That sort of reassurance must be sought if we are to give the people of Cambodia confidence.

The hon. Gentleman was also right to mention the mines that have been laid around that area. Figures vary, but I have heard of 250 casualties, and some 80 amputees, a month. It does not matter now who was responsible for laying those mines; the world must come to the aid of those who are digging them up and trying to make them and the area safe once again. The world is ignoring that appalling catastrophe and those limbless people. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will assure us that he will work with the international community to solve that problem.

The hon. Member for Tottenham spoke about trade and aid. Bringing Cambodia back into the world community must involve the reopening of trade and aid links and the removal of the embargoes with Vietnam and Cambodia. Japan is already well involved; it is Britain, America and the other western nations that are standing back. Because of that, the £44 million for aid in the United Nations development fund remains frozen.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to talk to his colleagues in the international community to find ways to ensure that trade and aid are pumped into Cambodia, at the same time as we are monitoring and assisting in the disarming of the Khmer Rouge. We must never relax. We must never forget that history. Even in the past few days, Khmer Rouge plans have been found that show that their tactics are still a mixture of a campaign of intimidation and a campaign of changing history through a propaganda war to persuade the Cambodian people, and then the world —although I hope that the world is not gullible enough to believe it—that the genocide of those 2 million people was nothing to do with the Khmer Rouge but was the result of Vietnamese atrocities. We will not believe that. We will support the Cambodian people.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Tottenham on raising the matter and I look forward to the assurance of my hon. Friend the Minister that he, the British Government and the British people will play our part in returning peace to Cambodia.

10.52 pm

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): You, Mr. Speaker, may have noted that when my hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) said that he hoped that the Minister would give us more information on this issue, and with greater frankness than in the past, the Minister cheerfully shouted, "I certainly shan't." That summarises the attitude taken by a succession of Ministers towards Parliament and towards the taxpayers whose money they have been spending on nefarious projects. It also tells us that we are not likely to hear much from the Minister tonight other than the bluster and diversion that has become standard in such debates.

I pay tribute to John Pilger, David Munro and Central Television for a succession of programmes that have done

more to bring this issue before the public in Britain and throughout the world than has been achieved by anybody else who has taken an interest in the matter. I was a journalist in my previous incarnation. Inquiring journalism is a dying trade in this country, and those who practise it expect to be vilified. I framed some of the better attacks on me and they hang on my wall—"Loony MP backs bomb gang", "Mr. Odious", "Twenty things you didn't know about crackpot Chris", and so on. None of that surprised me, and I note that a number of similar articles are appearing about John Pilger. I am sure that he and Central Television will not be intimidated.

I regret that Mr. Colvin, a senior civil servant in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, is not here. He has taken a detailed interest in this subject over a long period. He has more knowledge and shoulders more responsibility for our policy than any of the 10 Ministers who have been responsible for it in the past decade. I notice that Mr. Colvin has started to circulate some of these articles. Such action from a civil servant is reprehensible, and I hope that it will stop.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mullin: The hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to speak later. He represents interests that are quite different from mine, and not necessarily just those of the Conservative party.

I know which version of events I prefer—that told over the past decade or so by Mr. Pilger, Mr. Munro and Central Television. When the history of this unhappy little episode is written, they will be entirely vindicated.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham said, on 25 June the Government admitted what some of us had been alleging for the past three years. They did so rather quietly in a planted written answer buried in *Hansard*, which confirmed that, from 1983 to 1989, British soldiers based in Thailand had been training Khmer terrorists.

That allegation has been repeatedly put to Ministers over the years and they have always answered with bluster saying how much they hate the Khmer Rouge and how wicked and terrible the Khmer Rouge are. They have never faced the issue that terrorists are people who plant bombs in public places. If it is wrong for the Irish Republican Army to do that, it is wrong for people who happen to be "friendly" terrorists. Thousands of people in Cambodia would not find it as easy as the Minister does to distinguish between terrorists of the Khmer People's National Liberation Front and the Khmer Rouge, to which they are so closely allied.

All those points have been put to Ministers. Parliament has been misled over a long period. On 13 March 1989, my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), the shadow Foreign Secretary, said to the right hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), then briefly the custodian of Government policy on Cambodia:

"If the Government want to avoid a protracted civil war in Cambodia, why are they providing special forces training to one of the participants in that war?"

The Minister replied:

"As the right hon. Gentleman knows, I will give no answer".—[*Official Report*, 13 March 1989; Vol. 160, c. 49.]

The subject came up repeatedly in our debate on this subject on 26 October 1990. The Minister—happily, the hon. Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Mr. Lennox-Boyd), who has record tenure in justifying Government policy on Cambodia—said:

"I am personally completely satisfied that the explanations that I have been given are comprehensive and accurate."

He declined to share those explanations with the House and said:

"I cannot say more than I have said . . . I must place it clearly on record that the British Government, of course, utterly and clearly refute the allegations made by the hon. Member for Sunderland, South and by Mr. Pilger in his programme."—[*Official Report*, 26 October 1990; Vol. 178, c. 692.]

The burden of the allegations was that British soldiers based in Thailand, funded by British taxpayers' money, were training terrorists. Such reports did not originate with Mr. Pilger; there is a wealth of other material on the subject, some of it from unlikely sources. On 24 September 1989, *The Sunday Telegraph* reported:

"British Army teams—almost certainly from the SAS—have been training guerrillas of the Sihanoukist National Army of Cambodia at a secret training base in Thailand for the past two years."

Mr. Allason: Almost certainly.

Mr. Mullin: I had not realised that that was controversial.

On 30 September, *Jane's Defence Weekly* referred to "the creation of a 250-man KPNLF sabotage battalion prepared by four Cambodian instructors . . . The latter were graduates of the UK-led courses, though this was not noted at the time"—

in the previous report—

"members of the sabotage battalion were taught how to attack installations such as bridges, railway lines, radar stations, power lines and substations . . . Small group tactics and use of improvised explosives were also covered."

Jeremy Stone in *The New York Times*, in an article in November 1989, said:

"The US is waging a secret war in Cambodia against the Hun Sen Government—knowing full well that none other than the genocidal Khmer Rouge"—

I hope that the Minister is listening to this—

"are likely to be the ultimate beneficiaries. Even as White House officials shed crocodile tears over signs of the growing military strength of the Khmer Rouge, they are continuing to use US financial and intelligence resources to weaken the Vietnamese-installed Hun Sen Government, the only faction capable of preventing a military takeover of the Khmer Rouge."

It then goes on to describe a secret organisation set up in Bangkok called the Cambodian working group, through which all aid for the various terrorist factions was to be funneled. It says:

"The United States pays $24 million annually"

that is in 1989—

"to support the resistance, and the Son Sann group is getting $150,000 a month for operating expenses alone . . . Through a Thai intelligence entity called 838, the Cambodian guerrillas receive weapons, food and other support."

Jeremy Stone goes on to say:

"So the irony is exquisite. We are redoubling our efforts to overthrow Hun Sen even while we announce that such a result would produce a Khmer Rouge takeover . . . From every objective point of view we are allied with the genocidal Khmer Rouge."

Those are not allegations made by Mr. Pilger, the hon. Member for Sunderland, South or any other hon. Member; that is *The New York Times*. It has been widely remarked upon. It is clear that the non-Khmer Rouge factions of the so-called phoney alliance are almost entirely the creation of a handful of western Governments, principally the United States, but by no means entirely the

[Mr. Mullin]

United States. Britain has had a part to play in that operation. I think that the French have had a part to play in it. The Thais have had a large part to play in harbouring all three factions. It is a matter of record that the Khmer Rouge themselves have a large number of facilities on Thai Government soil.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham said, over the years successive British Ministers, from the Prime Minister downwards, have misled the country and the House on the issue. As my hon. Friend said, the Prime Minister wrote to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition on 17 October 1990 saying:

"I confirm that there is no British Government involvement of any kind in training, equipping or co-operating with the Khmer Rouge forces or those allied to them."

That may have been true on 9 October 1990, but what the Prime Minister omitted to say was that we had been training them up to a year before that. The phrase—the wording is always identical—

"or those allied to them"

appeared in a succession of ministerial letters around that time. The Foreign Secretary and various other Ministers wrote that, and they all did so in the knowledge that the training had been going on and had stopped only just before that. That is being rather economical with the truth.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Lying.

Mr. Mullin: No one has actually lied to the House, but no one has told the truth. All of them knew the truth but despite repeated opportunities they deliberately misled the House.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman does not mean that the House has been deliberately misled.

Mr. Mullin: I am prepared for the possibility that the House might have been inadvertantly misled, but misled it certainly was.

I look down the long list of Ministers who, during the past decade or so, have had responsibility for this disastrous little venture, and I wonder which of them was in charge at the time of this particular training scheme —a rather unfortunate expression—at the time the Special Air Services were introduced into the Thai border.

As I look down the list, my eye lights on the name of the right hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) who was, between August 1982 and February 1983, the Minister responsible for Cambodia. This was exactly the sort of crazy scheme with which one might expect him to be associated. It was what is known in the parlance as a "touch of the Cranley Onslows". Perhaps he was not the one, however. The Minister responsible between August 1983 and November 1985—for over two years—was none other than the present Foreign Secretary. All those people must have known at the time—they must have been consulted when the scheme came into operation—yet they chose not to tell the truth.

We are told that, when he became Foreign Secretary, the present Foreign Secretary found out about all this and decided to do away with it immediately. If so, I am grateful to him for that, but he was responsible for these matters for two whole years earlier on, while the SAS were actively training the terrorists in Cambodia.

The statement that we were given in the planted written answer on 25 June was far from the whole truth. It failed to tell us what kind of training was provided. Taxpayers are entitled to know that. My information is that it included planting sophisticated, delayed-action mines of the sort that were certainly responsible for many of the hideous injuries inflicted on military and civilian personnel in Cambodia.

I read in *The Independent* last week that two little girls fishing in a river in Kampot hooked a floating mine which blew their arms off. I do not know whether it was a Khmer Rouge mine, or a KPNLF mine. I do not know whether we trained the terrorists or whether someone else did; but as the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) pointed out, 20,000 people in Cambodia have had limbs blown off by mines. The whole west of the country is a vast minefield, and I have no doubt that some of the mines were planted as a result of training received by the terrorists from British soldiers.

It is more than tragic that the good people of Oxfam and the Red Cross should be attempting in Cambodia to repair the damage and run hospitals to provide the amputees with some means of survival, while on the other side of the border, people employed by Her Majesty's Government are attempting to destroy those same civilians.

The statement of 25 June did not tell us the location either. My information is that some of the training occurred at the border in a camp known as site B. Some of it took place in Malaysia, too. We first started training Cambodians in Malaysia in 1970, shortly after Prince Sihanouk was overthrown in the coup organised and inspired by the United States. When the United States and British Governments tell us how urgent it is that the prince should be back in Cambodia, it is worth recalling that we helped to overthrow him in the first place and that we celebrated his overthrow and exploited it.

I am told that a gentleman who until 1989 was based in the British embassy in Bangkok, a Mr. Dennis Galwey, was responsible for overseeing the British role in military training in Thailand. In *The Spectator* of 4 May, Derek Tonkin—the British ambassador to Thailand until 1989 and thus in place while much of all this was going on, and whom I had challenged to deny that British soldiers based in Thailand had been training Khmer terrorists—wrote:

"Mr. Mullin invites me to deny it. I deny it."

How does that compare with the Government's answer of 25 June?

Did operations really cease in 1989? The Government say that they did, but they have told us all sorts of things over the years. Perhaps the matter was privatised, because such operations, when they become embarrassing, have a long history of being put out to people who call themselves ex-SAS or ex-this or ex-that. There are many bogus airlines in south-east Asia which operate for the Central Intelligence Agency. Bird Air was the big one in Cambodia, but Air America is the most famous in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

I do not know and do not allege that the operation was privatised, but if it was a good idea before the autumn of 1989 and remained a good idea for six or seven years, why did it suddenly stop being a good idea? If the Minister intends to shed light on anything, perhaps he will at least say why the operation was wound up, because that is a

puzzling question. If the truth was leaking out, that may have been a motive for stopping, but I suppose that the Minister will have a more sophisticated explanation.

Exactly what is still being covered up? I have a letter from the Treasury Solicitor which was addressed to the defendants in a recent libel case involving two shadowy figures whom my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) and the hon. Member for Broxstowe (Mr. Lester) ran into in Cambodia in September 1989. The letter states:

"It is the Crown's view that the public interest"

public interest, my foot—

". . . requires that only certain information can be disclosed in court. That information is contained in a statement made this afternoon to the House of Commons by means of a written answer."

That is the answer of 25 June to which I have referred.

"The text of that answer is attached to this letter. It is accepted that this information, but no more, may be made public without damage to the public interest. Any further information would attract a claim for public interest immunity."

That is not exactly the level playing field that we have come to expect from the Government. It seems that one side in that recent libel case was playing with its arms tied behind its back, while the other side had at its disposal the full resources of the British state. I have here an affidavit sworn by the Secretary of State which also became available for the purposes of the libel action. It states:

"As will be seen in the statement to which I have referred"—

that is, the answer of 25 June—

"it contains no details of the training given to the armed forces of the Cambodian non-communist resistance. The statement has been carefully limited so as to disclose no more than can in the considered opinion of the Crown be disclosed without injury to the public interest. In my opinion the making of any further disclosure whether or not by evidence given by any person orally or by reference to any documents concerning the involvement of specialist Crown personnel in any covert activities or security operations or as to their nature, method, circumstances or the identity of any person engaged in them would cause damage to the public interest for the reasons set out below. It is my judgment that any such further disclosure would cause unquantifiable damage to the Crown's ability to conduct any such activities or operations currently or in the future."

The affidavit goes on to say that the information would be of value to foreign powers.

I am unable to see how British people learning about the activities of British soldiers based in Thailand, some 8,000 miles from here, could possibly be a threat to national security. What are the Government trying to hide? We shall shortly hear a great deal of bluster from the Minister. The Government cannot have much confidence in their case when they have to issue affidavits of that nature in an attempt to gag witnesses and fix the outcome of the case. I regret that that case was settled, because if a jury had found out the truth about what was going on, the outcome might have been somewhat different.

If the past is anything to go by, the Minister will be at pains to assure us that the Government have not supported the Khmer Rouge. He will even generate a little synthetic indignation at that suggestion. He is deluding himself. It is a matter of record that the organisations that we have been supporting—the KPNLF and the Army of Sihanouk—are closely allied to the Khmer Rouge.

I have here a report from *The Sunday Correspondent* of 5 November 1989. It speaks of Prince Norodom Ranariddh, who is the son of Prince Sihanouk. Those of us who have met him know that he is a chip off the old block and can bullshit in about four languages. It says:

"Prince Norodom Ranariddh, the son of the nominal leader of the resistance coalition, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, said last week that links between the non-Communist groups and the Khmer Rouge were closer than ever. Combat co-operation was total he said, and the Sihanoukists celebrated Khmer Rouge victories as their own."

So much for funding the non-Khmer Rouge elements.

I know that, a couple of months ago, there was a meeting at the Foreign Office between Lord Caithness and the former Prime Minister of Thailand, who was recently overthrown in a military coup, and some of his close advisers. Mr. Colvin of the Foreign Office was also present. One of the advisers said that, in the field, the Khmer Rouge is in command of all three factions. All those there said nothing—they just sat there and nodded. The Government cannot say that they do not know.

Secondly, as the Minister knows, between 1979 and 1982, the British representative to the United Nations supported the seating of a Government formed solely by the Khmer Rouge. The fraudulent coalition did not come about until 1982-83. The Minister cannot say that we did not support the Khmer Rouge, because we did. For the following seven or eight years, we supported the fraudulent coalition, which was dominated by the Khmer Rouge. The Cambodian representative in the UN was Mr. Thioun Prasith, whose brothers occupied three of the top 10 posts in the Khmer Rouge between 1975 and 1979.

Thirdly, we provided food aid, through the UN border operation, much of which found its way into the terrorist resistance. Film has been shown of Khmer Rouge porters carrying that food away. Pol Pot was once housed in the Erawan hotel in Bangkok, although the Khmer Rouge leaders now stay at the Sheraton. All this went on quite openly, under the noses of many people over a long time.

The Government have got themselves into a sad and embarrassing situation. The hon. Member for Battersea said that we should look forward and not backwards, and I am inclined to agree with him—but before one can look forward, one must first face the truth. It is therefore necessary for the Minister to face the truth. So long as he cannot do that, he must not be surprised that there will be those of us who attempt forcibly to draw his attention to the truth.

11.18 pm

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): In my aborted intervention, I wanted to ask the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), when he spoke about his work as a researcher and investigative journalist and drew parallels between it and that of John Pilger, whether he had ever got his facts wrong, whether they had been challenged in the courts, and whether he had been forced to withdraw and apologise. I have followed his career with interest. He is an assiduous researcher and a doughty campaigner. I do not recall his ever having had to do that.

Having listened to the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant), I cannot believe that this proposition was based on an action that was lost in the High Court. The plaintiffs won, and received an apology. If such remarks were made outside the Chamber, another action for defamation would be brought.

I do not believe that there is a parallel between the hon. Gentleman and John Pilger. I think that the hon. Gentleman is being immodest. He says that he is sorry that

[Mr. Rupert Allason]

the case was settled. I know something about the laws of defamation, having been on the receiving end of a libel case in the not too distant past. Indeed, I am in a rather difficult position: on that occasion, I appealed to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, who will be answering tonight's debate.

There is a parallel here, in that my case involved someone who had lied—and whom I knew to have lied—about his military record during the second world war. With the greatest regret, Ministers said that a precedent was involved in relation to public immunity. I subpoenaed people to give evidence for me. The issue concerned events that had taken place years before—before 1963, and, in the case of the war record, before 1945—but it was not aired in court, because of a certificate issued by the Secretary of State.

The John Pilger programme, which I watched, was built on supposition and innuendo. It contained no concrete facts. As a journalist, I was somewhat ashamed, and hoped that rather more facts existed to back up what I saw on the screen. After the programme, I asked my hon. Friend categorically whether SAS personnel were deployed in Cambodia. I was given a categorical assurance that they were not.

Let us consider what has taken place in court recently. John Pilger was challenged by the people whom he identified. It was not a question of any kind of settlement; he agreed that he had been wrong, and apologised—as did a Member of the European Parliament who had made similar baseless allegations. The two individuals concerned were British observers.

I have followed the aftermath of the case. Bearing in mind what William Shawcross wrote in the *Sunday Telegraph* last week, I am surprised that John Pilger has the temerity to continue to pursue the matter—and, indeed, that the hon. Member for Tottenham should be prepared to do so. The answer has been given.

I do not think that any hon. Member would support the Government for a moment if he believed that the Khmer Rouge were receiving support, or that children's limbs were being blown off, because specialist SAS personnel were training the Khmer Rouge. Certainly I would not do so. I simply do not believe that that is happening, and I accepted my hon. Friend's word when he gave me an assurance in the House. It is common knowledge that training was given from a base in Thailand, but the proposition, or conspiracy theory—constructed on the basis of an acknowledgement in a written answer—that all sorts of nefarious activities have taken place in Cambodia, and are continuing to take place, defies belief.

Both the hon. Member for Sunderland, South and the hon. Member for Tottenham have done themselves a disservice. When they look back on this episode, I very much hope that they will see that it is a case study of a left-wing ideologue, John Pilger, who has simply got it wrong. He was also proved to have got it wrong. He admitted that he had got it wrong. He apologised to the persons concerned for getting it wrong. Now it is being produced once again. I very much regret it.

I hope that I shall be allowed to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) in urging the House to look to the future. By trade, I am a historian. I believe that what took place in the past is of enormous importance—it rightly influences our current perceptions and our future behaviour. But the hope, surely, for that tragic, war-torn country in south-east Asia is that it should return to peace as soon as possible. I very much hope that the Minister will be able to give us that assurance.

11.25 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): The hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) says that Mr. Pilger was proved to have got it wrong.

Mr. Allason: He admitted it.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: He agreed that he had got it wrong. There is a difference between the two phrases which perhaps the hon. Gentleman—knowing the detail into which he invariably goes—will wish to consider.

The programme "The Betayal" lasted, I understand, some 30 or 40 minutes. The greater part of it was correct and will be proven to be correct. It may be that part of the programme contained an error. Mr. Pilger and his colleague, Mr. Munro, have apologised. The hon. Member for Torbay should view the whole programme in the context of its overall message. He should not allow himself to be influenced by a particular part of it, about which there is some controversy.

In the course of the libel action, which began on 2 July and ended on 5 July, John Pilger and David Munro argued that reference to these two men was not meant, in the film they produced, to suggest that they themselves were involved in training the Khmer Rouge. It was the judge who ruled that, in his judgment, he was satisfied that the words used in the film were capable of the interpretation that Mr. Geidt and Mr. de Normann placed upon them—that they were involved in military training.

The trial was abandoned after an out-of-court settlement was agreed between the parties. The hon. Member for Torbay should recognise why it was agreed: because the judge ruled that certain evidence was inadmissible in the trial. I agree with the judge that, as the law stands, that evidence was inadmissible. I disagree with Mr. Pilger, as he would tell the hon. Member for Torbay, if he were to meet him. He should not seek to misrepresent what happened, which was that an out-of-court settlement was arrived at because Mr. Pilger and Mr. Munro were unable in any way to put their evidence, which they believed would have influenced the jury if it had been heard.

Following the trial, Mr. Pilger and Mr. Munro issued a press statement which stated:

"It should be made clear that these two men"—

their words—

"who sued us played no part in guerilla training."

Since December last, I have always argued that, as absolute evidence did not exist proving their involvement, Geidt and de Normann would win their action. Indeed, because of that, I argued in favour of an out-of-court settlement. But Mr. Pilger and Mr. Munro have always sought to argue that they never alleged such involvement, and that on such a premise they would base their whole defence.

I want to deal with what happened in that trial and its bearing on British foreign policy on Cambodia. My hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Balley (Mrs. Clwyd) first met Geidt and de Normann in Phnom Penh in September 1989, in the company of the hon. Member for Broxtowe

(Mr. Lester). The Foreign Office Minister, the hon. Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Mr. Lennox-Boyd), told the House:

"Those two men did not visit Indochina at our behest or as representatives of the Government. They went privately, at the invitation of the Institute for International Relations at Hanoi . . . Through the institute, they were introduced to the Phnom Penh authorities. Those authorities then invited them to witness the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia".—[*Official Report*, 26 October 1990; Vol. 178, c. 691.]

The public should be aware that much argument surrounds the activities of those two men, but it is argument that they have brought upon themselves because of the way in which they conducted themselves and because of the statements that they made. Their public statements have been most unconvincing. Nevertheless, I agree with the statement that Mr. Pilger and Mr. Munro made. Those two men made highly unconvincing statements, and I hope that the hon. Member for Torbay will research what they said.

In a covering letter to the Vietnamese embassy, de Normann was listed as a personal assistant to Geidt, as if he was from the Royal United Services Institute. That was untrue. I challenge Mr. de Normann and Mr. Geidt to question what I am saying.

In the same letter, Geidt said that he was part of an official two-man delegation. That was untrue. Group Captain David Bolton, director of the RUSI, denied that they were representing the RUSI. It was not an official delegation.

Geidt referred to himself in his letter to the Vietnamese and Cambodians as assistant director of RUSI. That was not true and had never been so. He was an assistant to the director—a very different role indeed. They both contended, as did the Foreign Secretary, that they were invited by the Hanoi Institute and the Phnom Penh Government. That was not true. They sought to be invited by the respective authorities, and evidence exists to show that.

In a letter to Central Television, lawyers for Geidt said that he was not military. That was not true. Mr. Geidt had links with military intelligence and had served in the regular Army.

Why did they make these statements if they were not true? Has not it dawned on them that, when such statements are made and people subsequently find out the truth, they begin to question the identity of those involved, from which was born much of the programme "The Betrayal". If they had been truthful in everything they had said to the appropriate authorities, there would have been no reference to that in the programme. In many ways, they were responsible for what happened.

It is not surprising, with the truth so easily denied on such a scale, that Central Television felt it prudent to spend what is rumoured to be £350,000 defending Pilger and Munro in a libel trial. Notwithstanding such errors fact, when the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, the right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton), was asked about contacts between Geidt, de Normann and the Ministry of Defence, he stated:

"The only contact with the Ministry of Defence in relation to the visit that has been traced was a routine inquiry by Mr. de Normann prior to departure to check on the regulations governing visits by ex-service personnel to communist countries."—[*Official Report*, 18 October 1990; Vol. 177, c. 923.]

That was a perfectly acceptable request to make. But what happened? That answer was quickly amended when it was realised that the libel trial was proceeding. On 13 May, the story changed. The MOD, out of the blue, wrote to my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin):

"More recently it has come to light that Mr. Mackenzie Geidt had an informal discussion"—

the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) knows all about such discussions and he has written many books about them—

"with an MOD officer in October 1989 on his return from Indochina"

Cambodia—

"during which he passed on some impressions he had gained about the political and military position in Cambodia which he thought would be of general interest to the Department."

Perhaps the hon. Member for Torbay can tell me what that means. I think that I know what it means. The hon. Gentleman has written many books on such subjects, and I am sure that he could extrapolate within the remit of fact.

Mr. Allason: I am as good at conspiracy theories as the next man, but I think that you are going a stage too far——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am quoting a Minister.

Mr. Allason: But you are quoting so terribly selectively. You are saying that a letter written by a legal representative to the television company was incorrect and you say that he had links to——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must refer his remarks through the Chair.

Mr. Allason: I apologise, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. We are talking about the ministerial reply. Perhaps he misunderstood what I said.

None of those matters ever came out in the libel trial. In many ways, it was perhaps right that they should not have done so because they may not have been relevant once the judge had taken his decision. The onus was on Mr. Munro and Mr. Pilger to prove their facts conclusively before the trial, with all the evidence available. Of course, it was not quite possible in the circumstances.

None of those matters ever came out in the trial, because the judge, for reasons that I perfectly understand, on the basis of the law as it stands and following representations from the Government, ruled such material inadmissible. Pilger and Munro were very angry about the cloak of secrecy surrounding the trial. Throughout the trial, the Government did their utmost to hide the facts behind Government policy. They even quoted "Spycatcher".

The hon. Member for Torbay will remember that debate. He and I were on the same side and he argued my case. He argued then that the Government should never use such a defence in a court of law. On this occasion, does he think that they should have done? The Government intervened to block five subpoenas on three Ministers and the head of the Special Air Services, with the use of public interest indemnity orders in the name of the Secretary of State for Defence—I understand that he signed them. The jury were totally unaware of those matters and if required to make a judgment—which they were not—would still have remained unaware of them, because they were inadmissible in the courts.

[Mr. Campbell-Savours]

The truth is that, if it had not been for the trial, the public would never have known the truth of Britain's involvement in Cambodia between 1983 and 1989. Every answer over all those years always avoided identifying where the money was going and where the military support was being given. The Government did not want the truth to come out. It was only the libel trial which extracted from the Government on 25 June the statement that we had all the time been supporting two of the three factions in the non-communist coalition, but not, the Government maintained, the third—the Khmer Rouge.

However, I believe that the answer that refers to "ad hoc arrangements" and the statement of Prince Sihanouk's son suggest that some co-operation went on. The Government may have believed that they were not supporting the training of the Khmer Rouge, but the Khmer Rouge were infiltrating the camps of the two other factions in the coalition and were securing training through the back door without official knowledge and approval of the British Government. That is why they could answer all the questions in the way in which they did over all those years. If the Minister were to concede that tonight, it would make a lot of difference.

It has cost £350,000 to establish the fact that the Government trained the non-communist resistence in Cambodia. The Government could have admitted that years ago. As for Geidt and de Normann, they became the unnecessary casualties of the whole exercise. That never should have happened and it cannot be excused, but to some extent they brought it upon themselves by failing to be more forthcoming and truthful about their activities. I am not convinced that those individuals are too unhappy with the results of their actions.

11.39 pm

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): I apologise to the House for not being here earlier, but I have spoken in every debate on Cambodia since the issue was taken up.

The debate is about the Government's policy towards Cambodia. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) that we should now be trying to look forward as things are looking far more healthy following the recent meeting in Peking with the Supreme National Council.

We have heard a great deal about the military and about the re-running of the Pilger film. It was a profound disappointment to me to learn from the statement of my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces that we had given miltitary training from 1983 to 1989. I had defended the Government in the House against that claim on many occasions. I had argued that I did not believe that such training was possible because we believed in the Foreign Office's policy by objectives.

I could not see any possible Foreign Office objective in training two elements of the coalition force against the Phnom Penh regime. It was a profound disappointment to discove that the claims about such training were true. The Government statements were economical with the truth, and the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs is now investigating the matter, because we do not feel that the manner in which those statements were given was correct.

We should now look forward. Following the conference in Peking, attended by the Minister's representatives, where do we stand now? Where do we stand in terms of aid to Phnom Penh and Cambodia? The Supreme National Council will form in the capital and it will represent all the groups. What are the priorities in terms of aid? I believe that there are three.

The first and foremost priority, as we understand it from representatives of the Phnom Penh regime, is English language training. They are desperately anxious for that, and we could undertake that relatively quickly. Secondly, it is equally important that a de-mining programme is undertaken soon. It is essential that the many mines that were laid in that poor country by all sides, and which are extracting terrible casualties from the civilan population, should be removed quickly. Thirdly, plans should be drawn up to bring in United Nations organisations to restore the infrastructure—the roads and the telecommunications system—as quickly as possible.

We should plan to act on those essentials as quickly as possible once the Supreme National Council resumes its role in Phnom Penh.

11.42 pm

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): Those of us who have taken a long interest in Cambodia would have a lot to say tonight if there were time to say it. However, I am anxious that the Minister should have time to answer in detail the questions put to him by my hon. Friends. It is important that he should set the record straight today.

Over the years as the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) said, the Government have all too often been economical with the truth. They have misled Parliament continuously, and at least seven Ministers are responsible for that.

Although I share my hon. Friend's disappointment and anger about what happened in the past, I want to talk about the aid and future needs of Cambodia. Cambodia has 20,000 mine amputees for whom we bear considerable responsibility, and 86,000 displaced people due to the ongoing civil war, for which we also share much of the responsibility.

Last April, a consortium of non-governmental organisations called for $12 million. So far, the response has been $500,000. The Government and the European Community should respond to that request. The 300,000 refugees on the Thai-Cambodian border have been there since 1979, and we now hope that they will have a future in a peaceful Cambodia. It is encouraging that the factions are talking and that there is an agreed international ceasefire.

However, Ministers must be accountable to Parliament. The former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) made that point in the House just a couple of weeks ago. Other democracies do not have the same paranoia about national security as our Government seem to have. They seem to be able to accommodate secrecy and security without dashing for cover and invoking public immunity orders at the drop of a hat. It is ironic that former eastern bloc countries are looking at ways to make their security services accountable to an independent body. Even the KGB now has a press officer.

As Melanie Phillips said in *The Guardian* last Friday:

"The law in Britain at the moment makes it a criminal offence to disclose anything about the security services . . . but a law which puts an arm of a State outside the law is immoral, undemocratic and wrong."

In a democratic country there should be one test—whether people are allowed access to enough information to meet their needs as citizens and to ensure that their servants are running the country properly. Although we all recognise that secrecy is sometimes in the public interest, we should also expect that, in a democracy, disclosure can sometimes be in the public interest. Until that is recognised, the elected members of the Opposition are in no doubt that the Government's first priority has been to mislead Parliament and the public continuously between 1983 and 1989 over their activities in Cambodia. As my hon. Friends and the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) have said, the Government owe us an explanation and, most of all, they owe the people of Cambodia an abject apology.

11.47 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): I congratulate the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) on raising this important subject once again. I am pleased that we are debating it again this evening. It is not a subject for which I am responsible in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office but, each time that it comes back for debate, I find that my interest for and concern about the subject grows.

I am on good personal terms with virtually all hon. Members who have participated in the debate, even when they allege a cover up, which I utterly refute. I am grateful to my hon. Friends the Members for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) and for Torbay (Mr. Allason) for saying that we should look to the future, and to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester).

The hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) said that he would be met with some bluster by me. I wish to say something that will be controversial, but I shall say it at the outset because I do not seek to shirk it. I shall not elaborate tonight on the written answer of my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Why not?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Well, I do not believe that anyone thinks that I shall do so, because, at the end of that written answer, my right hon. Friend said that that was as far as the Government were prepared to go at that time.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Will you confirm that that was a blocking answer under our parliamentary procedures?

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is not a matter for the Chair. It is a matter for debate.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Obviously, I recognise that hon. Members in any quarter of the House may criticise me for what I am saying, but that is the position, and I am prepared to face that criticism. Furthermore, I shall not comment on the libel actions, including the one with which the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) was involved, which has not been mentioned by anyone.

I wish to comment on the interesting developments that have been taking place in the past few months. Last November, the permanent five and the co-chairmen of the Paris conference on Cambodia between France and Indonesia met in Paris to complete the task that they had already begun, of turning the five's framework into a fully worked-out draft settlement document. That document became known at the United Nations plan. It comprises those elements which the permanent five and the co-chairmen consider essential components of a comprehensive political settlement.

Hon. Members will recall that, in September 1990, all four Cambodian parties agreed to form a Supreme National Council, but because they could not agree on a chairman, the SNC could not function. Nonetheless, the Paris conference co-chairmen decided to present the draft document to SNC members in Paris on 20 and 21 December 1990. The response was mixed. There was unanimous Cambodian support for the five's framework; and the resistance members of the SNC accepted the document in its entirety. But Hun Sen and his colleagues had reservations.

Much time and effort was spent in the first six months of this year in trying to bridge the gap between the Phnom Penh regime and the resistance coalition, so that the peace process could move forward again. It was not an easy task. The resistance coalition refused to contemplate amendments to the draft settlement document, but Hun Sen could not accept the document as it stood.

A number of countries, notably the co-chairmen, Australia and Japan, suggested various ways of attempting to meet Hun Sen's concerns without alienating the resistance. But none of their proposals was wholly acceptable to the Cambodians, who appeared unwilling at that stage to compromise for the sake of peace.

In late April, however, the Paris conference co-chairmen rightly concluded that it was important to restore momentum to the process if it was not to stall altogether. They therefore proposed that, although the SNC was still without a chairman, they and the SNC should meet in early June with the aim of clarifying and, if possible, resolving the issues dividing the Cambodians. More significantly, they also called on the armed forces of all the Cambodian parties to observe a temporary ceasefire from 1 May, at least until after the meeting, to enable it to take place in a constructive atmosphere.

Against the expectations of most observers, all four Cambodian parties committed themselves to observing the ceasefire—the first time that they had all agreed on such a move. That was a milestone and, as more recent events have demonstrated, a turning point in the peace process. We warmly welcomed the way in which the Cambodians were finally heeding repeated international calls for self-restraint. For the most part, the ceasefire held, to the extent that the co-chairmen and the United Nations Secretariat felt able to dispatch a small "good offices" mission to observe it. Its report was encouraging.

The success of the temporary ceasefire made the outcome of the co-chairmen's meeting with the SNC, in Jakarta on 2 and 4 June, all the more disappointing. There was continued intransigence both on the part of Hun Sen and the Khmer Rouge. Hun Sen presented extensive amendments to the draft settlement document, but the Khmer Rouge refused to accept a deal between Prince Sihanouk and Hun Sen which would have resolved the problem of SNC's chairmanship. The Khmer Rouge also threatened to resume fighting in Cambodia from 6 June.

Behind the scenes, however, it was clear that Prince Sihanouk and Hun Sen were making progress towards some kind of personal rapprochement. There were also signs of a shift in China's position, perhaps indicating growing unwillingness to support the Khmer Rouge at any cost. At any rate, Prince Sihanouk seized the opportunity

[Mr. Lennox-Boyd]

to assert his authority over all the Cambodian parties and convened a meeting of the SNC in Thailand from 24 to 26 June. That meeting achieved welcome, but largely unexpected, success.

It was agreed that Prince Sihanouk should be de facto chairman of the SNC—a major breakthrough—and that he should lead an SNC delegation to this year's United Nations General Assembly. Most important of all, the meeting agreed that the forces of all four Cambodian factions would continue to observe an unlimited ceasefire; and would, moreover, not receive further outside supplies of weapons. We warmly welcomed the outcome of that meeting, and congratulated Prince Sihanouk and all the Cambodian parties on their constructive and positive approach.

Mrs. Clwyd: Will the Minister confirm or deny that military training is still being provided by the British Government to the non-communist resistance?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I stand by the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton), which was absolutely clear. I must get on—I will not give way again.

Mr. Bernie Grant: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. As this is my debate, having been granted to me by Mr. Speaker, I believe that I have a right to ask the Minister to answer the debate. He is stating some obscure Government policy, but he is not answering the questions that were raised.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): The hon. Gentleman may feel frustrated, but the points that he makes are not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: If the hon. Gentleman takes that view, he does not show his desire to see progress made in Cambodia. I should like an opportunity to continue describing what is happening.

We regarded the unlimited continuation of the ceasefire and agreement on the functioning of the SNC as important steps in the peace process, and we urged all the Cambodian parties to work for the comprehensive political settlement, which, we believed, remained the key to a lasting solution to the Cambodian conflict.

Despite that notable achievement by the Cambodians themselves—the first time that they had met on their own initiative—we and others could not fail to notice that they had not addressed the contentious issues that have for so long divided them. If there is to be a durable peace settlement, those problems cannot be ignored. Given the history of false starts that plagued the Cambodian peace process for so many years, we must avoid the temptation to be over-optimistic.

The Cambodians' willingness and ability to co-operate and achieve compromise may yet fail. None the less, the developments in Thailand did give cause for hope that we may finally be on the verge of a breakthrough that could, in the foreseeable future, bring an end to the misery and suffering of the Cambodian people.

The latest events reinforce that hope, although we continue to be cautious. Last week, an informal meeting of SNC members took place in Peking, again under Prince Sihanouk's chairmanship. It continued to take decisions in the spirit of the earlier, formal SNC meeting in Thailand. The issue of the SNC's chairmanship was finally resolved when Prince Sihanouk was unanimously elected its president. The SNC is therefore now a properly functioning body.

The meeting also agreed that Hun Sen, Hor Nam Hong, Son Sann, and Khieu Samphan would accompany Prince Sihanouk to this year's United Nations General Assembly, and that the SNC would represent Cambodia at meetings of the Mekong committee, an important body in the development of Indochina. It decided too that the next formal meeting of the SNC would take place in Bangkok in late August. In pursuit of its previous commitment to observe an unlimited ceasefire, the meeting agreed that Prince Sihanouk should ask the United Nations to send an appropriate number of UN personnel to control the ceasefire and the cessation of foreign military aid, preceded by a survey mission to establish how that control would take place.

Mention of Mr. David Colvin has been made by the hon. Member for Sunderland, South. Mr. Colvin was in Peking from 16 to 20 July. He is still on a foreign trip, and that is why he is not here. He attended, first, in the margins of the SNC's informal meeting on 16 July and then later as one of the United Kingdom's delegates at the meeting of the permanent five and co-chairmen. His record of involvement in the search for a comprehensive political settlement is exemplary, and I wish to defend him tonight.

The permanent five and the co-chairmen had already decided to take advantage of the Cambodians' meeting in Peking to hold one of their own there immediately afterwards, and they did. The five and the co-chairmen welcomed the SNC proposal that a United Nations survey mission go to Cambodia to begin the process of preparing for the military aspects of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and to consider how the United Nations Secretary-General could use his good offices to help maintain the present ceasefire.

They welcomed the Cambodians' self-imposed ceasefire and ban on receiving arms supplies and undertook to respect this decision themselves. They also agreed to meet again in Bangkok on 29 and 30 August following the SNC's meeting there, and to hold discussions with the SNC. Finally, the five and the co-chairmen "viewed positively" the sending of diplomatic representatives to the SNC after it establishes itself in Phnom Penh "in the expectation of" free and fair elections under United Nations auspices, as part of a comprehensive settlement.

I am delighted to be able to report these positive developments. Not only is there renewed and sustainable momentum in the peace process. All the Cambodian factions have at last recognised the need for co-operation, consensus and compromise if there is to be peace in Cambodia. They are demonstrating this in their willingness to work together. Their commitment to ensure that the fighting stops and cannot begin again will create the right atmosphere for negotiation, and relieve the suffering of the Cambodian people.

Much work remains to be done. The Cambodians have still to tackle the divisive issues, and a major task of the five and co-chairmen in coming weeks will be to encourage constructive discussion of these difficult areas. But the more the Cambodians can agree among themselves, the easier the task for the United Nations will be. The Cambodians have been left in no doubt that, if they want the support and assistance of the international community, they must work together with the permanent five, the

co-chairmen and, in due course, the Paris conference on Cambodia to produce an agreement which is acceptable to all, Cambodians and the United Nations alike. In practice, that means a comprehensive agreement, including all the elements which the five and the co-chairmen have already judged indispensable.

We shall continue to play our full part, both as a permanent member of the Security Council and with our other friends and partners, in these renewed efforts to end 12 years of conflict. A settlement would not just mean a permanent end to fighting in Cambodia and the prospect of legitimate and representative government in Phnom Penh. It would open the way to the large-scale multilateral reconstruction and development aid that Cambodia so desperately needs.

We hope that Cambodia can very quickly reap the benefits of a functioning SNC. The United Nations secretariat has already indicated that it may be willing to do business with the SNC as a government structure. The sooner the SNC takes advantage of this the better, for this in turn could enable the United Nations development programme to implement a country programme using the funds set aside for Cambodia during the past 10 years.

As my right hon. and hon. Friends have made clear to the House in the past, we shall be ready to play our part with other donors in contributing to Cambodia's aid needs in the context of a comprehensive political settlement. Meanwhile, we shall continue to support the humanitarian work of British organisations and the international agencies in Cambodia.

Our commitment to Cambodia remains undiminished. We shall do our utmost to ensure that the current momentum towards a peace settlement is sustained and strengthened. We shall continue to contribute to meeting the urgent humanitarian needs of the Cambodian people. We are committed to playing our part in implementing an internationally agreed comprehensive settlement, and we shall provide every support we can to all the Cambodian leaders who now accept that, despite the work of others, peace can be achieved only if they themselves co-operate.

Abortifacient Drug (Licence)

12.3 am

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): I am grateful to Mr. Speaker for this opportunity to talk about the drug RU486. The purpose of the debate is to call the attention of the House and the country to this abortifacient drug, which is manufactured by Roussel Uclaf, a subsidiary of the international company, Hoechst, which is based in Germany. As an active campaigner on pro-life issues, I took an interest in the drug mainly because it was one of the first drugs developed purely and simply to kill—and against that background we should consider it very seriously. I am sure that hon. Members will listen carefully to the objections to the drug.

The purpose of the debate is to call for the withdrawal of the drug, which was licensed on 1 July by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health. It is planned to introduce it into the national health service in the near future. I do not want to concentrate on the pro-life arguments this evening—they are perfectly clear. I want to discuss the other factors that are being ignored by many of the people who are considering this matter.

The first is the insufficiency of the research into RU486, which is a danger to the health of the women who take it. The long-term costs of the NHS could be vast because the chances are that the drug will produce deformed and damaged children. Britain is being used as a guinea pig by the manufacturer to set an example to the rest of the world, and especially the third world, where it could be used with disastrous consequences. Only two countries currently license RU486. One is France, where the drug is manufactured and the French Government have 40 per cent. of the shares in the manufacturer.

On the question of insufficient research, Dr Turchen —a member of the United States Public Health Association and a well-known pro-abortionist—has claimed that all but one of the studies on the drug have been financed by the manufacturer. In answer to a written question two weeks ago, the Minister of State, Department of Health, said that no independent studies had been carried out in the United Kingdom by the Medicines Control Agency. By implication, that must mean that all the research programmes on the drug that were considered by the agency were carried out and paid for by the manufacturer.

As a consequence of the lack of independent research, there is no evidence to show what the long-term effects will be for women who use RU486. It has been described as a powerful steroid. It has neoplastic qualities, so in simple terms it is cancer-causing. In a recent study on 11 normal, healthy male volunteers who took the drug twice a day for seven to 14 days, one developed adrenal insufficiency, which is potentially fatal, and a further eight developed widespread, unpleasant skin rashes. In another study, four women developed hirsutism, a male pattern of baldness or menstrual irregularity. That was after only a short period taking the drug.

Tests on animals in the United Kingdom have shown that the drug is cancer-causing. The chemical cocktail of the drug works away in the body of the woman. The long-term effects are not known, as is admitted by the drug's supporters. This House, the Medicines Control

[Mr. Kenneth Hind]

Agency and the other agencies throughout the world with responsibility for licensing RU486 all agree that we cannot predict the long-term effects of the drug.

According to an answer to a written question by my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos), drug licences are granted in this country within, on average, 19 months, and only when the matter is not referred for examination to the drug committee of the Department of Health. RU486 was fast-tracked—it was licensed within 10 months. The only reason given is that it will save money for the national health service.

The Chinese carried out a study into RU486 involving 3,000 patients. The conclusion was that the drug was three times more expensive than a clinical abortion. The Chinese totally reject the argument that it will be cheaper. No doubt my hon. Friend the Minister will tell us that a clinical abortion will cost the NHS £270, whereas the use of RU486 will cost £182. I do not believe that four appointments at a hospital, four lots of treatment—involving taking RU486 and then taking prostaglandin, the second process in 15 per cent. of cases—will cost the NHS only £182.

Many more tests have been carried out in the United States than in the United Kingdom. The United States has banned the import of RU486. The Food and Drug Administration warned that the drug

"could pose a risk to the safety of the user."

The FDA refused to license Opren. We did so, and are experiencing the consequences.

Recently, representatives of the Pro-Life medical committee, which advised a group of hon. Members, went to Germany and talked to Hoechst, the holding company for Roussel Uclaf, and asked whether it would seek to license RU486 in Germany. The company did not suggest that it would attempt to do so.

I recently had a debate at the Oxford Union with Professor Baird from Edinburgh university, who has carried out research into RU486. He claimed all sorts of wonderful side effects. I refer him and the House to Dr. John Seward of the American Medical Association Trust, who said that published conjecture that RU486 might be an effective treatment for a variety of illnesses was not based on any substantial test of the drug.

RU486 is certainly not a contraceptive. It does not do anything to treat cancer. It cuts progesterone and probably stimulates the growth of breast cancer. It is of use only for strangling and killing a child in the womb. It is useful only as an abortifacient. No doubt my hon. Friend the Minister will say that it has only been licensed as such in the United Kingdom.

My major concern is the danger to women's health. In March this year, a woman died in Lens, in France, from taking RU486 followed by an injection of prostaglandin. The drug licensed in France is called Nallodor. There is evidence that two women in France had serious heart attacks as a consequence of taking it. It is clear that RU486 stimulates some types of breast cancer, although it is fair to say that it puts others into remission. We must seriously consider that factor.

It would be wrong of me not to examine the French experience of taking RU486. If I correctly read the notes attached to the licence, it is proposed to replicate in the United Kingdom the clinical usage in France. In France, there are four visits to the hospital or the clinic where the drug is taken. On the first occasion, the blood count is taken. If the patient is anaemic or a heavy smoker, she is rejected. The child is examined by ultrasound. In France, the woman who is to take the drug signs an eight-page document, a waiver which absolves the manufacturer, Roussel Uclaf, from liability if the woman refuses to continue with the full treatment and goes on to have a deformed child.

The woman returns one week later and takes RU486. She returns a third time, 48 hours later. If the child has been aborted she has to bring the remains with her. If she does not return, she is fetched. If I read my hon. Friend's notes on the licence correctly, in Britain the patient will not be brought back—she will be lost in the community, irrespective of any medical complications that may arise.

In 75 to 85 per cent. of cases, RU486 works, but that leaves between 15 and 25 per cent. Those patients need to take prostaglandin. In the United Kingdom, that will be taken by way of vaginal suppository. In France, if the child is not aborted by late afternoon, the women is taken into theatre and a surgical abortion is carried out.

There is some dispute about how effective the drug is. Dr. Turchen of the United States says that the drug is only 90 per cent. effective, and that in 10 per cent. of cases surgical abortions will be required. Roussel objects to that and says that it is 95 per cent. effective. But its data depend on the duration of the pregnancy. The longer the pregnancy, the less effective is RU486 and the greater the number of failures.

We must also consider bleeding. Professor Baird at Edinburgh came to the conclusion that women could bleed for up to 44 days. The average is 13 days. In a study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* of a large number of women who took RU486, one in 1,000 needed a blood transfusion and, more importantly, one in 100 needed a surgical dilation and curettage to stop the bleeding. One can imagine what that involves. It has been described by Mr. Sakiz, chief executive of Roussel, as

"an appalling psychological ordeal".

Roussel is using Britain as a springboard to the third world. If a woman is anaemic, or suffering from some other disease, and she bleeds for up to 13 days, where will she find a clinic or hospital in the outback of Zimbabwe or the uphills of Ethiopia to provide the necessary treatment? She will bleed to death. There will be many fatalities in certain parts of the world if the drug is licensed there. Those people look to us, and we shall carry the responsibility. They do not have the sophisticated licensing facilities that we have. They will follow our lead, and we shall be responsible if people die as a result.

Unlike a surgical abortion, the user of RU486 removes the remains of the child herself after the abortion. It is not like a clinical abortion where the foetus is removed under a general anaesthetic. The woman has to take part in the abortion. We cannot underestimate the long-term psychiatric effects, particularly when we consider the guilt that women may suffer, as has been shown in psychiatric research which proves that post-abortion syndrome is very much a reality. Professor Alan Templeton of the university of Aberdeen has found that women are distressed at the sight of their aborted babies. We should not underestimate the long-term psychiatric troubles that will come to many of these women as a result of post-abortion syndrome.

Most important of all are the deformities that may result if women start the process of taking RU486 and then change their minds and do not take prostaglandin, Their

children will be born with congenital abnormalities. Tests on rabbits have shown that the drug can give rise to a condition known as sirenomelia, in which the legs are fused together. There may also be effects on the skull and head. If such children are born here, they will not be the subject of signed waivers as they would be in France. Their relatives will sue the NHS, and out of its budget will have to flow the hundreds of thousands of pounds necessary to provide those children with the lifelong treatment that they will require.

We have seen the same happen after mothers have taken other types of drug. This means that money will not be spent on treating other people but will go to meet the needs of children whose deformities could have been avoided. The drug should be withdrawn now. Already an example of this syndrome has been noted in France. The child in question was so badly deformed that it was aborted after 19 weeks. Before this goes any further, it should be stopped, thereby preventing the vast costs to the people of this country that will ensue if it is not.

When a drug is approved in the United States, those involved in the Food and Drugs Administration produce a summary of their findings on the drug, detailing why it has been approved, for the public to see. All that happened here was an answer to a written parliamentary question and nothing more. We have been given no details of clinical research into the drug or into past-abortion syndrome occasioned by it. The United States has a much tougher regime and is more careful about licensing drugs. We need the same in this country in order to know where we stand.

We know too little about this drug, and it is too dangerous. The risks involved are too great. Now is the time to draw back and recognise that we should examine the matter further before British women are used as guinea pigs in trials of the drug.

12.23 am

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) on his tenacity during the past few weeks in persistently bringing this matter before the House, and now on successfully enabling what I am sure will turn out to be a major debate to take place.

I am sure that every hon. Member knows my views on abortion. Everybody also knows that, for a quarter of a century, I have fought unceasingly for the protection of the unborn child, the most defenceless of all members of the human family. However, during that time, nobody has ever heard me single out any abortion technique and demand its withdrawal. The reason for that is simple. I am concerned about the destruction of human life, not the means of bringing about that destruction.

However repugnant I feel abortion to be, the House made it legal, and some technique has to be used. Some techniques are quite revolting, but at least we know something about the long-term effects on the mother. RU486 is totally different. It is the first drug to be produced with the single aim of killing, and we have no idea whatever of its long-term effects on children in cases where the abortion fails or upon the women to whom the drug has been given.

One of the most worrying aspects of the matter is that the drug was supposedly examined and evaluated by the Medicines Control Agency, a body governed by the Medicines Act passed as a result of the thalidomide tragedy, when Parliament and public opinion were unanimous that we should never allow such a disaster to happen again. But here we have a drug that was approved behind closed doors and of which the manufacturers have had to admit that they have no idea of the possible long-term effects.

How many hon. Members have noticed a singular lack of enthusiasm demonstrated by the National Abortion Campaign, which since its inception has fought for abortion on demand up to birth? its supporters are not opposed to the principle of abortion, but they are quite categorical that the purpose of treatment is to benefit the woman. On that at any rate we can respect the views of people who say that in certain circumstances, abortion is justifiable.

Nobody knows what the long-term effects of RU486 might be on women. One would think that the fact that the manufacturers admit the possibility of sequelae which could be absolutely disastrous to those who were afflicted, would have encouraged the Medicines Control Agency and the Department of Health to proceed with caution. I very much regret that the Secretary of State for Health is not here to reply to the debate. If he were, he would be left in no doubt about how some of us feel about the way in which this matter has been managed.

Such has been the unseemly haste in giving approval that one might almost think that our Government, like the French Government, had 40 per cent. of the shares in the manufacturing company Roussel Uclaf or in its parent company, Hoechset. I hope that we shall be told that there is no such connection here as there was in France.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Stephen Dorrell) *indicated dissent.*

Sir Bernard Braine: At least we have gained one admission right at the beginning of the debate.

Since Roussel Uclaf applied for a licence to market the drug in September, stories have been leaked to the press that the Department of Health was "fast tracking"—that is the term that was used—its progress to ensure that it would reach the marketplace with such speed that one would hardly notice its arrival.

On Thursday, my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) tabled a question asking the Minister how many drugs had received product licences in the United Kingdom in the last year, and how long each took to receive its licence. The answer is interesting: it showed that new drugs took 19 months, and that established drugs also took 19 months, unless referred to a committee established under the Medicines Act, in which case the period was 23 months. That is surprising, because the process took only 10 months in the case of RU486.

By the most remarkable of coincidences, the company just happened to have organised, for the second half of July and the beginning of August, a series of seminars to take place all over the country, to promote the use of the drug. As a former Minister in the Department of Health, I know that seminars take a great deal of organisation, requiring considerable advance planning. However, the company was able to send out letters to every gynaecologist in Britain, on the very day that the licence was issued, inviting them to seminars, the first of which was to take place within days of the letter being posted.

[Sir Bernard Braine]

Neither the Secretary of State nor the Minister saw fit to inform the House. They both know that there is a joint committee of both Houses of Parliament that holds a watching brief in pro-life matters. They know, especially from the debates last year, that there is considerable interest in the subject on both sides of the House. But all this was done in secret. No sooner was the licence granted than the company moved. The seminars had been organised, and everything was ready to go ahead.

Such is the scenario that a fair-minded person would wonder whether the company could assume in advance that a licence would be issued. We insist on having a clear answer on whether the company was told this in advance. If we do not have the answer tonight, we must have it from the Secretary of State. If the answer is no, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will have to draw up new rules to ensure that there is no repetition of such indecent haste in introducing a drug that it known to be dangerous, and is banned in other countries such as the United States and Germany. We are being used as a guinea pig for the vaster markets in countries which have a policy of restricting population growth.

What is more, as the Secretary of State knows, the drug has long aroused deep suspicion in the minds of parliamentarians and leading medical authorities. We were finally informed that the licence had been issued only because of the persistent questioning of my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West. By the time that the question was answered, the licence had been issued. Such indecent haste demands an explanation, especially when one looks at the data sheet to examine the admissions that both the company and the licensing authority deigned to make.

As I have said, the Medicines Act was passed to ensure that never again would we experience another tragedy such as that caused by thalidomide, yet this drug was licensed behind closed doors, in record time, when, as we learn from the company's data sheet, it could result in the child being handicapped in the case of a failed abortion.

The data sheet says that, in such cases, the woman should be informed of the dangers, and it stresses that it is essential that the termination is carried out by another method. The manufacturers do not explain just how dreadful these abnormalities might be. My hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West has said that rabbits treated with RU486 developed sirenomelia—in plain English. mermaid syndrome—where the child's legs are fused together, quite apart from other gross deformities of the organs.

Let us be clear about this grave matter. Let us weigh carefully what the Department of Health has done. It may be said that the Department proceeded to license the drug in a fit of absent-mindedness, but I do not believe that for a moment.

We know that, in France, at least one baby exposed to RU486 was aborted at 19 weeks because its legs were fused. Its mother had changed her mind about having an abortion, but then the child developed such horrendous abnormalities that she clearly felt compelled to end the pregnancy. I use the phrase "at least one baby" advisedly. The case was cloaked in such secrecy that, when the story leaked out from the hospital, it took months for any real details to filter through. We have no idea whether information about similar cases has been successfully suppressed or not.

We need to know exactly what independent investigations, if any, were carried out by the Department of Health before it granted the licence. Both the manufacturers and the licensing authority have left unsaid things that most people would consider they ought to have said in explaining the possible handicaps that children who survived exposure to the drug might develop. They have also failed to make any reference to other abnormalities that could be just as dangerous, or even more so, since they could be passed down from generation to generation.

I should explain that I have been advised on such matters for some years by a committee whose membership includes some of the most distinguished medical figures not only in this country but in the world. RU486 is not dissimilar to another drug—DES, or diethylstilboelstrol —which was originally produced with the laudable aim of preventing miscarriage. In this country, it was given to some 10,000 pregnant women between 1940 and 1970.

Apart from the fact that it was not effective in preventing spontaneous abortion, the drug was finally withdrawn from the market when it was discovered that teenage girls who had been exposed to it in utero had developed cancer of the vagina. It was also discovered that 25 per cent. of males and 40 per cent. of females who had been exposed to it had developed abnormalities of the reproductive tract, none of which had been apparent at birth.

As if that were not tragic enough, it has been discovered in the past few years that the third generation may also have been affected. People who had been exposed to the drug in utero, but were apparently normal, have now produced children with urinogenital tract deformities, or children who have developed cancer in their teens or twenties. As a distinguished embryologist told me recently, the chemical time bomb ticks on; we can have no idea whether a fourth generation will be affected, or how.

Having considered the children who may be affected by RU486, let me now turn to women who, in their dilemma, may now be subjected to it. Admittedly, the manufacturers warn that women taking the drug could have heart attacks. At least one unfortunate patient has died in France from a heart attack, and at least two more have suffered severe cardiac trauma. The manufacturers have persistently stated that the drug should never be used in cases of ectopic pregnancy; that is also one of the contra-indications of the licence.

When a woman is being considered for an abortion by RU486, it should be mandatory for her to be given a scan to confirm an intra-uterine pregnancy; otherwise, her life will be in danger. As a number of our medical advisers —including gynaecologists—have pointed out, a woman suffering from pain and bleeding after taking the drug might well believe that the symptoms were related to her abortion, rather than being the early signs of a rupturing ectopic pregnancy, which could be fatal.

In this connection, it is of supreme importance to note that ectopic pregnancies have increased. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will confirm that they have increased and are a significant cause of maternal deaths, yet nowhere in the Department of Health circulars on the subject of RU486 is scanning considered to be mandatory.

We consider that to be absolutely scandalous. I hope therefore that we shall hear that there are plans to rectify that omission quickly. I require a precise answer to that.

I have been an opponent of abortion for a quarter of a century, but this is the first time that I have ever called for the withdrawal of a drug or for the banning of a technique to terminate a pregnancy. I do so now for one reason only. Far from being a simple, easy, new method of abortion, this drug, introduced by ministerial decree, is potentially very hazardous, and there has been almost no independent research on it.

I call upon the Secretary of State for Health to withdraw the licence and to order a proper scientific and wholly independent investigation that is not financed by the manufacturers. I should have preferred to say that to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health. I expected him to be here, since this is the most important subject that we have debated today. It relates not only to the health of women but to our children's futures. The Department is represented by the Under-Secretary of State. I hope that he has been fully briefed on the subject, for he will have to answer a great many questions. I hope too that he will pass on the message that I should have preferred to see my right hon. Friend on the Treasury Bench.

It will take great courage by my right hon. Friend to withdraw the licence, but for him to admit the possible dangers and to do what, in the circumstances, is right will enhance, not weaken, his reputation.

12.42 am

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): I intervene early in the debate because a number of Conservative Members want to speak. If I do not do so now, I may be squeezed out.

The hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) and my old adversary, if I may so describe him, the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), the Father of the House, have spoken against RU486. The right hon. Member for Castle Point made his usual somewhat exaggerated condemnation of this very important development. Both of them—and doubtless those hon. Members who will speak later in the debate—are obsessed anti-abortionists. They have made a number of very misleading statements and—I was going to say half-truths, but I do not want to be ruled out of order.

Mr. Hind *indicated dissent.*

Ms. Richardson: The hon. Member for Lancashire, West shakes his head. I want to try to put the record straight.

I am glad that the Government have decided, after the most rigorous checks, to grant a product licence. I am sure that the Under-Secretary of State will explain those checks. It is unusual for the Under-Secretary and me to be on the same side, but in this case I fully support the Government's licensing of this product.

We believe that RU486 is a step forward. It is the culmination of a research programme that was initiated in 1975 by Roussel. In 1982, the first clinical trials were carried out in Switzerland, since when it has been used by more than 100,000 women in more than 20 countries. In France, about which so much has been said, it was introduced in January 1989 as an integrated part of the women's health care programme. More than 90,000 RU486-induced trimester abortions have taken place.

A large-scale British multicentre trial of RU486 began in 1987 with the recruitment of volunteers from 13 NHS hospital gynaecological units in Scotland and England. The findings, which were published in 1990, confirmed the effectiveness of the sequential use of oral mifespristone and vaginal prostaglandins in inducing pregnancy up to the 63rd day of the pregnancy. That is the limit to which it can be used.

British-based Roussel Laboratories applied to the Department of Health for a product licence in September 1990. It was granted on 1 July 1991, nine months later —that magical figure of nine months.

Roussel Laboratories is running a series of seminars —the right hon. Member for Castle Point referred to the seminars; I presume that he means the same thing—in Leeds, Bristol, Nottingham, Glasgow and London to ensure that gynaecologists are familiar with the drug before it becomes available. It is doing so under conditions of the tightest possible control within the NHS and in other places approved by the amended Abortion Act 1967.

RU486 is not a morning-after pill, as so many people have said in the run-up to the debate; it is an abortifacient. It will be available under the terms of the 1967 Act. Its use will be confined to approved places and, as with other methods of abortion, will require the agreement of two doctors who will have to give their signature in good faith. It is not abortion on request. A leader in the *Daily Telegraph* today—other hon. Members doubtless will refer to it—said that it is, but it should get its facts right.

Despite what the hon. Member for Lancashire, West said, no deaths have been recorded that were attributable to RU486, and more than 100,000 women have used it since 1982. One woman died in France earlier this year during the course of a medically induced abortion shortly after receiving an injection of sulprostone, which is an injectable form of prostaglandins. She was an exceptional case. She had had 12 previous pregnancies and was a heavy smoker. In this country, the injectable form is not used. The prostaglandins analogue is given in pessary form.

RU486 is now in its 10th year of clinical use.

Mrs. Ann Winterton (Congleton) *rose——*

Ms. Richardson: I do not propose to give way, as there is so little time for this debate.

There is no evidence of any long-term health risk. We have heard many scare stories this evening, but we should stick to the facts. The drug is taken as a single dose, perhaps once in a woman's lifetime. It goes through the metabolism quickly and is eliminated quickly from the body. Nothing could be simpler and safer than that.

Women in this country can obtain legal abortion despite the vigorous attempts by some hon. Members to close that option. We have never debated what methods of abortion should be legal—should women be entitled only to vacuum aspiration abortions, or would D and Cs be the most appropriate? It is right that we have not debated that, because we need to leave the decision on the safest and most appropriate method to doctors and women to decide between them case by case.

I welcome the product licence for RU486 in Britain, because it extends the choice to women and to doctors. It has proved safe in clinical trials, despite what the hon. Member for Lancashire, West has said, and I believe that many women will prefer it. Of course it is not without risk —no drug is. Conventional methods of abortion are not

[Ms. Richardson]

without risk either, but they are all safer than a pregnancy which carries quite a lot of risk, as I am sure hon. Members will recognise.

In 1988, Roussel announced in France that the distribution of RU486 would be suspended. We now know that that was as a result of pressure and threats from the anti-choice movement against both Roussel and its parent company Hoechst, which is based in Germany and in the United States. It is to the very great credit of the French Government that they responded with the now famous phrase:

"RU486 is the moral property of women."

More than 100,000 French women are very grateful.

I am delighted that the forces of ignorance and fear have not been successful in Britain either and that Roussel has been granted its licence. RU486 is not a wonder drug. There will always be some women who prefer an abortion under an anaesthetic. Although I would like abortions to be carried out as early as possible, I recognise that some second trimester abortions are necessary. RU486 is not available for use in later abortions; it is simply for the first three months.

RU486 has the potential to improve national health service abortion facilities, which are currently inadequate and have too great a regional variation. The drug has the potential to cut delay because the woman does not need to be scheduled for surgery and because the prostaglandins which accompany RU486 can be administered on the ward.

The drug will save theatre time and theatre staff. It will save the surgeon's time. It will save anaesthetists, theatre nurses and anaesthetic nurses. It will save porters, equipment and anaesthetic agents. I hope that that considerable saving of resources and the freeing of resources will be redirected into providing a comprehensive national health service for abortion, with less delay for women. I have heard some Conservative Members talk at length in previous debates about the difficulties. I accept that delays cause great problems for women.

Here we have something that is safe, or it would not have been licensed. It has been properly tested, or it would not have been licensed. Yet those hon. Members resist the drug because of their obsession with their anti-abortion feelings. Far too many women are forced out of the NHS and have to go privately because the NHS is not good enough. I want the NHS to become good enough. I believe that RU486 will liberate a number of women.

I support self-referral for abortion in the first three months of pregnancy. I realise that that view is not shared by everyone. That practice would ease NHS delays and, for the first time, would give women rights to decide whether to continue with a pregnancy. That would be in line with public opinion, as a recent Harris poll showed that 81 per cent. of adults support that proposal. In that context, RU486 would mean that women who wanted abortions could get them very quickly.

Do not let us be deflected from making progress along this difficult and sometimes muddled path by the scare stories and the myths that are constantly put about by those who are anti-abortion anyway. Whatever the developments in the next decade, those anti-abortionists will be there to argue that such developments are unsafe and unwelcome. I believe that they will be wrong, as they have been in the past.

On this occasion, the anti-abortionists are using the potential benefits of RU486 to so many women to throw a cloak over their real intention of outlawing abortion altogether. The right hon. Member for Castle Point admitted that he was anti-abortion. I am sure that hon. Members will not be deluded by the comments of the anti-abortionists. Hon. Members have not been so deluded in the past, when they voted decisively for the improvements to the Abortion Act 1967.

It is not often that I agree with the Government, but I welcome their decision to grant the product licence. I am sure that women will also welcome that decision and the additional choice that RU486 will bring.

12.57 am

Mrs. Ann Winterton (Congleton): I shall try to be brief, because I know that many hon. Members who are against the product licence want to talk about this important issue.

It is always a pleasure to follow my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), and I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) for introducing this important debate. It is difficult to follow the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) as we always seem to be totally opposed. The hon. Lady has said that, in her opinion, the drug is perfectly safe for the women of this country to use. In 10 years' time I hope that the hon. Lady will not have to eat those words, which are now on record. The hon. Lady believes that the drug is safe—I do not, and I believe that the medical evidence will prove me right.

I am amazed that the drug has been licensed in such record time, almost with unseemly haste. All the excellent pharmaceutical companies associated with my constituency—ICI, Wellcome, Fisons and Ciba-Geigy—would love to know the magic formula to put the product licences that they want on the fast track for acceptance. What do they have to do to make that happen? The House should consider the speed with which the licence has been granted.

Tonight we have the opportunity to register our concerns. The hon. Member for Barking made great play of the fact that Conservative Members are opposed to abortion. I am opposed to social abortion. It is regrettable that in this day and age, with better education, better living standards, and free contraception through the national health service, the lives of unborn children are taken away merely because they happen to be a social inconvenience. Rather than discussing women's rights, I wish that hon. Members would say more about their responsibilities and, for that matter, about men's responsibilities for the children that they father.

Initially, family planning was introduced to plan families, not to destroy life. So-called family planning has been abused and there is abortion on demand in this country. We have the most liberal abortion laws in Europe and I am thoroughly ashamed of them.

The drug has been marketed very cleverly as a wonder drug—a morning-after pill—which is easy to take and will solve the dilemma of young women who find themselves pregnant and want to do something about the matter. The drug has been promoted as a cheap alternative to surgical abortion. I was dismayed to hear the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) advocate that it was so good and cheap and would save surgeons' time. She was really advocating the cheapest possible method of ensuring that

women have abortions. That is an insult to women and I am appalled to have heard those words spoken in this House.

RU486 will not be cheap. It has been promoted on the ground, for example, that it will save the national health service between £15 million and £23 million. Why has the Birth Control Trust, which actively promotes the drug, subsequently revised the figure down from £15 million to zero? I suggest that it is because there must be at least three appointments with the doctor who will prescribe the drug. At the beginning there will be no scan, which would immediately put up the cost. I believe that a scan is essential. Neither is there a costing of the pathological assessment for anaemia and other illnesses. Furthermore, the costs of the drug itself, the prostagladins and the surgical abortion when the drug fails in its purpose have not been taken into account. There are hidden long-term costs of treatment for, for example, post-abortion syndrome, the possible cancers that the women may develop in the long term and the cost of a child who is damaged if a woman has a change of heart halfway through the treatment.

The licensing of the drug shows a cavalier attituded towards women's health, and ignores the possible long-term damage, both psychological and physical which may be inflicted. There is no doubt that insufficient independent research has been done on the long-term effects. Most countries have rejected the drug, and it is licensed for use only in France and Britain. France has a vested interest because the drug was developed there, and at that time the French Government had a 40 per cent. holding in the company, but Roussel needs the United Kingdom licence to promote and market the drug elsewhere and to give it credibility. Women in this country are therefore to be used as guinea pigs to help market the drug. People reject research on animals—yet this drug involves research on women, and the Government are backing it and introducing it as fast as they can.

We must get the message across to women that, due to insufficient research, no one knows whether the use of the drug will cause cancers in the future. No one can predict the side effects that patients may experience. Opren was introduced and licensed and, in the majority of cases, it did what it was claimed that it would do—but in a minority of cases it reacted adversely, ruining the lives of several of my constituents. So an example already exists.

It cannot be predicted whether the woman will abort quickly or easily, or whether she will suffer much pain alone and unsupervised when the abortion takes place. She may—more often than not, she does—suffer considerable bleeding. On top of that, the drug may not work—if it is not administered early on, the maker's claim for a failure rate of only 5 per cent. does not apply. If the pregnancy runs to 63 days, as it will be allowed to in the United Kingdom, the failure rate rises steeply to 20 per cent., so 20 per cent. of cases could be presented for surgical abortions, thus increasing the cost.

I am possibly the only woman who has had children to speak in the debate, other than the hon. Member for Barking. At the beginning of pregnancy, most women have ambivalent feelings about the baby. A young, unmarried woman who finds herself pregnant and is horrified at the prospect may go to her local doctor or to one of the clinics advertised on the tube for what is commonly known as counselling, which is absolutely worthless because it is not independent. There will, however, be some discussion of the woman's dilemma, and she may then decide to have a medical termination.

The woman will go to a doctor to be given RU486, be told to go home, and to return in 48 hours. In that time, she may change her mind and decide not to return for the prostaglandin. What will happen then? It is perfectly true that the baby that she is carrying will most likely be severely damaged by the RU486 that she has already taken. In addition to the physical damage done to the women, she may suffer psychological damage. Post-abortion syndrome is well chronicled and recognised by the medical establishment, but there will be additional trauma for a woman who undergoes a medical termination and has to deal with the products of her conception and then return with that to her doctor.

If a woman has a surgical abortion, at least it is quick. She is admitted to hospital, is given an anaesthetic and does not see the baby, and the trauma is kept to a minimum. The same is not true of a medical termination, when she may be left alone and totally unsupervised for a considerable time. How on earth is she supposed to cope with that while working or carrying on her normal life? It seems quite intolerable.

I do not know why the information that my hon. Friend the Minister has laid down for general practitioners does not state that a scan is essential before the treatment is administered. No young woman keeps the date of her last period regularly, which is the only way to work out by how many weeks she is pregnant. Unless a scan is undertaken to ensure that the baby is not more than nine weeks and that there is no ectopic pregnancy—which can kill the woman—it is disgraceful to allow the drug to be administered.

The hon. Minister for Barking spoke of the rigorous checks made by the committee which licensed the drug and the way in which it was introduced in France, where restrictions were put on its use. Is she happy that in France people who smoke heavily, whatever that may mean, or have a heart condition will not be allowed to have that drug, but that in this country no such restrictions are placed on its use? It seems appalling that women in this country should be allowed to take the drug without meeting the conditions that apply elsewhere.

I genuinely believe that the drug is being introduced at far too great a pace. We need much more independent research. Despite the fact that, as was said by the hon. Member for Barking, I do not believe in social abortion, I am concerned about the long-term health of women, I believe that we shall rue the day that RU486 was introduced into this country.

1.8 am

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) on being called at a comparatively reasonable hour, but I find it difficult to agree with him, with my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), or with my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton), all of whom expressed concern about women's health and said that RU486 should be withdrawn because it is not safe. I suspect, however, that they feel that drug will make abortion too easy, and that they want RU486 to be withdrawn because they oppose abortion.

[Mr. Peter Thurnham]

I am surprised that lay persons should so question the work of the Medicines Control Agency, which is held in the highest regard and undertook proper testing. The drug has been available for some 10 years, so I do not accept that it has been on any fast track. My right hon. and hon. Friends want its more widespread use delayed because they oppose abortion—not because they are really interested in the woman's point of view.

I found myself in agreement with my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton when she spoke of the need for parental responsibility. No one wants abortions in the first place. Surveys in this country have shown that 1 million women are at risk of unplanned pregnancy, and that in the course of a year one third of them become pregnant. More than one half of unplanned pregnancies end in abortion, and the remainder in the birth of a child that was not planned. No doubt some of those children are unwanted.

Mrs. Winterton: My hon. Friend says that such children are unwanted, but that is not so. Many childless couples in this country would love to adopt them. Surely it is much better to do the honourable thing and to give birth to one's child, even if one cannot bring it up oneself.

Mr. Thurnham: My hon. Friend knows that few children are given up for adoption. I am sure that people do not want to see children born who are not wanted in the first place, and who might then become the victims of abuse.

There needs to be more and better family planning, and improved sex education in our schools—and that should begin at an even earlier age than now. We are all aware of the phenomenon of gymslip mothers. Only the other day, *The Sun* published a picture of a 14-year-old mother of two children. It seems as though sex education ought to be introduced in our primary schools, if we are to bring home to children what are the real choices in this world.

It seems to me that RU486 is a safe drug and that its use ought to be considered on that ground and not rejected. The drug's provision by the health service ought to be considered in the light of today's statement by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on a citizens charter. On the subject of the principles of public service and choice, it states on page 5 of the charter:

> "The public sector should provide choice wherever practicable. The people affected by services should be consulted. Their views about the services they use should be sought regularly and systematically to inform decisions about what services should be provided."

It follows that women ought to be given the choice of using a drug that I am satisfied is safe. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will confirm that that is so, and that RU486 should be made available to women under the terms of the Abortion Act 1967—that is, when two doctors agree that it should be used.

1.13 am

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) on initiating this debate, but I wish that it had been held before RU486 was licensed. I am delighted to see my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) in her place, and also my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves), because I know that he, too, has strong feelings on this matter.

I was appalled by the speech of hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson). I do not know why anyone who regards life so cheaply should serve as a Member of Parliament. She spoke about life in a way that I found deeply offensive.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on initiating the citizens charter today, and I hope that as it develops we shall learn what price is placed on the unborn citizen.

Like an increasing number of my colleagues, I am appalled at the manner in which the Medicines Control Agency is allowed to reach its decisions on drugs behind closed doors. I am well aware that much of the material must remain confidential because of pirating, but the United States Food and Drug Administration is required to publish the summary basis for approval, which any member of the public, not to mention parliamentarians, can scrutinise.

I call on the Government to withdraw the licence allowing the marketing of Mifeggne until it has undergone substantial independent clinical trials, rather than allowing the women of this country to be used as guinea pigs. I and other colleagues intend to campaign for a change in the law to make it mandatory for the Medicines Control Agency to publish the summary basis of approval each time it licences a drug, and for that summary to be available for public scrutiny.

1.16 am

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): With the leave of the House, I should like to contribute a few words to the debate.

The hon. Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) was perhaps ill advised to attack my hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson), as the argument about RU486 is far more complicated than he suggests. Four years ago—I remind the House that my maiden speech was on abortion and that I have always been in the life lobby in the House—I addressed a conference of about 2,000 people in Central hall, Westminster. I believe that the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) was there. I told him then, and all the others who were present, that I believed that the drug would divide the life lobby.

The drug raises a huge principle, and it was one that the right hon. Member for Castle Point and I had to examine in the debate in which we were involved. If we are devoted to ending the practice of late abortion but recognise that there are millions of women who, however much we object, will demand abortion, we must find a way around the dilemma that they as women face. The principle of a morning-after pill, while it may be unpalatable to many in our lobby, may to some extent appease our consciences. I know that that is not the purists' position, but we must deal in the world of reality.

I understand the concern about the placing on the market of a drug which seems to me to be untested, and I understand also that much evidence has been produced in the debate to suggest that that is the position. We should be careful, however, about how we deploy our arguments. There is an argument for delay, but in the longer term this drug—or one of this nature—may well resolve the great dilemma confronting the right hon. Member for Castle Point and me, and all in this place who are part of the great life movement of which he is a member.

1.18 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): It is common ground among all those who have participated in the debate that my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) has raised a major issue by talking about the licensing of RU486. I regret that my presence in the place of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health has been interpreted by some as signifying a downgrading of the importance that the Government attach to the drug. I can assure my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) and the House in general that that would not be a correct interpretation of the view of the Government or of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. There is no argument about the importance of the issues that are raised by the licensing of the drug.

I shall begin my substantive reply by briefly sketching the background against which I approach the problem. I do not agree with the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) that we are talking in any sense about a morning-after pill. We are discussing a method of abortion. As it should be seen clearly as an abortion method, its use must be governed by the provisions of abortion legislation, and principally the Abortion Act.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made it clear that he is licensing the drug only for use in conditions that are clearly set out in law—that is to say, that the prospect of an abortion must be agreed to by two doctors. It must be on defined grounds within the terms of the Act, it must be in licensed establishments—there is no question of it being available for use in unlicensed establishments by general practitioners—and it will be available for use only where a pregnancy has run for a maximum of nine weeks.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: How does my hon. Friend intend the length of pregnancy to be confirmed, unless a scan is carried out? Will he give an assurance that a scan will be carried out on every woman before the drug is administered?

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend earlier asked me to answer that specific question, and I shall do so now. If a clinician is to use RU486, the conditions of the licence require him to be satisfied that the pregnancy has not run for more than nine weeks. In those circumstances, the clinician may be satisfied by the woman giving details of her normal menstrual cycle. However, if the woman does not know the details with sufficient accuracy, clearly the clinician would have to satisfy himself by some other means that the conditions of the licence were being fulfilled. The conditions are clear and unambiguous, and the drug is licensed for use only for abortions before the expiry of nine weeks of pregnancy.

In the Government's view, the drug is an alternative method of carrying out an abortion, and we leave the choice of the method principally in the hands of the clinician, although, as with all clinical choices, the clinician will use the discretion vested in him in consultation with the patient. I emphasise that we do not envisage the use of RU486 as a cost-saving exercise. Even if we did, it would be arguable whether it would be an effective cost-saving approach.

I wish to distance myself from one of the comments of the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson), although I was grateful for her support on some matters. There is certainly no commitment by the Government that any savings that did accrue from the use of RU486 would be made available to increase the availability of NHS abortions. That is a matter to be decided by individual district health authorities against the background of their own choices and decisions about health priorities in their districts.

In considering whether a clinician should use that method of abortion or any other, the primary concern must be the welfare of the patient. One of the considerations that was not given as much weight by some of my hon. Friends as I had anticipated is the relative risks for the woman of an abortion by taking a drug or an abortion requiring general anaesthesia. Neither routine is risk-free, but it is a legitimate exercise of clinical judgment to make the choice between those two methods of carrying out the legal act of procuring an abortion.

Dr. John G. Blackburn (Dudley, West): My hon. Friend referred to the clinical welfare of the woman. As has been said, some 588 cases were reviewed. Is my hon. Friend aware that 37 of those women required surgical evacuation as a result of taking the drug?

Mr. Dorrell: I cannot confirm that statistic, but it is true that, if a woman changes her mind halfway through the course of treatment with RU486, or if its use is found to be ineffective, the guidance from the manufacturer is that there is an appreciable risk of a foetal deformity and that an alternative method of abortion should be considered. That is clearly stated as part of the supporting literature on the licensing of the drug.

Sir Bernard Braine: My hon. Friend has just made an important statement. Is he saying that weight is given to what the manufacturers say? Has my hon. Friend grasped the main point—which has been made by all Conservative Members who have spoken, save one—that independent research is needed before we are committed to a method that is largely, if not wholly, unproven?

Mr. Dorrell: If I may, I shall come later to my right hon. Friend's point about independent research. I was trying to establish common ground between Health Ministers as the licensing authorities and those who are worried about the use of the drug. If an abortion is not completed as a result of the drug being administered, there is acknowledged to be a risk of foetal deformity, which must lead the clinician and the woman to consider what further steps should be taken to complete what I emphasise is a legal abortion routine.

I know that my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point and many of my hon. Friends fundamentally disapprove of the procurement of the abortion in the first place, but if the law allows the woman and the clinician to contemplate that action, and the initial steps taken in using the drug were ineffective but rendered the foetus liable to deformity, it is clearly legitimate for them to consider alternative ways of bringing the contemplated abortion to a successful conclusion.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West said that there had been insufficient research into the drug. In responding to that point, I shall answer the point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point about independent assessment of the evidence used in the licensing process. Under the licensing system, it is for the applicant in the case of any drug to substantiate the

[Mr. Dorrell]

application against the tests of safety, efficacy and quality that are laid down in statute. It is not for the taxpayer but for the drug company to pay for research into a new drug and to demonstrate to the Independent Licensing Authority—the Committee on Safety of Medicines and the Medicines Control Agency, giving advice to Ministers—that the proposed new drug passes those tests.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point correctly pointed out, that was the system set up as a result of earlier failures of medicines licensing. That system, seeking to learn the lessons of those earlier failures, gave my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State unambiguous advice that this drug should be licensed for the purpose, and on the condition, set out in the licence.

I assure the House that there was no fast-tracking of the application; it was considered according to the normal processes laid down in statute and it passed the tests, set out by Parliament, of safety, efficacy and quality.

Sir Bernard Braine: Did the Government inquire into why the drug is banned in the United States and Germany, two highly civilised countries with established medical professions, from whose ranks have come some of the greatest medical scientists in the world?

Mr. Dorrell: No, the Government did not inquire into that, because, if we had done so, we would have been acting outside the Medicines Act. Parliament sets out the test that a new medicine must pass in order to secure a licence.

Sir Bernard Braine: Why not come to Parliament in the first place?

Mr. Dorrell: The Medicines Act sets out the tests of efficacy, quality and safety which the producers of a new drug must pass.

My right hon. Friend asked me whether the company had had notice of the issuing of the licence. I am advised that the company had no such notice. The seminars, which my right hon. Friend correctly said would have been prepared before the licence, were organised by the company at its own risk.

My right hon. Friend also asked me about the investigation of mermaid syndrome, and I will, if I may, write to him on that.

Mr. Hind: Was any research carried out by Roussel Uclaf and submitted to the Medicines Control Agency on post-abortion syndrome?

Mr. Dorrell: The information that is tendered by a company to the MCA is, as my hon. Friend knows—not least because my hon. Friend the Minister for Health has responded to him on the specific point during parliamentary questions—confidential within the MCA and the published information on the drug, as was also referred to during parliamentary questions, appeared in the *British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology* and in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, both of them containing scientific papers on the background to the drug.

My hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) asked about the supervision of a woman, particularly if she changed her mind or if there were problems associated with the use of the drug. It is clearly true, and unavoidable, that, with a drug which involves the use of several stages some days apart, there is the risk that the woman will change her mind during the course of the treatment. I have already acknowledged that a half-completed use of the drug leads to a risk of foetal abnormality, and I have dealt with the consequences that flow from that.

The guidance that has been issued makes it clear that, if an abortion has not occurred in the expected time and if the patient leaves the treatment centre, she must be given a specific contact name and told where to go in the event of any problems. A follow-up visit must always take place within eight to 12 days after the administering of the drug to verify that the abortion has been completed and that vaginal bleeding has stopped or substantially reduced. Persistence of moderate vaginal bleeding at that point or later could signify an incomplete abortion, and appropriate investigation and treatment would therefore have to be considered.

But we must remember that it is always true that any treatment of this nature is voluntary. We have no power, nor should we have, to compel a woman to return. We should make it as easy as possible and stress to her the clinical need for her to ensure that such signs are followed up in her own interests.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

1.33 am

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): No one would have anticipated that the closure of a bank would result in riots, disorder, or such anxiety, anguish and public concern as followed the decision that fateful Friday 5 July to close down the Bank of Credit and Commerce International. But this is the stuff of which fictional best sellers are made. We have all heard of the bank that likes to say yes. This is the bank that refuses to die. It is a story straight out of the Arabian Nights—of a bank, a sheikh, a governor, a political crisis and a Prime Minister who claims to have known nothing.

Every day and every hour, there seems to be some development or some new information about BCCI which occupies the top of our political agenda. It has dwarfed all other issues and events. It therefore seems remarkable that the Government refuse to give parliamentary time for a full debate, although we have had two statements, one private notice question and the announcement of a public inquiry as well as debating amendments to the Finance Bill last week. I welcome this debate and I pay tribute to hon. Members on both sides of the House who have helped to form the action committee on BCCI, especially the hon. Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Knowles).

In the past few days I have had meetings with thousands of depositors and members of staff. They are in a time warp. It is like talking to victims of some terrible disaster. They are worried, perplexed and anxious. Many have lost their life savings, and many will be ruined. The reputations of some business people with even the most tenous connections have been put at risk. For the staff —12,000 of them worldwide—the situation is bleak indeed. They have lost jobs and deposits and they are at risk in the employment market because they have to some extent been ridiculed for working for an organisation that has been so bitterly attacked.

Those who have acted improperly ought to be brought to justice, but there have been no arrests or detentions and no prosecutions. We should like to know when they will start.

What action is being taken to support initiatives to help members of staff to keep their jobs? What arrangements can be made to help members of staff to clear their names? It would be ungracious not to welcome the establishment of the committee of inquiry announced by the Chancellor on Friday, but will the Minister explain why the Governor of the Bank of England told Members at 8 pm on Thursday that he did not favour an inquiry as it was not in the interests of depositors or the liquidator, but by Friday lunchtime had changed his mind? What persuaded him to do that?

Did the Governor meet the Chancellor before the two occasions that I have mentioned? The Prime Minister today announced the chairman of the team of inquiry, Lord Justice Bingham. Will the Minister confirm that the commission of inquiry will have full judicial authority, including the right to subpoena and examine all accounts and transactions of all BCCI banks and related activities throughout the world? The commission should also have full access to all information from Ministries, Depts and regulatory authorities, and the right to decide issues of compensation, the period for compensation, and any appeal procedures.

Will the Minister accept that the commission's main responsibility will be to undertake a thorough examination of all the events leading to the Bank of England's decision to close down the BCCI's operations and to assess whether the Bank of England examined all possible options to contain the situation? Will the commission of inquiry undertake an analysis of the economic and social consequences of BCCI's closure both in the United Kingdom and throughout the world? Will it be able to propose essential reforms, including reforms of the Bank of England and the other authorities? Will it be able clearly to identify the criminal and civil responsibilities of all concerned, including the auditors? Finally, will the commission be able to give us an interim report so that any findings can be the subject of parliamentary debate or legislation?

I pay tribute to the frankness of the Governor of the Bank of England, who I believe will eventually become the unfortunate scapegoat for the whole problem. In the two meetings that he has held with hon. Members, on Wednesday 10 July and on Thursday 18 July, to which he readily agreed and at which he was unfailingly courteous and frank, he gave us details and answered questions about events. However, if there has been a failure to regulate, no matter how nice and courteous the Governor may be, he must take full responsibility. He knew the seriousness of the situation. That is why he went to Downing street on 28 June to give the news of the proposed closure. We are entitled to know whether the bank, as the watchdog, had carried out its duty adequately —not whether it acted too early or too late, but whether it acted properly. The same considerations apply to Ministers.

The Bank of England has certain statutory responsibilities, and while the rest of us can raise rumours and other points of concern, the bank has the power to act. For example, did the Governor know about BCCI's alleged terrorist links? What action was taken after the two Price Waterhouse reports in March and October 1990? We know from our meeting with the deputy Governor on 10 July that 10 special reports were commissioned by the Bank of England, ending with the report of 25 June.

Does the Minister unequivocally endorse the role of the Bank of England? Is there nothing that it did or failed to do which causes the Government concern? The Chancellor said in his statement on Friday:

> "I have no reason to doubt that the Bank acted properly and promptly in the best interests of the depositors."—[*Official Report*, 19 July, 1991; Vol. 195, c. 716.]

Does the Minister agree?

It is also important to know when Ministers and Treasury officials knew, and what action was taken. Last year, in a debate in another place, the noble Lord Henley said:

> "Treasury officials have been in touch with the Bank of England to emphasise to it the degree of public concern about the case, not least that expressed by noble Lords, and to ask it to take full account of the concern in its continued supervision of BCCI. The Bank of England has confirmed that it is doing this and will continue to do so."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 23 April 1990; Vol. 518, c. 421.]

What action did the Treasury take to ensure that the situation was being monitored? When the Price Waterhouse report was received in October 1990, the

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Governor told us that it did not contain any fraud or anything to warrant the action now being taken. Does the Minister agree?

Yesterday in the House, there was an exchange between my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition and the Prime Minister. On Thursday, I chaired two cross-party meetings. At the meeting with the Governor of the Bank of England, the Governor clearly stated when pressed by two colleagues that he always kept the Chancellor of the Exchequer fully informed of all major developments. He said that it was his job to do so, but that he could not divulge the nature of the conversations.

That course of action was confirmed in a written reply to me this evening from the Minister. I asked the Chancellor to list the dates on which we had discussed the trading position or other matters relating to BCCI with the Governor of the Bank of England in the past two years. The Minister replied that the Chancellor had discussed a number of supervisory cases, including BCCI, with the Governors of the Bank of England on a number of occasions since becoming Chancellor, but was not aware until 26 June that fraud had been uncovered.

Clearly the then Chancellor, now the Prime Minister, had similar meetings with the Governor. It is inconceivable that the Prime Minister was not informed of the circumstances of BCCI. BCCI was going through the most important development of the time, which resulted in the resignation of the president and chief executive of the bank, and a major reconstruction of the bank was taking place. At that time of hostilities in the Gulf, the Chancellor would have wanted to have that information and to act on it in defence of the leader of a friendly Gulf state. The Prime Minister must return to the House and make a statement about his true knowledge of events. He cannot keep hiding behind the old lady's skirts.

I accept that the Prime Minister did not know about the fraud until 28 June, but he has been reticent about telling the House what else he knew. The final report from Price Waterhouse arrived on 25 June. By 26 June, the gist of the report had been given to a Treasury official, John Geeve. On 28 June, a special meeting was held at Downing street, which was attended by both the Prime Minister and the Chancellor, and both were informed of what was to be done. There is then an extraordinary seven-day gap, in which there was no political or diplomatic initiative.

It is beyond belief that the Prime Minister, who a few months ago had been fighting on the same side as the sheikh, could not even pick up a telephone or send an official to visit the sheikh to see what could be done to save the bank. That crucial gap, that seven-day silence, has still not been explained. Both the Prime Minister and the Chancellor must have known the consequences, both financial and political, of that gap. They had a duty to act. The shiekh makes it clear that, had he been asked, he would have provided financial support to save the bank, but no approach was made.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Listening to the hon. Gentleman, anyone would think that the head office of BCCI was regulated by the Bank of England. It was not —it was regulated by the Luxembourg authorities. As we know, the bank operated in a large number of different countries. Is not the reason why there was some delay once the Bank of England had decided to act in the United Kingdom the fact that it had to communicate with all the regulators so as to ensure that there was concerted action throughout the world?

Mr. Vaz: As the hon. Gentleman will find out from my speech, negotiations were taking place and the College of Regulators was already fully informed of what was being proposed.

BCCI Holdings is a member of a substantial group of companies which carried on a banking business in over 60 countries, where it had more than 1.25 million depositors and approximately 12,000 staff. his Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan an-Nahayan has always maintained that he was more than prepared to co-operate with any scheme and any initiative by the Bank of England to maintain BCCI. Can the Minister confirm that he has no information which casts any doubt on that statement? Last Thursday, the sheikh went to the trouble of taking out full-page advertisements in national newspapers citing his outrage at what had happened. The statement speaks of his shock at the abrupt action taken by the Bank of England, without any consultation with either the shareholders or the central bank of the United Arab Emirates.

The sheikh, as the majority shareholder, was well aware of the troubles in the bank, and he tried to implement new measures. Their implementation involved close co-operation and consultation with the Bank of England and other members of the College of Regulators. As the investigations were pursued, further losses and certain irregularities were uncovered. These were reported on a regular basis to the College of Regulators to keep it informed of the developing situation.

In the light of those discoveries, Price Waterhouse was instructed by the sheikh to prepare a refinancing and restructuring plan designed to reorganise the group on a sound footing. A first draft of this plan was presented to the College of Regulators in October 1990. Members of the college, and the Bank of England, made it clear that they welcomed and were willing to co-operate fully in implementing the proposals for restructuring on the basis that this would best safeguard the interests of the group, depositors, shareholders and staff, and avoid the other alternative. The other alternative was liquidation, which, it was recognised by all concerned, would have catastrophic effects, given the size and extent of the group's liabilities.

In a letter to the department of finance dated 11 April 1991, the Bank of England stated:

"The college did form the view that the proposed overall framework of the new structure appears to acceptable basis for restructuring . . . All the relevant supervisors stand ready to engage in the necessary dialogue in the near future."

On 5 July 1991, the latest in a long series of meetings was due to take place between representatives from the Bank of England, the Luxembourg monetary Institute and the majority shareholders so that the finalised restructuring plan could be presented to the majority shareholders. A new chief executive, Mr. Kingshott, had been appointed, and a new name—the Commercial Bank of Europe—had been found, but that plan came to an abrupt end on 5 July as a result of the Bank of England's decision.

As the House knows, this morning's High Court hearing was adjourned. I attended the hearing, and was amused to see that the judge was having as much difficulty as some of the lawyers in following this complex case. I strongly believe that it is not impossible to save the bank, or at least to protect the depositors and staff. The

adjournment has provided ample opportunity for consideration as to whether something can be done to ameliorate the situation.

It is disgraceful that a rush to wind up the bank should prevent a possible rescue of parts of the group by the sheikh. I understand—I should be grateful if the Minister would confirm that it is his understanding, too—that on Saturday the Abu Dhabi-based BCC (Emirates) conditionally approved a takeover of BCCI's three branches in Pakistan. It is possible that attempts are being made to construct a new regional bank out of the remains of BCCI.

Even now, at the eleventh hour, it would be possible to arrive at a formula to help the depositors, investors and staff. The answer may well be a freezing of the bank's assets and the payment of interest with the long-term aim of creating a new bank, allowing those who wish to take the statutory compenstion to do so. To achieve that, the Governor of the Bank of England must continue his dialogue with the Sheikh of Abu Dhabi, and the Bank of England must show a willingness to do that. Will the Minister confirm that the Government would support such an initiative?

There are reports that British exporters are in danger of losing at least £2 billion as a result of the closure, and that some of those firms may themselves close. What action does the Minister propose to take to assist them? Clearly, the plan presented on 5 July—which had taken many months to develop—is wholly inapplicable, due to the Bank's action. If the group, or any of its constituent elements—including BCCI—is to avoid liquidation, an alternative plan must now be developed by the sheikh, in conjunction with the commissioner appointed by the Luxembourg court, Mr. Smouha, and the Bank of England.

Is the Minister aware that, in the past 10 days, a number of meetings have been held by Mr. Smouha and those representing the sheikh? Those meetings have involved constructive discussions intended to explore whether there is any alternative to liquidation. The adjournment of the case in the High Court allows the sheikh to conduct a review, and to enable the discussions to continue, with a view to establishing whether there is any viable means of preserving the value of the group for the benefit of all interested parties—depositors, employees and shareholders. The possibility of a viable alternative to liquidation is, in the sheikh's view, a real one.

The majority shareholders have already taken active steps to secure that objective, and apparently wish to continue to do so for as long as may be necessary. If, however, the court ordered that BCCI be wound up, the majority shareholders would have no continuing interest in rescuing that element of the group. The negotiations and discussions are continuing at the highest level. Is the Minister aware of those discussions, and does he support them?

Did the Minister know that a meeting had taken place in Abu Dhabi on Tuesday 16 July 1991—attended by Mr. Jaans, the director-general of the Luxembourg Monetary Institute, the Governor of the Bank of England, Mr. Leigh-Pemberton, and Brian Quinn, the director of finance, together with the ambassador to the United Arab Emirates? Mr. Jaans referred to the six-month period that Mr. Smouche had been given by the Luxembourg court to do what he described as a thorough stocktaking intended to enable him to tell the court whether a reconstruction of BCCI should be attempted.

Mr. Jaans stated expressly that he regarded the stocktaking operation as being necessary to establish the true position of BCCI and that it must be completed before a solution could be found. Will the Economic Secretary confirm what he said to me earlier—that if there were any means by which a reconstructed group could be viable, by removing those who have committed the fraud and bringing them to justice, the Government would support it? Is he aware that there are only eight days in which to do so?

As the Economic Secretary knows, the issue was raised earlier in the House. Serious allegations have been made in some main newspapers about alleged terrorist links with the bank. Will the Economic Secretary comment on those allegations and tell us whether the security services have indeed informed Ministers? Has the matter been reported to the Cabinet's joint intelligence committee? I understand that the British security services first warned the Bank of England over a year ago of terrorist links and of accounts used by terrorists, including Abu Nidal. It is important that Ministers should take early opportunities either to confirm or to deny those rumours.

Did the security services tell the Prime Minister? If so, the Prime Minister had two different channels of communication—first from officials from the Bank of England, in his position as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and secondly, from the security services in his position as the Prime Minister.

I wish to refer finally to two points. The first is the position of local authorities. My hon. Friend will speak later, if he catches your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, about local authorities, which have been severely affected. They invested their money on the basis of an authorised list provided by the Bank of England and with the approval of the Department of the Environment. When we met the Governor on Wednesday 10 July he said that the list was not a guaranteed list. Both my colleagues and I disagreed. A list from an authoritative body such as the Bank of England must be assumed to be authoritative. Unless it carries an exemption notice, there is, in my mind, no question that it cannot be acted upon. Can the Economic Secretary confirm what action has been taken by the Government to ensure that the list has been checked and that all the listed insitutions are sound? What compensation is he proposing to offer to local authorities?

Depositors—the Economic Secretary was pressed about this on 8 July when he made his first statement to the House—must be given an assurance that the amount being offered by the Deposit Protection Board will be increased from the present level of £15,000. The average portfolio of investors in this bank is £15,000. They cannot possibly be expected to accept less than that. The Government must consider increasing that figure. If they cannot do so out of their own funds, they must pay even more attention to the initiatives currently being undertaken by the sheikh and others so as to ensure that they succeed.

This has been a fiasco which has degenerated into a shambles. The pivotal role of the Prime Minister and the Governor of the Bank of England needs to be carefully examined. I welcome the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee inquiry. I hope that the Committee will invite the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer to give evidence. The Prime Minister had the audacity in the House this afternoon to accuse my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition of muckraking. How can raising the hardship and misery of individuals and others, and the

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possible failure to act properly, be regarded as muckraking? In my view, the Prime Minister ought to apologise to those whom he has insulted.

In a democracy, we demand the right to know the truth. The depositors, the investors, the staff—indeed, the whole country—want to know the truth. Those in high office who have breached their duty of care should consider their position in the light of the revelations of the past few days. This astonishing banking scandal will live to haunt the present Administration and taint the reputation of the Bank of England for years to come. Even at this late stage, I hope that the Government will act.

1.58 am

Mr. Michael Knowles (Nottingham, East): I thank the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) for the kind words that he said about me. We started together on the scheme in the somewhat vain and naive hope that, in an election year, BCCI could be kept out of the party political bull ring. Inevitably, it was bound to be dragged in.

Bank failures in the United Kingdom are rare compared with countries such as the United States, where banks go to the wall not every day of the week but reasonably frequently. In the United Kingdom, such failures tend to be rare because of the Bank of England system, which has been very effective. With the more open international banking system, which has grown and I suspect will continue to do so, BCCI could happen again —and all too easily.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): Will my hon. Friend acknowledge that there are two salient points to this affair? The first is that BCCI was not registered in this country, so the prime regulatory authority was not based in this country. Secondly, bank regulation is not for the Government but for the Bank of England. That has always been true, and presumably would be if, God forbid, we had a Labour Government.

Mr. Knowles: That is right. The Bank of England is not an independent central bank like those in Germany and the United States. In the Banking Act 1987, the House deliberately give it great powers of independence. The alternative is for the Chancellor to look after it, but I am sure that no Chancellor would like to do that.

As far as I am aware, no hon. Member has had the opportunity to read the auditors' full 800-page report. In the Governor's opinion, that report of 26 June left the Bank of England with no choice but to move immediately. It revealed not inefficiency or poor management but fraud on a massive scale. The phrase used was "a bank within a bank".

The Bank of England has been subject to similar criticism in the past. The Johnson Matthey case showed that the Bank of England will lean over backwards to save a bank if it is humanly possible. However, the Bank of England believed that nothing could be done to save BCCI. It may have been right or wrong, and that will be tested in the courts in eight days' time and certainly in the investigation, but the fact that it had to act is irrefutable, because that responsibility is laid on it.

Did the House get it right in not only the 1987 Act but the Banking Act 1981? I suspect that the answer to that will emerge in the report.

With the internationalisation of banking, and given the amount of money in that system, the problem will be how a single nation state polices an international bank such as BCCI. We could tighten the 1987 Act and the Bank of England could close any institution not on proof of fraud or any wrongdoing but on suspicion alone. Is anyone going to argue for that power to be given to the Bank of England? That might also have an effect on the operation of the City of London. There might suddenly be a massive growth in Frankfurt and Paris as international centres.

Pre-1987 and in the old days, the Bank of England worked very much on an old boy network. We moved away from that as we saw a changing international environment. We wanted to move the Bank more towards having to work on a basis of law and of being able to prove its suspicions rather than having a quiet word in somebody's ear. That means that situations like the present one can occur. One cannot have the best of all systems; one will always have to make hard choices. We made choices when we passed the 1987 Act.

Can BCCI be rescued? As the hon. Member for Leicester, East said, there are eight days in which to decide that. Who can rescue it? There would seem to be only one man—his excellency the Sheik. How much will it cost? No one knows, because no one has yet been able to quantify the amount that has been extracted fraudulently from the bank. We have no idea what funds are left in it. The amount could be anything up to the book value of £20 billion, which is a horrendous sum.

Should the Bank of England have acted sooner? Some argue not that it has acted precipitately, but that it left it too long. I suspect not, because the Bank hoped to have some proof on which to operate. The gap from 28 June to 5 July does not seem unreasonable.

There had to be consultations with Luxembourg, where the bank is domiciled. When the Luxembourg authorities had agreed that action had to be taken, it then had to be agreed with all the other regulators and central banks around the globe, and they all had to move together. I remember it being explained clearly at one meeting that, if one loophole had been left, funds would have flowed out of the bank so fast that nothing but an empty shell would have been left. The whole point was to try to save at least some of the investors' money.

The hon. Member for Leicester, East mentioned local authorities and investors. No lists are issued by the Bank of England with hard guarantees. No Government could give a guarantee to anyone investing on a market anywhere that he will be totally safe. If somebody offered someone else a gold brick for 50p, he would do well to investigate it and look at it closely. The same applies if someone offers 2 per cent. or 3 per cent. more interest. Why is he doing that? How is he able to do that? The responsibility lies with all of us individually when we invest our money. It is still a matter of caveat emptor—the buyer has to beware. No one can or will give a guarantee.

I feel more sorry for the small investor who gets taken in by a fraud. I have less sympathy with professional investors and with borough treasurers, who are paid substantial sums to know their way around. If we could do something to help the smaller investor, I would be sympathetic. Some councils seem to have been trying to play the money market and have got their fingers burnt.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Of all parties.

Mr. Knowles: Of all parties. This is not a party political point. I have a fairly hard heart towards such councils, and that is probably true of most hon. Members. There will be a lot of lessons for a lot of people to learn from this, not least all hon. Members who have passed the Banking Acts. In many cases, they were bipartisan Acts which had been in the treadmill of legislation for many years. We may have got it right, but we may have got it wrong. Before we start trying to pass the buck to other people, we must look carefully at what we did right and wrong in the first place.

2.9 am

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): I know that other hon. Members want to speak, so I shall make a relatively short speech. Many hon. Members present tonight have taken part in all, or almost all, the meetings that have been held so far with the Treasury and the Bank of England.

I shall deal with the issue of local authorities. Local authorities, whatever their political persuasion, are concerned at the interpretation, after the event, being placed by the Department of the Environment and the Treasury on the list issued by the Bank of England. Discussions between the Bank of England, the Treasury and the local authority associations were held in mid-May. Therefore, one can well understand why local authorities feel extremely aggrieved about the reinterpretation of events now offered by the Treasury and the Bank of England.

I should like to bring to the attention of the House a Press Association report issued earlier this evening. It records the disturbing claim by Sky News that it has documentary evidence to suggest that Abu Nidal was ferried between BCCI branches in London by the police, with the full knowledge of MI5, to oversee his accounts. That operation was allowed so as to ensure that MI5 had close contact with the terrorist to enable it to monitor his activities and that of his organisation. We should remember that this is the terrorist who planned and caused the destruction of the Pan Am aircraft over Lockerbie.

That allegation has not been made by a politician or an organisation known to be sympathetic to the Labour movement. We are talking about an organisation owned and controlled by Murdoch and his associates. According to the information from Sky, it is clear that the manager of the BCCI branch in north London provided information to the police and MI5 about the amount of money deposited on behalf of the terrorist in both of his accounts. He says that he gave information to MI5 about the activities of the bank in relation to that terrorist organisation.

According to the allegations, MI5 revealed the information to the Bank of England which set up an inquiry into Nidal's accounts in London code-named Project Q—Q for Qassem, the name of the Jordanian manager of the London branch.

Given the type of information that has filtered out, one can understand why the Opposition and the people cannot believe that the Prime Minister's sole knowledge of the events commenced on the morning of 28 June when he met the Governor of the Bank of England at Downing Street to discuss the latest Price Waterhouse report. That is inconceivable. In October 1990, the Governor reported to the then Chancellor, the present Prime Minister, on the Price Waterhouse inquiries. Since then, he has kept the Prime Minister and the current Chancellor abreast of events.

My local authority has so far lost £2·1 million, plus interest to the value of almost £26,000. My authority has banked on and off with BCCI since the early 1980s. At one stage, it withdrew its reserves from the bank following an investigation in the United States. Money was replaced in the bank following discussions and assurances from the authority's advisers, the brokers R. P. Martin, and from others in the City. One of the decisions we should reach as a result of this case is whether brokers should be regulated far more strictly.

The Treasury and the Bank of England should at least support those local authorities. Organisations such as R. P. Martin should immediately provide their accounts to show all transactions between the local authorities and the bank. That would clarify, once and for all, whether R. P. Martin and other brokers received preferential treatment and, in the process, failed to carry out their duties on behalf of their clients, the local authority associations. It is vital to the brokers' organisations in the City that that happens urgently.

Last week, my local authority asked R. P. Martin, verbally and in writing, for that information. I understand that it has failed to respond to the request for information. Will the Minister respond by saying whether the bank will put pressure on brokers to ensure that such information is made available at the earliest opportunity?

The Minister may also like to comment on the fact that, at 10 am on 5 July, in the normal course of events, my local authority sought to transfer its overnight deposit from BCCI to National Westminster Bank. BCCI acknowledged that request at 10 am, and at 12 noon it notified the local authority that the Bank of England had stepped in and was preventing the transfer of the funds to the appropriate account at NatWest.

Why, three hours before the bank was closed, was a transaction that BCCI had agreed to make to one of the clearing banks intercepted by the Bank of England? Because of the Bank of England's action, my authority lost over £2 million. Was that step taken to prevent haemorrhages of funds from other institutions, or was it a direct attempt to ensure that local authorities and other lenders did not have the opportunity to withdraw substantial sums of money which could be used at a later date by the liquidator? The Minister should make a commitment to provide a public answer to that question.

In the meeting between the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Governor of the Bank of England, I raised—as did other hon. Members—the subject of the list that the Bank of England issued to local authorities. I do not have time to discuss whether that list carried a risk. If I accept the argument that it did, why did Treasury and Bank of England officials at the Committee on Local Authority Borrowing, which met on 10 May in the Treasury under the chairmanship of the adviser to the current Chancellor of the Exchequer, go out of their way to make it clear to the local authorities that there were no problems with the secondary banking system?

Indeed, Mr. Beverly, representing the Bank of England, said that local authorities would have to take into account the risk of overreacting and moving funds unnecessary and at some expense. That statement was not made in isolation. It was a direct attempt by the Bank of England

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to put off inquiring local authority treasurers who were voicing concern about the problems of the secondary banking system at that time.

Given the consequences of the two smaller banks, on 13 May——

Mr. Tim Smith: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McCartney: No, the hon. Gentleman can make his own contribution. If he cannot do so, it is tough luck—at the top.

Mr. Smith: Why does not the hon. Gentleman read from paragraph 11 of the minutes of the meeting?

Mr. McCartney: I would read the whole minute if I had time. From the discussions in paragraphs 10, 11 and 12, it was clear that local authority representatives had become concerned that there was no guarantee about the list. They therefore said that it would be reasonable for them to withdraw the funding from the secondary banking system. In paragraph 13, the Bank of England representatives went out of their way to show that that was not the best course of action for them to take at that time.

That minute was subsequently followed by a letter on behalf of the local authorities from those represented at the meeting. The letter asked the Bank to confirm that it had been given the assurance that there was no systemic problem with the secondary banking system and to confirm the confidence shown by the Bank of England at the meeting of 10 May. The Bank of England did not respond to that inquiry to deny confirmation that there was no substantial problem lurking round the corner for the local authorities that were investing in the secondary banking system.

However, we know from the information that came to light that that was not so. The Bank of England was well aware that it would take action within days, if not weeks, to close down the bank. We can well understand why local authorities feel aggrieved that they were taken for a ride by the Bank of England and the Treasury, which failed to take them into their confidence when the issue was raised on 10 May by those representing local authorities at the meeting at the Treasury.

Irrespective of what anyone believes about local authorities' role in the affair, one fact is clear—local authorities of all political persuasions have become involved. All took the same view about investing in the bank. They all took the same advice, and came to the conclusion that, having made the best inquiries that they could, their investments were safe.

Local authorities will survive the affair, but that is not true of the tens of thousands of small depositors in this country. Therefore, it is vital that we ensure that, if it is clear that the Treasury failed to recognise the signs as soon as it should have done, and that the Bank of England failed to act to defend depositors, the Government should admit that mistake and allow compensation to be paid.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I think that I know what the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) was trying to say about paragraph 11 when he attempted to intervene in my hon. Friend's speech. However, I do not think that he heard my hon. Friend's comments. At the meeting, assurances were given about the secondary banking sector and, having heard them, treasurers believed that they were safe in making investments. Therefore, paragraph 11 does not relate to the issue to which my hon. Friend alluded——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr Harold Walker): Order. I am not sure whether the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) is intervening in the speech of the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr McCartney) or in a hypothetical intervention that I did not hear.

Mr. McCartney: Either way, my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr Campbell-Savours) made a telling intervention. My hon. Friend is always able to provide information to the House that is helpful in clarifying the confusion surrounding this issue—which is more than can be said about the various statements that have been made by Ministers to the House.

During the past few weeks, we have seen a pass-the-parcel Government. The parcel has passed between the Department of Trade and Industry, the Department of Employment, the Treasury and the Bank of England—and back again. During the past 18 months or so, millions of pounds have been sifted out of that parcel. A decision was eventually taken on 28 June which changed for the worse the livelihoods of many people in this country and worldwide, probably for the rest of their lives.

The lesson that should be learned from the debacle is that we must ensure that nothing similar happens again. We must ensure that we have international arrangements so that small countries such as Luxembourg cannot hide behind inefficient regulations that allow funds to flow into that country that affect the international banking system. We must also devise a warning system, so that not only local authorities but others can invest with confidence in the secondary banking system—otherwise, it will be deprived of many millions of pounds of resources, which are important to its continuing good health in the British economy.

I hope that the Minister will take on board not only the points made in the debate but over the past few days and weeks. Unless he does, we will be back debating the collapse of another bank, and the problems that that creates not only for local authorities but for tens of thousands of our constituents.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. May I ask for very brief speeches? Mr. Burt.

2.25 am

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): I will be as brief as I can, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is clear that the BCCI affair has many levels. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) for reminding the House that the real villains are those who are allegedly guilty of fraud. We are running around chasing everyone else, but we should be chasing those primarily involved in the fraud—and they should be brought to justice as soon as possible.

There are many questions to be asked at the highest level of both the Bank of England and the Treasury concerning the time scale of knowledge held by each. As a Member of Parliament whose constituents have lost £6·5 million via the local authority's investment in BCCI, quite apart from the losses of individual investors, I recognise the need for, and welcome unreservedly, the inquiry—and

the remarkably free range of it indicated by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in his statement. He clearly contemplates that no holds will be barred, and putting himself forward if required to do so. Only the most churlish person can fail to recognise the integrity of such an offer.

As to the casualties of the affair, I will concentrate—as did the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) —on one group of investors, in the form of local authorities. The BCCI scandal has made more open than ever before the complex nature of local authority financial transactions. After the public difficulties concerning recent interest rate swaps that led to court cases, several councils lost significant sums of money through that particular choice of investment.

The inquiry will, rightly, examine the role of the Bank of England and the Treasury in the BCCI affair, but I hope, for the sake of millions of taxpayers throughout the country, that local authority finance systems will also come under scrutiny. I stress that I am in no way prejudging the issue, or impugning the integrity of any local authority officers. I merely want to make it clear that many people whose local authorities have lost money are asking pertinent questions. The most pertinent among them is, "Why us? Why did other authorities choose not to invest as ours did?"

It is incumbent on all public officials to seek answers to such questions. What standing orders govern the making of local authority financial transactions and their reporting to meetings of their full councils or council committees—and are they adequate? In the case of Bury borough council, an officer is empowered to deal, under delegated authority, with day-to-day investment decisions —and that is quite right. I cannot see that arrangement changing, and nor should it. However, the council's standing orders do not subsequently require a full report detailing, among other things, the name of the bank with which a deposit has been placed.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The same is true of all local authorities.

Mr. Burt: I accept the hon. Gentleman's assertion—he makes my point for me.

In Bury's case, an investment of £6·5 million was made for five years, from April 1988, renewable on six-monthly instalments—the last being in April 1991. Although the terms were reported in confidence to the council's finance sub-committee, the name of the bank in which that money was invested was not revealed—nor was it required to be. I cannot help but feel that such deposits should be reported in full. If that were done, at least all councillors would know of the details of an investment, and any who came to believe that there might be something untoward about the bank concerned could make further inquiries. That could not be done in the case of Bury—and I suspect that the same is true of many other councils.

The hon. Member for Makerfield asked what rules govern the relationships between local authorities investing public money and the investment brokers. Is it wise to take advice "for free"? It is emerging that certain investment brokers who advised councils were allegedly on commission from BCCI of up to four times the norm. Was that known to local authorities? Did they ask? Should they not be compelled to seek independent untied financial advice, or at least know in detail and make public the commission arrangements of those who advise them?

Exactly what information was available and circulated among local authorities from 1988 onwards? Why did some authorities resist the pressures to invest with BCCI? Why did some—notably and incredibly, Lambeth—withdraw investments already made while others did not? If all local authorities looked to the famous Bank of England and Department of the Environment lists as gospel, many other authorities would have been caught out. They were not, and we should all know why.

I submit that the questions that I have asked are appropriate for all local authorities, because I suspect that Bury's action was pretty standard. It is proper to pursue such inquiries, bearing in mind the fact that the public in the authorities concerned cannot easily be expected to put the loss of millions of pounds down to experience. Whatever comes out of the inquiries that involves the Bank of England, some authorities—I accept, not all—would still have been caught out, having invested some time ago. Had the Bank of England been in a position to close down BCCI earlier, such authorities would have lost their moneys a few years before they did. For them, therefore, my set of questions about their predicament is easily as relevant as any other set of questions that has been directed to the Government and the Treasury inquiry.

Whatever may have been the cause of the losses to local taxpayers, I hope that they will not have to pay too high a price for the actions of others. My hon. Friend the Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg) and I support the efforts that are being made by authorities to persuade the Government to spread the repayment of the debts over as long a period as possible, to reduce the impact year by year on local taxpayers.

None of us wants to see BCCI-type collapses affect public authorities in future. Only by asking the right questions and seeking the right answers will some good come from the collapse. Only in that way will a similar situation be avoided for local taxpayers of the future—who deserve no less.

2.32 am

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): The appointment of Lord Justice Bingham to head a committee of inquiry into this sorry and unhappy affair is a welcome one.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In a short debate, is it right that the summings up should continue for half an hour? This is meant to be a private Members' day.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is the convention that, when a Front Bench spokesman seeks to catch the eye of the occupant of the Chair, preference is given to him. I hope that the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng), who is speaking from the Opposition Front Bench, will not take up so much time that no other Back Bench Member will be able to contribute to the debate. I hope that other Back Bench Members will be able to take part in the debate before the time limit expires.

Mr. Boateng: The appointment of Lord Justice Bingham to head an inquiry into this sorry and unhappy affair is a welcome one. It is, however, a matter of regret that the Opposition's call for an inquiry was not met

[Mr. Boateng]

sooner. It is also a sad and sorry affair that there is about the inquiry, and the Government's surprising reticence in relation to its terms of reference, suspicion on our part —indeed, more than suspicion—that we are about to see created a smokescreen behind which the Government intend to play a game of pass the ministerial parcel.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Rubbish.

Mr. Boateng: I wish that the hon. Gentleman would refrain from making comments of that nature from a sedentary position. He will have time to make his own speech.

There is concern on our part that we shall see the creation of a smokescreen behind which there will be played a game of pass the ministerial parcel, and that the Government will use that as a cover for inactivity on matters that it is possible for them to take action on now.

I raise one such matter immediately with the Economic Secretary because he is aware that it has been raised with the Government on several occasions since the BCCI affair came to light. It relates to the role of auditors and whether there should be a duty, not merely a right, placed on auditors to report to the regulating authority—the Bank of England—when they have a suspicion of irregularities, dishonesty or fraud. That is a reasonable demand, but it has been consistently resisted by Ministers. Will the Minister now say that he does not intend to continue to resist that modest request, and that he will not allow the appointment of a commission of inquiry to be the cause of delay in that matter?

Will the Minister confirm that the inquiry can consider the following questions? Do current regulatory procedures concerning both sound banking practice and fraud provide adequate protection for the consumer? Should there be an independent supervisory body for the banking industry? Should banks have a statutory responsibility to insure customer deposits? Should this country propose amendments to the European Community first banking directive to establish more effective supervision within the single market? Finally—this relates to a matter that I raised with the Minister earlier—will the inquiry consider the role played by the BCCI auditors in the light of their responsibility to present a true and fair view of the company's accounts, and what changes should be made in that regard?

Those are five simple matters, and we seek an assurance that the inquiry can take them on board within its remit. If it does not have a sufficiently wide-ranging brief, and if it is not equipped with the power not just to summon Ministers and civil servants but to sub poena others who do not fall within either category, we must wonder whether the inquiry can adequately do the work that I imagine the whole House wants it to do.

It is important to ensure that there is a clear sign, at the earliest possible stage, of exactly what Ministers knew and when they first knew it. There is a concern not only about when the Treasury and the Chancellor knew the facts—either the present Chancellor or, importantly and significantly, the former Chancellor, now the Prime Minister—but about the role of the Department of Trade and Industry. As the responsible body with regard to the Investment Management Regulatory Organisation, was the DTI aware of the concerns of that body about the approval of BCCI's application?

If the DTI was aware of those concerns, of the failure of IMRO to register BCCI for its purposes, and of its reservations about the people operating the investment management division within BCCI, why was that not considered sufficient warning as to the probity of the bank and the fitness of those who managed it? Should not that have sparked warning lights at the Treasury and the Bank of England? There is more than a suspicion that there was a breakdown in communications between Government Departments, which of itself could only have put depositers and the general public still further at risk.

There is no reason why there should not be—and I should like an assurance that there will be—an interim report produced by Lord Justice Bingham. That would allay the very real concerns about the potential for delay and for removal of material from the public domain which should be in it as quickly as possible. We do not want the report merely to be promised tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow.

There is a question which I am sure the Minister appreciates is important to those within and outside the house who witness our proceedings. What can be done in the interim for the deposit holders and the staff? What is the current status of the practical steps promised by the liquidators and the Bank of England to ameliorate the plight of those people in so far as that is possible? Many small business people want an assurance that their needs and worries will not be ignored in the inquiry. The hard-pressed staff of BCCI await some reassurance, in so far as it can be given, by the liquidators and the Bank of England. We hope that it will soon be forthcoming.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind party spokesmen that the debate arising out of the Consolidated Fund Bill is one of the most precious opportunities for Back Benchers to raise matters in the House.

2.41 am

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): The hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) did not like my saying, "Rubbish," from a seated position, so I shall say it from a standing position. It was rubbish to suggest that the Government were reticent about holding the inquiry, or that the inquiry is being held to hide something. The one certainty of our judicial system is that no Lord Justice will be used or abused by any Government. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said, the Lord Justice will call whom he wishes in order to get at the truth for the House, as it has demanded. Surely that is right.

The hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) referred to what the Governor of the Bank of England was meant to have said. Referring to the debate in the House yesterday—Monday—today's *Financial Times* published a statement by the bank:

> "The governor certainly did not intend to give any impression that the chancellor is briefed other than in general terms on major supervisory developments and issues. As the PM indicated in the House today, the governor would not have told the chancellor about individual reports on individual cases".

It was said in the House yesterday that the Chancellor must have known of every page in the accountants' reports —[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] That was said by the respected Leader of the Opposition.

BCCI has 48,400 accounts. Some 36,000 of them have less than £1,000, so those depositors will get most of their money back; a further 9,500 have less than £20,000, so those depositors will get 75 per cent. back; then there are 3,100 large accounts, of which the local authorities will be the biggest losers. There have been two debates on the position of the local authorities. One should not repeat the comments which have been made, because other hon. Members wish to speak.

If one thinks about it, this is the simplest thing in the world. I have a list of all the banks that the Bank of England authorises. It does not guarantee their accounts. Those banks range from those with deposits of £100 million down to those with deposits of £20 million. Any local government treasurer who thinks that a bank with £100 billion and an AAA rating is exactly the same as the BCCI, with a minus-C rating, is not fit to hold his job. If anyone thinks that for a treasurer in the Western Isles to borrow £17 million to lend to someone else to gain ¼ per cent. more interest is not irresponsible, it is hardly surprising that so many Labour-controlled authorities go up the spout.

The one certainty is that everyone has a fiduciary capacity to be responsible with other people's money. We may be sorry for the people who chose such idiots to be their local authority treasurers, but it is no good saying that it is the Government's fault and that the Government should bail everyone out.

Mr. Tim Smith: I referred earlier—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) refused to give way to me when I sought to draw the attention of the House to the minutes of the meeting to which he referred. This is an important matter. The representative of the Bank of England, Mr. Beverly, addressing the local authority associations which were present at the meeting, emphasised:

"The list did not say anything about the relative creditworthiness of the institutions or that they could not fail. That was an assessment the local authorities, and other depositors, had to make."

That was passed on by the Association of Metropolitan Authorities in a circular three days later to its members when it said:

"It cannot be assumed that all institutions on the list are equally creditworthy."

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I agree with that point. The list is clear and it is there for good reason. Anyone who wants to lend or borrow money can look at that list. If the Opposition are saying that when there is a list this long of category A and B banks, one should lend to an inferior bank, they do not know much about local government finance.

2.46 am

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Lord Justice Bingham would have been the first choice of many of us for the task that he is about to undertake. It is unfortunate that the Prime Minister was unable to confirm this afternoon that the Lord Justice will have the power to compel witnesses or to take evidence abroad. I hope that we shall hear from the Economic Secretary tonight that that will be the case.

I was criticised by the Prime Minister when I intervened this afternoon for referring to the toytown banking laws of Luxembourg. I make no apology for repeating that allegation. My recollection of Noddy is that he was particularly good at keeping secrets, even from Mr. Plod.

In December 1988, Professor Richard Dale, the consulting editor of the *Financial Times Newsletter and Financial Regulation Report*, wrote an article in which he suggested that the BCCI holding company structure was designed to bypass the regulators, that Luxembourg's secrecy laws were inviting criminal activity at BCCI and that for those reasons, as well as the absence of a lender of last resort, BCCI could collapse. Lord Justice Bingham will probably not be looking at the differences between European banking laws and regulation, but I hope that, in the light of what has happened, the Government will.

The banking laws of Luxembourg are similar to those of the Cayman Islands. They guarantee secrecy. That means that they are calculated to be attractive to tax evaders, fraudsters and money launderers. Luxembourg can nevertheless claim to wash its hands of the inevitable consequences of having such lax laws.

BCCI's corporate structure, which consisted of an unregulated Luxembourg holding company and two main operating subsidiaries incorporated in separate offshore secrecy havens, Luxembourg and the Cayman Islands, was purpose-built to confuse the regulatory authorities. That structure made nonsense of the Basle concordat, which was revised in 1983 specifically to take account of

"the principle that banking supervisory authorities cannot be fully satisfied about the soundness of individual banks unless they can examine tha totality of each bank's business worldwide through the technique of consolidation."

I ask that there should now be a searching review of the international bank regulatory framework. A number of points are already clear. First, the principle of consolidated supervision which was formally adopted but then neglected by the group of 10 countries in 1983 must be rigorously enforced. Secondly, further efforts must be made to combat bank fraud, and that should mean greater emphasis on unannounced on-site examinations by regulatory authorities.

Thirdly—I acknowledge my debt to Professor Dale for these views—and most importantly, the present regime under which offshore banking services tout for business by offering secrecy, fiscal and other regulatory inducements needs to be overhauled. After all, what conceivable benefit does a banking centre in Luxembourg or the Cayman islands confer on the global economy? Offshore banking is a legitimate business, but it should be conducted in centres that have the financial and regulatory infrastructure to host it responsibly.

Part of the responsibility for what has happened with the BCCI lies with Governments who have been prepared to condone such a lax regulatory structure. I hope that the Government will allow Lord Justice Bingham to take that into account; but above all I hope that he will be able to decide whether there has been a failure of a reasonable duty of care, whether by the Government or the Bank of England. If there has been such a failure, I hope that the Government will undertake to pay compensation to the hard-pressed account holders.

2.50 am

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Maples): I am sorry that not everyone who wished to speak has been able to do so, but I wanted to try to answer as many as possible of the points that have been made.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) raised an interesting and difficult point—the regulation of multinational banking organisations. He was right that this one would seem to have been deliberately organised to make it difficult to supervise. There are lessons to be learned from that and we shall look hard at the second banking co-ordination directive and at supervision in Europe after the end of 1992.

The hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) said that he was suspicious about the terms of reference of the inquiry. I am not sure why, as they are perfectly clear. I shall read them out, although that has already been done at least twice. They are:

"To enquire into the supervision of BCCI under the Banking Acts; to consider whether the action taken by the UK authorities was appropriate and timely; and to make recommendations."

As my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) said, it is unlikely that Lord Justice Bingham will allow himself to be used as a smokescreen. Lord Justice Bingham will be able to make recommendations to us about banking supervision. I have been asked whether I am generally happy with the powers under the Banking Act 1987. In general, we are happy, but if there are lessons to be learnt from the inquiry, we shall take them on board.

The hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr Vaz) asked about an interim report. I doubt whether an interim report would be appropriate in this case. I hope that the job can be done fairly quickly so that such a report will not be necessary, but it will be up to Lord Justice Bingham to publish an interim report if he feels that to be necessary.

I have already dealt twice with questions about what and when Ministers knew. The Chancellor has dealt with them once, as has the Prime Minister. A series of events was involved, and the best place to bring them together is the inquiry. All records and Ministers will be available to Lord Justice Bingham so that he can elicit all the detail of what Ministers knew, and when.

It was interesting that the hon. Member for Leicester, East should raise the subject of auditors. In the Committee stage of the Banking Bill, which became the 1987 Act, the Opposition spokesman, Dr Oonagh McDonald, said that she still found enormous problems with auditors being expected to inform the Bank of England's supervisors about the conduct of business by the bank of which they are auditors.

It is fascinating to see the ground shifting now.

Mr. McCartney: She lost her seat.

Mr. Maples: She knew quite a lot about banking. It is the professional duty of auditors to inform the supervisory authorities if they are aware of anything that they believe is wrong. The hon. Member for Brent, South shakes his head, but he is wrong. I did not say that this was a statutory duty. I was going to say that their professional conduct includes the duty to do so. It is also clear from the supervisory guidance issued by the Bank of England under the Banking Act 1987 that the auditors should do so. If that became a problem, we could consider a statute, but many things happen outside statute and if they work satisfactorily they should be allowed to do so. I do not think that it has been suggested that the auditors withheld information which should have been given to the supervisors.

The hon. Member for Leicestershire, East posed many questions, but as there is little time I shall have to deal with them quickly. He asked what could be done for depositors and staff. The depositors can be compensated under the deposit protection scheme, which cannot be brought into action until a winding-up order has been made. That was today adjourned for eight days. We and the bank hope that the order will be made in eight days' time, although interestingly the representatives of the depositors and the shareholder and the liquidator today resisted that. Perhaps the depositors need to decide where their interests really lie because the deposit protection scheme cannot be activated until a winding-up order is in place.

The Deposit Protection Board has already started to write to all 57,000 eligible depositors enclosing the necessary claim form. The process is going ahead even though the winding-up order has not yet been obtained. We are moving on that as fast as we can and I am conscious of the need to continue to move fast. I assure the House that I shall keep an eye on that.

I understand that all members of staff have been retained as employees until the end of July and will be paid by the liquidator for their employment during that period. A winding-up order must be passed before redundancy and compensation can be paid. It may be in the interests of staff for the order to be passed before the end of the month so that they can receive the appropriate payments.

Several hon. Members spoke of local authorities, and in that context my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) read out a pertinent passage from the minutes of a Treasury meeting. I shall not repeat my hon. Friend's point because he made it well. No one can consider that a list of the more than 550 banks licensed by the Bank of England should carry a Government guarantee. First, the potential liability for public expenditure on such a scheme would be absolutely astronomical.

Secondly, if every banking organisation carried out Government guarantee, we might see on a smaller scale what happened in the United States. People would tend to invest in banks offering slightly higher rates of return. Of necessity, that higher return is earned by taking greater risks. A guarantee scheme would remove the moral hazard and shift the risk to the Government. There would then be no incentive to invest in a responsible bank paying a slightly lower rate of interest, because exactly the same guarantee would apply to all banks. No Government would be prepared to give such a guarantee to every depositor.

Some hon. Members referred to the commissions paid by local authorities. Local authorities are supposed to be sophisticated investors and could certainly have asked the brokers to state their commission. If the authorities were advised by their brokers to take certain actions they may have legal remedies, but that depends on the circumstances of each case. Local authorities are probably looking at that. I cannot offer much comfort on that score and, as I have said, it would be invidious for the Government to try to pick and choose between different creditors. Local authorities will have to live with the problems that they have created for themselves. Those problems may require more attention than it would be appropriate for me to

give, and questions about such matters should be addressed to Ministers at the Department of the Environment.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Will my hon. Friend deal with timing? Would it have been reasonable for the fraud to be detected earlier and for the bank to decide to close earlier? Or does he think, as some people argue, that it should not have been closed at all? Have we struck the right balance? Were the seven days during which the Chancellor, the Prime Minister and the Governors of the Bank of England knew about the situation well spent? It is quite an achievement to close a bank of that size in seven days.

Mr. Maples: My hon. Friend has made some good points. One of the misconceptions that many people have is that the first thing that a banking regulator would do if it got adverse information about a bank that it was regulating would be to close it down. In fact, the first thing that it would do would be to try to correct the problem. We have seen the awful problems that are created by the closing of a bank. It has to be the weapon of last resort. It is a serious step to take, and there has to be the evidence to support taking it. If there is any alternative, it should be pursued.

Two cases have been put to me this evening and on previous occasions. One is that the Bank of England closed BCCI too soon; the other is that it closed it too late. When a bank's licence is revoked, there are always arguments that it should have been done sooner, or that it should have been done later.

Mr. Vaz: In the short time that the Minister has left, will he direct his comments to the points that I raised about the negotiations which are going on with the sheikh, because many people would like to see the Government supporting such negotiations?

Mr. Maples: I cannot deal with all the hon. Gentleman's points, but as he has raised that one, I will deal with it. The best outcome, from everyone's point of view, would be an orderly rundown, with the co-operation of the major shareholder in a way which minimised depositors' losses. The major shareholders have proved themselves to be responsible, and we hope that they will co-operate in that rundown. The negotiations are between the Luxembourg liquidator and the Abu Dhabi authorities. It is for them to conduct the negotiations, but we should be happy if they had the outcome that the hon. Gentleman envisages.

Obtaining a winding-up order would not stop that process. If my memory of company law is right, if a winding-up order was obtained but the bank was put back in a financially sound position, it would still be possible for the order to be lifted and the winding-up process to stop. One has to go through with the order to get the deposit protection scheme activated.

The hon. Gentleman asked me why the sheikh and the Abu Dhabi authorities were not informed before the licence was revoked. The Bank of England came to the conclusion that the fraud was so deep and pervasive, and the losses so extensive, that there were no circumstances in which it would be possible to allow the bank to stay open, and nothing that the shareholders could have done, by way of changing management or injecting further funds, would have enabled the Bank of England to allow the licence to continue. The chances of putting together the sort of package that the hon. Gentleman envisages are remote, but I hope that it is possible. I would support such a move. If there is anything that anybody feels that we could do to facilitate that, we would do it, although the responsibility is with the main liquidator—the Luxembourg commissioner—who I understand is having talks with the Abu Dhabi authorities.

The hon. Gentleman asked why there had been no arrests. It is a bit early for that. The Serious Fraud Office has only had the papers since 5 July, and these are complex frauds, as will emerge if any cases come to trial. The hon. Gentleman asked whether the inquiry would have judicial authority. The answer is no. It will be set up in exactly the same way as the Lord Justice Taylor inquiry into the Hillsborough disaster, and the Wolff inquiry into prisons, not as a judicial inquiry. It is an inquiry into the supervisory authorities', the Governor's and the Bank of England's role in this.

The Prime Minister has made it clear that Ministers and Government officials and papers, and Bank of England officials and papers, will be made available to the inquiry without restriction. He went so far as to say that the Government would place no restrictions on what the inquiry had access to. If it becomes necessary for the inquiry to cast its net a little wider, we shall have to see whether it is necessarsy to give it further powers, but I hope that it will not be.

I am sorry that I have not been able to deal with all the points that the hon. Gentleman raised, but I will try to address the remaining ones in a letter.

Nuclear Deterrence

3.3 am

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): I start at this late hour by apologising to my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton), who will reply to the debate on behalf of the Government, and to the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers), who is Opposition spokesman on this subject. The lateness of the hour is not of my choosing, and, no doubt like them, I look forward to being in my bed ere too long.

I welcome the opportunity to debate, however briefly, the nuclear aspect of our defence policy, particularly as the conventional forces are almost certain to dominate the two-day debate that the House has scheduled for its return in October, and rightly so. The Government's proposals for the conventional forces, particularly the Army, are extremely dramatic and therefore need to be discussed in considerable detail.

This is a welcome opportunity for us to consider nuclear policy, albeit briefly. It surely warrants our consideration.

Although I am pleased to see that one or two Opposition Members are present, I am a little surprised that the Opposition Benches are not packed. Here is a chance for the Opposition—and, indeed, the rest of the country—to discern the Labour party's policy, at least for this week. There can be no doubt that there is a considerable element of shifting sands in Labour's nuclear policy.

I have taken a brief look at a document that is, I am sure, dear to many hearts: Labour's 1987 general election document, entitled "Britain Will Win". In fact Britain did win, because Labour did not. Page 15 of the document, commenting on Britain's place in a modern world, explains why Labour fought the election on a unilateralist ticket—which was, of course, rejected by the British people.

Two years later, Labour produced another document, "Looking to the Future", which spoke of a dynamic economy and a decent society, strong in Europe. That document was more vague, and—perhaps cleverly, from a political point of view—managed to avoid the subject of unilateralism entirely.

I suppose that, by 1991, the lure of the red boxes and the chauffeur-driven Montego had proved just a bit too much. It is now rather difficult to find out where the Opposition stand. However, the good old *Guardian* came to our help last week. As hon. Members will know, last week saw a lively exchange—in the spirit of modern, free debate—between the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), Labour's foreign affairs spokesman, and its transport spokesman, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott). We were granted the interesting spectacle of the pair slugging it out, courtesy of a national newspaper. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East was quoted as saying that his right hon. Friend—he may not have used that title—had "sown seeds of confusion and dillusionment". All that appeared in the wonderfully supportive *Guardian*.

There is confusion, not in the Tories' challenge but within the ranks of the shadow Cabinet. We can always rely on the Tories' friend, the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short), who described the contribution of the right hon. Member for Gorton as unwise and unprincipled, and continued in a similar vein. We should be lost without her, and the wonderful supply of quotes with which she provides us.

Even more interesting is the fact that the Leader of the Opposition himself has seen fit to withdraw from CND, leaving Bruce Kent as one of his beleaguered candidates—destined, no doubt, to be permanently in opposition. I feel slightly sorry for the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill), who is regarded by many—and rightly so—as a very nice man, but who simply does not feature in the shadow Cabinet. Perhaps, given the perpetual vote for a woman, his only way into the ranks would be to become a transvestite. I do not mean that cruelly; he is a good guy, but he has a hard wicket to fight in his own party, where confusion reigns. The situation is not helped by the leadership.

My party presented a very different history to the electorate, and it continues to endorse the same policy: a policy advocated by my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), who, when the USSR deployed its SS20 missiles, was adamant—sometimes in the face of considerable criticism within NATO and our European allies—that Britain would deploy the American cruise missile. There was no messing about; she warned the Soviets that, if they did it, we would match it. She meant what she said, and the Kremlin knew it.

I think that it is fair to say that the Soviets understand strength. Perhaps that is why they treat the Leader of the Opposition so discourteously: they also understand weakness. I am convinced that the progress made in eastern Europe will be judged by history to owe a good deal to the steadfastness of my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley, who played a substantial part in the arms reductions that are now taking place, and which we hope that all sides will welcome.

It is, I suppose, right for the House to consider—even at 3.8 am—whether there is a continuing role for military force in inter-state relations. I would argue that there is. We still live in a very unsettled world. Who could argue against the proposition that Europe is still far from stable? Undoubtedly the threat of nuclear war is colossal and way beyond anything that high-explosive weaponry could achieve, although those who have witnessed high-explosive weapons say that the devastation they cause is substantial, if not on the scale of a nuclear war. Even a dictator like Saddam Hussein understood the threat, and refrained from chemical bombing during the Gulf war.

The east-west balance has prevailed for 40 years, but who can judge just how far a conflict would escalate amid the confusion of a major war? There would always be the doubted intention, the doubted action. Most of all, there would be the certainty of ability. That certainty of ability has enabled us to each the stage that we have reached in all the international negotiations.

I would argue that nuclear weapons are still a much-needed cornerstone of our defence policy. We all wish the scale to be reduced, and we should like the capacity reduced. I hope, however, that most of us see the sense of keeping and modernising our nuclear defence arsenal. If anyone is tempted to think that the Soviet economy is now down to a brush and a couple of ponies, he should look at table 4 of the defence statement that the House will consider in October, which still shows a substantial balance in favour of the Soviet forces in terms of nuclear arms.

To look on the bright side, the intermediate nuclear forces treaty was concluded between the USSR and the USA in May. United Kingdom involvement in that has ceased. All the ground-launched cruise missiles were withdrawn in December 1988 from RAF Molesworth, and in March of this year from Greenham Common. I am sure that the House will have considered the defence estimates and the statement, particularly paragraph 319, which shows that the Government welcome the strategic arms reduction treaty, agreed between the USSR and the USA. The Washington summit last June saw that framework agreement signed. Undoubtedly there is a will on all sides to reduce the burden of such a large arsenal.

The question remains, however, whether it is right for the United Kingdom to pursue the Trident programme as our national system. My party believes that that is the case and will continue to stand by it, whereas the Opposition, as far as I am aware—perhaps we shall be told differently in this debate—are still committed to its removal by the year 2000, although there seems to be some doubt about that in the shadow Cabinet. The debate provides them with an opportunity to set the record straight.

I suspect that much ground could be covered during this short debate—not only nuclear testing and nuclear proliferation but alternative defence strategies—but this is neither the time nor the place to do so. What remains the case is that, as with French socialists and capitalists alike, the Conservative party has always understood the uncertain world in which we live. Perhaps we are slightly more cynical or, as we would prefer to call it, more realistic, but our policies have been prudent and will continue to be prudent for the long-term integrity of our national security. The general public know that. They considered that fact in 1983 and 1987 and stood by us. I believe, therefore, that, as the public know us, they trust us. It is right that they should continue to do so.

3.12 am

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): This is a very interesting and important occasion. We are talking about the nuclear deterrent. There have been massive changes in eastern Europe. The Soviet bloc is no longer there. The threat that it posed was never there in the first place, but it was used as an excuse to build up our nuclear forces, at very great expense and sacrifice by the British people.

Justification for the nuclear deterrent was shot to pieces, to use a military phrase, by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Clark) who said, in effect, in a debate in this House in 1981 that the Soviet Union had been in decline ever since that high point of 1948 at the time of the Berlin airlift, and that it was beginning to lose control over various parts of the Soviet empire. The right hon. Gentleman's highly thoughtful speech was entirely contrary to the general trend of speeches in that debate. It was remarkably far-sighted, because the right hon. Gentleman, who is now Minister of State for Defence Procurement, said that the Soviet Union was not so strong as successive Conservative Governments had claimed, that it had serious weaknesses, and that it did not pose a threat. I agreed with the right hon. Gentleman, but our expenditure on nuclear weapons kept increasing. We embarked on the Polaris programme in 1962 and are now faced with the Trident nuclear missile programme.

The nuclear deterrent is a myth, because the Polaris programme is not what it used to be. To varying degrees, all the Polaris submarines are suffering from cracks in their cooling systems which make them dangerous in operation. Only one of the four-boat system is available for use. In May, Greenpeace produced a report entitled, "Bring Polaris Home". The Ministry of Defence did not reply to the questions that that study posed. Greenpeace expressed serious concern that HMS Resolution, Renown, Repulse and Revenge have serious defects. They were launched in 1966 and were designed to last for only 20 years, but they are still in use. A cloak of security prevents us from getting answers to the questions that were asked in that important report, which suggests that in reality we can hardly manage to put one Polaris boat to sea.

Over several years, we have trusted the Soviet Union. Rather curiously, the Central Electricity Generating Board and the Scottish Electricity Generating Board had a uranium enrichment contract with the Soviet Union which was concluded in 1975. Some 170 tonnes of uranium per annum were supplied in the form of uranium hexafluoride. It returned from the Soviet Union as enriched uranium or as tails—that is, depleted uranium. The enriched uranium was needed for incorporation in civil reactor fuel. If it is further enriched, it can be used for bomb material.

The Government told us that the Soviet Union was a powerful organised nuclear threat to civilisation, yet they authorised a contract between a publicly owned body and the Soviet Union to enrich uranium—the basic process for producing nuclear weapons.

Moreover, the Soviet Union did not keep the uranium that the CEGB and the Scottish generating board supplied. It was perfectly honest and scrupulous in its dealings with this most powerful and dangerous material. Did the Government intervene to stop the contract? Apparently they did not regard the Soviet Union as such a threat that they felt that they had to stop the contract. It was a quite an irony.

If we are to maintain the fiction of the nuclear deterrent, someone has to be prepared to use it. If it is not going to be used, it is not a deterrent, but a complete myth.

The Minister will confirm that the Government and the Prime Minister are prepared to press the button. That means that the Minister, apparently an affable and quite innocent man, is prepared to become party to one of the biggest acts of mass extermination in human history. He and the Government are prepared to embark on killing on a scale that will make Hitler and Pol Pot look like amateurs. They may say that they do not want to do that, that it would be a failure of the nuclear deterrent if they did so, and that they would desperately wish to avoid doing it, but at the end of the argument, they will say that they are prepared to do it. I reject that attitude. I reject a relationship of our country to any other country based on the threat of mass extermination.

Other countries share my view. I do not mean countries with communist or even left-wing Governments. Let us consider Canada which is under a Conservative Government. At Heads of State meetings, the Prime Minister of Canada talks with a fellow Conservative when he meets the British Prime Minister. Canada has a Conservative Government and a Prime Minister who would ally himself with the range of values and attitudes that the British Government claim to support. But Canada will not have nuclear weapons on its soil.

It is extraordinary that our Government believe, uniquely, that it is necessary for our country, virtually

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

uniquely, to have nuclear weapons, whereas other Conservative Governments reject that attitude. They are not alone. In NATO, there are countries that reject the deployment and use of nuclear weapons, such as Denmark and Norway.

If we decided, as I believe that we should, to get rid of our nuclear weapons, we should not be isolated; we should be joining the majority of nations. How do we know that? When I was first re-elected to the House in 1987, I raised the question of the United Nations nuclear non-proliferation treaty with the Minister. I vividly recall that he said that this country was not a signatory to the treaty. He had to write a letter to me subsequently, however, to say that he had examined the matter and discovered that this country was indeed a signatory to the treaty.

The "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1991" makes it clear that the Government regard the nuclear non-proliferation treaty as being extremely important. I quote from paragraph 323 of the statement, which has not been debated by the House yet:

"The NPT Review Conference in September last year demonstrated the wide support for the NPT's objectives, with agreement being reached on most issues. We regret that consensus on a final document was blocked by the Mexican delegation, but the Conference nevertheless achieved a full review of the operation of the Treaty, and demonstrated its continuing importance as a cornerstone of world security."

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): I remember the incident, when I had been in office for a very short time, extremely well. I actually said —the hon. Gentleman will remember this—that the United Kingdom was not covered by the part of the non-proliferation treaty that he was going on about. I had to write to the hon. Gentleman to provide a full explanation of that. I never said that we were not a signatory to the non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Cryer: I do not have the *Hansard* quotation in front of me, but I accept the Minister's correction. It is virtually what I said anyhow. What is important is that that demonstrates the priority that is given in the big fat briefing document that Ministers get when they get into office. The civil servants say to them, "This is your brief, Minister—this is what you've got to learn as a background to your Department." At that stage, the nuclear non-proliferation treaty was obviously not one of the headlines.

The quotation from the current "Statement on the Defence Estimates" shows that the Government, a signatory to the important nuclear non-proliferation treaty, recognise its importance for the preservation of the planet. Under clause 6 of that treaty, the nuclear power signatories are called upon to negotiate in good faith to get rid of nuclear weapons from their soil. The Soviet Union and the United States, both signatories, have done that because they have got rid of intermediate nuclear weapons with the removal of cruise missiles.

The United Kingdom has done nothing. What is worse is that the United Kingdom has embarked on replacing the Polaris nuclear weapon with the more powerful Trident nuclear weapon. I believe that we are therefore in breach of United Nations nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

In our document "Meet the Challenge: Make the Change", we make it clear that we support the United Nations treaty. Any Government who support that treaty are committed to getting rid of nuclear weapons by virtue of clause 6.

It is worth noting what the move from Polaris, creaking and defective though it is, to Trident will mean. In the Polaris system, there are three warheads per missile and 16 missiles per submarine. In the Trident D5 programme, there are still 16 missiles per submarine, but the number of warheads per missile has leapt to 14. Therefore, the total number of warheads per submarine is no longer 48 but has shot up to a maximum of 272, or, on average, 224.

Under the Polaris system the four submarines can carry a total of 192 warheads, but under the Trident D5 programme the submarines will carry 896, with a possible maximum of 1,088. The yield per warhead is 200 kilotonnes in the Polaris system and between 100 and 200 kilotonnes in the Trident system. The total yield for all the missiles is 38,400 kilotonnes in the Polaris system and between 89,600 and 217,600 kilotonnes in the Trident system. In the case of Polaris, the maximum number of targets is 64, but Trident offers a maximum of between 896 and 1,088.

The Government are intent on developing the Trident missile and installing it in submarines. Where will those dreadful weapons of mass extermination be targeted? It would be interesting to hear the answer from the Minister, but it is a secret. We are not allowed to know which section of the planet the Government propose to subject to mass extermination. What an extraordinary and absurd set of circumstances.

We believe that those weapons will be aimed at the Soviet Union. Just last week, a lot of Conservatives were grovelling around Mr. Gorbachev when he visited the Terrace. One of my hon. Friends wanted to know what Mr. Gorbachev was doing with all those Conservatives. After all, they are the very people who have argued that Mr. Gorbachev and all the other Soviet citizens should be the target of our nuclear deterrents. Considered in those terms, it is absolutely outrageous. The Prime Minister is toadying around Mr. Gorbachev and inviting him here while at the same time pointing a pistol to his head and saying, in effect, "If I determine that the Soviet Union is a threat, I shall kill your men, women and children."

The Government are supposed to be concerned with green issues. What sort of green country would this be if the button were pressed and those weapons were used? It would not be a country in which Greenpeace would get the Conservative vote—it would be a radioactive cinder heap. There would be nothing left. It would be the end of civilisation as we know it. Yet that scenario is implied when the Government or anyone else talk about deploying nuclear weapons. It is morally unacceptable and outrageous.

The United Nations non-proliferation treaty is supported by 141 non-nuclear nations—two of which the Government do not recognise—which have said that they will not deploy or manufacture nuclear weapons. Those nations have had a number of review conferences. The statement on the defence estimates indicates some of the difficulties. They are not spelt out very clearly, but the document says:

"We regret that consensus on a final document was blocked by the Mexican delegation".

That happened because the signatories to that treaty are a bit fed up with the nuclear signatories. The vast majority of the nations of the world—those 141 signatories—have

signed the non-proliferation treaty. They have implicitly bargained that they will not manufacture or deploy nuclear weapons if the nuclear signatories agree to get rid of their nuclear weapons. They see no reason why they should reject nuclear weapons if other countries insist on having them. On three occasions, the review conferences have said that they are not satisfied with the United Kingdom Government's attitude in retaining nuclear weapons, seeming to do nothing to get rid of Polaris submarines and manufacturing and deploying Trident nuclear submarines with their massive increase in missiles, delivery, firepower and accuracy.

One of the dangers of the world is that some of those nations might withdraw from the United Nations non-proliferation treaty and start to manufacture and deploy nuclear weapons. The Government will then say, "How terrible—you should not have nuclear weapons", and they will ask what God-given right the United Kingdom has to tell them that they should not have nuclear weapons when it has them. The hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway), who introduced the debate, said that nuclear weapons are important. I do not share his view, and neither do the vast majority of the nations of the world. Some of those nations might decide to do as the United Kingdom does rather than as it says. The Government says that the non-proliferation treaty is important—so important that, if a country like Iraq wants nuclear weapons, the United Kingdom and United States Governments are prepared to bomb the sites where they are being developed. That comes pretty rich from countries that have developed nuclear weapons.

I agree that Iraq, which is a signatory country to the United Nations nuclear non-proliferation treaty, is utterly wrong even to attempt to develop nuclear weapons. There must be an international regime to supervise any nation that develops nuclear weapons. It should dismantle, and prevent the sale of, equipment that can be used for the development of nuclear weapons. That is clearly important, and the nuclear non-proliferation treaty provides a vehicle for that. That treaty may not be a perfect, but at least it is a vehicle, on which we must build. We must not erode it or criticise those nations which have declared that they will not have nuclear weapons on their soil. We should join those countries, not say that we need four expensive nuclear-powered submarines stuffed to the gills with nuclear weapons at a cost of £10,000 million.

It is morally outrageous for any Government to spend £10,000 million on nuclear weapons. They cannot be used, because that would mean self-destruction. The vast majority of the world's nations do not need nuclear weapons—they need food, shelter and clothing. Every week Parliament is in session, questions are tabled about some region of starvation or deprivation, either in our own country or abroad. There are people in the United Kingdom living on the poverty line in inadequate housing and rotten conditions. A fortnight ago, there was a sleep-out in London to demonstrate against the cardboard cities springing up in major towns and cities throughout the country.

We know about the massive levels of starvation in Africa and the Sahel, where men, women and children virtually die in front of the television cameras. While the charities get to work drawing our attention to the terrible plight, the Government continue to spend money on nuclear weapons rather than introducing a programme to switch those great assets and facilities, and the ability of people in Barrow-in-Furness, to make items which could help to develop, maintain, preserve and enhance life both at home and abroad.

Engineering skills could be developed in Barrow, but instead, thousands of people have been sacked. Defence expenditure has not saved all jobs. As the Minister knows, there have been massive sackings, and there will be more. The conditions in eastern Europe which, some argue, precipitated expenditure on nuclear weapons, have changed. It is claimed that we are no longer threatened by the Soviet Union, but we are still going ahead with Trident nuclear submarines and the nuclear missile programme. That does not make sense, and it is a moral outrage when so many people in our country and others throughout the world are deprived of the means of achieving a decent standard of living and preserving their place on the planet.

There is so much work to be done on the planet. The ozone layer over Europe is thinning. We are in difficulties because of our abuse of the planet. Yet the Government spend £10,000 million producing weapons that we cannot use. If we ever used them, it would be curtains for all of us —we are pointing a gun at all our heads. There will be no clear distinction between defence and defended, attackers and defenders. There will be no time for that. The possession of nuclear weapons is an outrage against democracy. Has there been any consultation? Has the Prime Minister included in his charter of rights the right for people not to be slaughtered by the Government? Will people be able to say, "I don't want the Government to use nuclear weapons—I want to live"?

The phrase "Better red than dead" no longer applies because the redness is disappearing into a pale pink imitation. The phrase will be, "Is it better to be pink than dead?" The power to press the button will not be spread throughout the nation or even given to part of it. That power will be in the hands of a tiny clique—the Prime Minister, one or two cronies, and the chiefs of staff. That decision will be taken wholly undemocratically. It is a complete and utter outrage against humanity.

When the next Labour Government achieve office, they will express their support for a nuclear non-proliferation treaty. If people really mean what they say about that treaty, they must get rid of nuclear weapons.

There is a powerful case against nuclear weapons. If we had any sense, we would produce a plan for switching the engineering skills used in their manufacture to peaceful uses for the benefit of mankind. We would be able to help the wretched, starving nations of the world, and join with the majority of nations—including those headed by conservative Governments—who say no to nuclear weapons and will not allow them on their soil. We would also improve our civil liberties. The development and possession of nuclear weapons and our links with the United States in that respect is an erosion of our civil liberties.

I have in my hand a facsimile of the front cover of the *New Statesman* for 18 July 1980, which refers to

"The Billion dollar phone tap",

and to Menwith hill monitoring station, which is described as

"America's big ear in the heart of Yorkshire."

It reports:

"America taps into our international telephone network in the cause of defending freedom".

That may be done not wholly in the cause of defending freedom but in that of defending American commercial

[Mr. Cryer]

interests, as was done when the Americans interfered to stop the sale of BA146 aircraft—peaceful, civil aircraft—to Iran. Menwith hill was authorised without Parliament's approval. That sort of interference was exemplified also by the withdrawal of trade union rights at GCHQ. It is all part of a parcel.

I have supported the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament since it began in the 1960s, and I shall continue to do so. It is morally right and makes pragmatic sense. If we join the majority of nations by getting rid of Trident, we shall be on the side of the moral majority.

3.42 am

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) on his powerful speech. One may not agree with some of his premises, arguments and conclusions, but he speaks a lot of sense.

I enjoyed also the speech of the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway). No one is more arrogant than a Conservative talking about defence. It bucks one up at three o'clock in the morning to hear an arch-Conservative wrapping himself round with the Union Jack again. The hon. Gentleman gave us an analysis of Labour policy, but not of that of his own party, whose defence history he appears to have forgotten in respect of its geopolitical interests over the years.

The hon. Gentleman's history conveniently stopped at 1945. He did not delve back 10 years before that, when one of the predecessors of the present Secretary of State for Defence was a great buddy of the Nazis in Hitler's Germany. The Conservative party also enjoyed a strong and healthy relationship with Saddam Hussein for some years, and with other dictators throughout the world. I am sure that the Conservatives are proud of their history, although they do not recount it very often. Instead, they claim to be the party of defence—and that is an awful arrogance. It is appalling.

The hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham talked about being realistic, but I would say that the Conservative party is opportunistic. Opposition Members do not need lessons on patriotism from Conservative Members. Many of us find it deeply insulting when Conservative Members, who have dallied with many opponents of Britain for purely financial and economic interests, decide to give us lectures on patriotism. Most of my constituents find that attitude insulting. In villages and towns throughout the country—in wool towns, cotton towns and mining towns—where people have always voted Labour and have always been socialists, there are cenotaphs and memorials. Those people are as interested in the defence of their country as anyone else.

It is unfortunate that the Conservative party starts to talk about patriotism when we are coming up to a general election. They cause divisions by talking about a commitment to defend Britain, and that only causes harm. When we are faced with a danger, however, the Conservative party always wants everyone to get together to form a united front. That is what we did during the Gulf war. As soon as it was over, the Minister of State for the Armed Forces said that the Labour party was not really with the Government. I suppose that he has had to withdraw that insult. I have never known such condemnation to be voiced by supporters of the Conservative party and Conservative Members. I remember the many Members who came up to me and said that the Minister had ruined the debate by making that awful statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Will the hon. Gentleman admit that the Opposition's policy—I am not saying that they did not back the action when the conflict started—was to wait for sanctions to work?

Mr. Rogers: It was clearly stated that we wanted sanctions to have the maximum effect so as to secure a peaceful resolution of the conflict. When the Minister starts rattling his sabre, he knows in his heart of hearts that we were lucky to lose so few in the Gulf war. If the losses had been as horrendous as some thought they might be, I do not know whether the arguments that the Minister advanced and his statements following the war would have washed.

The hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham talked about the changes in Labour party policy. I cannot see that there is any problem in changing one's political views. Surely it is a sign of political maturity. Everyone has said that the world has changed, that the Russian threat no longer exists and that we are facing a completely different set of circumstances. What is wrong with a change of political views in those circumstances?

I understand the problem of change for the Conservative party. Its attitudes are neanderthal and fossilised. Conservative Members are in a groove and it seems that they cannot move out of it. Their policies are the same now as those which prevailed during the Crimea war and which created the slaughter in Flanders. We know that the Conservative party is incapable of adjusting, and we are only too well aware of the disasters that it brings upon the country from time to time.

The Labour party sees changes in political views as signs of political maturity. If we are presented with a different set of circumstances, we can adapt our policies for the benefit of the nation. It seems from what Conservative Members say from time to time that they would welcome a Labour party that said, "In the circumstances, we might want to adopt a multilateralist stance rather than a unilateralist position." Why condemn us? I thought that that was the policy that Conservative Members wanted us to adopt.

Mr. Conway: I talked about the French socialist Government and the French capitalist Government. Many of us would be pleased if the major parties of Britain had the same views on defence, and I am sure that the electorate would be pleased as well. The hon. Gentleman talks about my party's neanderthal way of thinking and the maturity or otherwise of political development. On which level of maturity does he put the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) and the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott)? Their views are diametrically opposed. Who is neanderthal man in the shadow Cabinet?

Mr. Rogers: It is the opposite—they are not Neanderthalic, they are two mature politicians discussing their differences, and why not? What is the matter with political argument and discussion? That is actually

beginning to happen in the Conservative party. The schoolmistress has gone; she is no longer whipping the boys into shape.

Some dissention is developing in the Tory party, which is now the party of argument on all sorts of issues. During the last Army debate, the former Secretary of State for Defence attacked the present Secretary of State and told him where he was going wrong. There have been wide dissensions on European issues.

As the hon. Gentleman has pushed me, I am grateful for this opportunity to place on record the Labour party's position on nuclear deterrence. We believe that the best method of enhancing Britain's security is through the achievement of properly inspected and verified international disarmament treaties. The case for further discussions on nuclear disarmament talks is strong, and that has already been recognised by both the United States and the Soviet Union.

In a joint statement on 1 June 1991, the USA and the Soviet Union agreed that

"reducing the risk of outbreak of nuclear war is the responsibility not only of the USA and the USSR and that other states should also make their contribution towards the attainment of this objective. In particular, in the field of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons they call upon all states to consider the new opportunities for engagements in mankind's common effort to remove the risk of outbreak of nuclear war world wide."

We have considered the new opportunities to reduce the risk of the outbreak of nuclear war, and we wish to make our contribution. We know that more work is required, but hope that working with other nuclear powers we can begin talks on a START 2 agreement. We believe that British pressure could act as a catalyst for START 2. President Mitterrand has indicated French willingness to participate in the disarmament process. In addition, the French have committed themselves to signing the non-proliferation treaty. Given a sufficient weight of world opinion, the Chinese could also be persuaded to begin disarmament discussions. Once those discussions are under way, Britain should participate until they are successfully concluded with an agreement by all nuclear powers completely to eliminate those weapons.

Complementary to that work will be the need to strengthen the non-proliferation treaty. Controlling the spread of nuclear weapons needs to be tackled at two levels. First, we need to take steps to make it more difficult to obtain nuclear weapons manufacturing technology. In particular, the inspection and verification measures need to have more teeth. Secondly, we must address the motives of states seeking to obtain nuclear weapons manufacturing technology. There are understandable reasons for such attempts, which relate to regional security concerns. The United Nations should be much more involved in attempts to resolve such regional problems.

There have been a number of proposals to ban nuclear testing, although it must be said that some of them have been made after the proponents of that line have just completed a nuclear test programme. The Labour party does not recognise a need for nuclear testing. Other methods, apart from full-scale nuclear testing, can be used to ensure the technical effectiveness and safety of British nuclear weapons. Testing the non-nuclear components of nuclear weapons, computer simulation modelling and other forms of non-destructive testing could be used to provide satisfactory evidence of the technical effectiveness and safety of British nuclear weapons. The only real need for testing would be in the development of new warheads, which is not likely to happen under the START process.

Anti-ballistic technology also needs to be studied. The spread of ballistic missile technology to many countries is alarming. The Government must not only strengthen the missile technology control regime, which is designed to limit the spread of ballistic missile technology, but consider their position on that technology.

3.55 am

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): This has been a short, but interesting, debate. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway) on raising the important subject of nuclear deterrence. He pointed out that in 1987 Labour's manifesto was unilateral. Labour believed in nuclear disarmament and believed that Britain should get rid of its nuclear weapons without any corresponding gestures from other countries.

Since then, there has been a slight adaptation of that policy in the 1989 document, "Meet the Challenge: Make the Change", which basically said that Britain should negotiate away its nuclear weapons. There was a flaw in that argument. If there had not been any START 2 talks, to which the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) referred, we would have negotiated away our nuclear weapons and only a small part of the Soviet nuclear arsenal would have been reduced in return. That would have left Britain with no nuclear deterrent and the Soviet Union with enormous numbers of such weapons.

As I understand it, "Meet the Challenge: Make the Change" was approved by a two thirds majority at a Labour party conference. If any Labour Member would like to correct me, I should be grateful for that. I believe that the Labour party conference is responsible for making Labour party policy. If a policy were to be changed, it would be necessary for the party conference to approve it. Is that the position? I am more than happy to give way to any Labour Member who wishes to answer.

Mr. Rogers: I would bow to any right hon. or hon. Friend who wishes to correct me, but, as I understand it, the conference makes a policy recommendation to the leadership of the Labour party which then constructs a manifesto upon which the election is fought. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will accept that the position is quite different from his description.

Mr. Hamilton: As I understand it, a Labour party conference makes recommendations to the Labour party leadership, which can ignore them or take them up, if that happens to suit the leadership. Is that the position? Even if a two thirds majority is in favour of a motion that has been passed at the party conference, that makes no difference, because it can be overridden by the leadership. It is important to understand the position taken on these documents.

Mr. Rogers: How does the Conservative party arrive at its policy?

Mr. Hamilton: The Conservative party has never been tied to conference motions, so we are in a different position. I was not responsible for changing the constitution of the Labour party. I thought that the Labour party believed that policy should be decided by the

[Mr. Hamilton]

party conference. It is interesting that that party is moving from that position and now says that the party leadership can ignore any motions made by the party conference, even if there is a two thirds majority. It is important to discover where we stand on all this.

Mr. Cryer: It is interesting that the Minister is exploring the democracy of the Labour party. I suggest that he looks to the democracy of the Tory party which is notable for its absence. "Meet the Challenge: Make the Change" was carried overwhelmingly at the Labour party conference. There was not a card vote on it, so there may or may not have been a two thirds majority. No one can say that with any authority. The Labour party conference does the groundwork for the compilation of an election manifesto in a democratic way, and long may the Labour party's democracy continue—in stark contrast with the authoritarian, elitist regime of the Tories.

Mr. Hamilton: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that contribution. Where do we now stand? "Meet the Challenge: Make the Change" was an important document. It received the overwhelming support of the Labour party conference, but that policy now seems to have been changed.

I respect the hon. Gentleman's strong feelings on nuclear deterrence and the undesirability of nuclear weapons. I do not agree with his arguments, but he feels them strongly. I should have thought that the changes in Labour party policy to which the hon. Member for Rhondda referred must put him in a rather difficult position, but perhaps we can explore that later.

Conservative Members have come to realise the importance of nuclear deterrence. War in Europe has been prevented by a range of deterrents, conventional as well as nuclear, but many of us feel that the nuclear component is the most important, bearing in mind the fact that we have in the past been faced with the enormously superior numbers of forces of the Warsaw pact and the Soviet Union which we have been unable to match on the ground. The possibility of nuclear war breaking out if we ever were invaded has long been one of the principal reasons for our avoiding war in Europe.

My hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham spoke of the INF deployment—a significant move, backed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) and President Reagan, to deploy cruise and Pershing in Europe. The deployment of those missiles was one of the most significant things that forced the Soviet Union to the negotiating table and resulted in the first significant treaty on intermediate nuclear forces which started the whole business of negotiating away large amounts of nuclear arsenals between the Americans and the Soviet Union.

It is significant that the deployment of cruise and Pershing was robustly opposed by the Opposition throughout and there has been no act of contrition since then admitting that this was a good policy and that the Labour party was wrong. That policy produced remarkable results in terms of subsequent arms reduction negotiations.

The Government have always taken the view that it is important that we have our own independent nuclear deterrent. It was becoming apparent that Polaris could not go on indefinitely and needed to be replaced by a decent system. That is why we are investing in the Trident system which the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) says is extremely expensive. However, the figure will be taken over a number of years and, when I last looked, it was on average about 3 per cent. of the defence budget. Compared with other forms of defence spending, in terms of deterrent effect the Trident system is good value for money.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South made a robust and interesting speech which did not seem to quite tie in with the latest pronouncements on Labour party policy. He said that there has never been a threat from the Soviet Union. That view is not supported by any military analysis of the fact that the Soviet Union and its Warsaw pact allies have in the past practised exercises for making serious inroads into western Europe and across the inner German border. We have been aware of several of their plans which have posed a serious threat.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South referred to weaknesses in the Soviet system which, he said, made it impossible for the House to take the Soviet Union seriously as a military enemy. For a long time there have indeed been serious weaknesses in the Soviet economy, but they never seemed to extend to the Soviet defences, which seemed almost the only part of the system that really worked. The Soviets have produced massive numbers of submarines, missiles, tanks, and so on. The general view is that they have a sophisticated defence manufacturing industry and a great capability in terms of producing equipment and of training service men.

Mr. Cryer: When discussing the long-term weakness of the Soviet Union, I was paraphrasing a speech made by a Minister of State, Ministry of Defence in March 1981.

Mr. Hamilton: I have made it clear that the military capability of the Soviet Union has exhibited great strengths. We should not think that the whole place was so inherently weak, corrupt and rotten to the core that it posed no military threat.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South talked with great vehemence about mass extermination. The hon. Gentleman always goes on about how nuclear weapons are the only form of weapon that can kill large numbers of people. During the last war—in which, I agree, atom bombs were dropped on Japan—the fighting in Europe seemed to account for a very large number of service men being killed. They died in their tens of thousands, and millions of civilians died at the same time. It is naive to propose that only nuclear weapons kill people in large numbers. There is no evidence that large numbers of people are not also killed in conventional wars.

We want to avoid war. The question is how that can best be done. The massive destructive power of nuclear weapons has been an important component in ensuring that we have had no war in Europe since 1945.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South has said that Canada will not have nuclear weapons on its soil. As he said, the same applies to Denmark and Norway. It is worth pointing out, however, that Canada, Denmark and Norway have all signed up to the NATO treaty and at meetings of NATO Ministers they have accepted the importance of nuclear deterrents as part of NATO's arsenal. So the Canadians, Danes and Norwegians are in the fortunate position of being able to come under the

protection of other countries' nuclear deterrents, even though they have decided not to have them on their own soil. NATO has collectively benefited from the nuclear weapons held by the Americans, the United Kingdom and, to a lesser extent, the French.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South said that the United Kingdom had done nothing under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. It has always been understood that the onus is on the Soviet Union and the United States, which have the most weapons to negotiate away. We look to them to start the negotiating process, as they have in fact been doing. The United Kingdom has a minimum nuclear deterrent. As the hon. Gentleman said, the capability of the Trident system is greater than that of Polaris, but, as a percentage of overall warheads, it does not give any great increase. At a time of increasing sophistication, Trident is the minimum that we need to be able to say that we have a nuclear deterrent. The hon. Gentleman cannot argue that we should negotiate away our minimum deterrent when many other countries still have nuclear weapons.

Does the hon. Member for Bradford, South think that the Labour party has changed its policy or that it is radically different? Does that conflict with his membership of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament? I understand that the Leader of the Opposition has decided to allow his membership of CND to lapse and I gather that other Opposition Members are being encouraged to do the same. Does the hon. Member for Bradford, South think that his membership of CND totally conflicts with Labour party policy or does he think that Labour's policy has not changed very much? The hon. Gentleman spoke vehemently on the matter and I shall give way if he wants to tell us where he stands.

The hon. Gentlemen is typical of many Opposition Members, because about 140 of them are members of CND. Will they allow their membership to lapse? If they do, it will raise the question why they joined in the beginning. I thought that membership of CND stemmed from great convictions about the evil of possessing nuclear weapons and was not the sort of strong moral conviction that one simply allows to lapse.

Mr. Rogers: The Minister seems determined to drivel on at this time of the morning. Before he finishes drivelling, can he say how many Conservative Members were once members of the National Front?

Mr. Hamilton: The National Front has nothing to do with this, and I should be very surprised if any Conservative Members were ever members of the National Front. No Conservative Member has ever been a member of CND, and the Conservative party has been united in its resolve to have an independent nuclear deterrent.

Mr. Cryer: The Minister should be careful about saying that there have been no supporters of CND in the Tory party. I well remember going to a CND demonstration at Lakenham and seeing a group of Conservatives holding a large banner saying, "Conservatives against nuclear weapons". Perhaps those people have been scoured from the Conservative party. Labour is a very democratic party and encourages discussion and argument. In a democratic party there is always room for policy changes and movements. Many people in the Labour party are anxious to see a Labour Government, because they believe that such a Government will be far more sympathetic than the present Government to implementation of the United Nations non-proliferation treaty. I am staggered that the Minister should dismiss in a couple of sentences his Government's total inactivity on that treaty. That is absolutely appalling.

Mr. Hamilton: I am a little bemused by that, because the hon. Member for Bradford, South spoke vehemently about the matter and his membership of CND seemed to be important to him. There comes a time when one's party changes its policy so radically on some issues that the only course that an honourable person can adopt is to reject the Whip. The hon. Gentleman seems to be changing his position on the issue and falling in behind the non-proliferation treaty. He either feels that the changes are not very substantial or that they are substantial but he is prepared to live with them. His attitude does not quite tie in with the vehemence of his speech, which seemed to come from the heart.

Mr. Conway: My right hon. Friend is prodding a sore in a way that some Labour Members would prefer that he did not. Did he see the deputy leader of the Opposition being interviewed, admittedly at a late hour, on Channel 4 last Thursday? The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) was asked about unilateralism. In the words of the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers), he made some arrogant but failed attempts at humility, and said that while he stayed soundly in the multilateral camp, his party had moved way across to the left in the 1987 manifesto, and had come back in a full circle to his position. Is not the difference the fact that the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) is talking about individual members of the Conservative party who held no office and certainly were not Members of Parliament? No member of the parliamentary Conservative party holds a unilateralist position, and——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The House is debating the Adjournment. The hon. Gentlemen can make only one speech.

Mr. Conway: That is so. I am reminding my right hon. Friend——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentlemen was intervening at too great a length.

Mr. Hamilton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for reminding me of those facts. The Labour party is in great confusion over this, and the embarrassment is clear for all to see.

The hon. Member for Rhondda referred to the need for properly inspected and verified treaties under international control, saying that that was what the Labour party now stands for, that START 2 should take place, and that British presssure was needed to bring this about. That may be the understatement of the year. I have not heard from the Americans that people want START 2, and a great deal of pressure would be needed to begin the talks.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the great ideal moment when there would be agreement by all nuclear powers to eliminate nuclear weapons. There is a problem about that, in that one has strong suspicions that there are some countries which have nuclear weapons but do not admit to having them. Will those countries be included in the treaties? Will they be talking about the nuclear weapons that in theory they do not have? Will they be gathered up

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in the talks or shall we impose external verification or inspection on them, even when they say that they do not have nuclear weapons?

We must establish whether Labour party policy is to keep our independent nuclear deterrent if we cannot be confident that the talks will produce the miraculous result that no other country has nuclear weapons, as the hon. Gentleman thinks that they might. I cannot see a point at which we could be confident that that had happened. I also do not think that the scenario suggested by the hon. Member for Bradford, South—that if we got rid of our nuclear weapons, other countries would follow suit—would materialise. Many of the countries that one suspects have nuclear weapons have them for their perceived security interest, not because they feel threatened by super-powers with nuclear weapons.

Mr. Cryer: My argument was that we should strengthen the United Nations nuclear non-proliferation treaty—that other countries would miraculously follow our example and get rid of their weapons. Does the Minister regard it as desirable that we should try to reduce nuclear weapons stakes?

Mr. Hamilton: Absolutely—that is one of the essential parts of our policy, and has been for a long time. We entirely support the non-proliferation treaty. We must, however, be completely confident that no other country holds nuclear weapons, before we negotiate away our own independent nuclear deterrent. The same is true virtually everywhere in the world. At a time when we had good reason to believe that other countries were holding nuclear weapons, negotiating our deterrent away would have put Britain's entire defence in jeopardy and would have been a great mistake.

The debate has taken us a little way towards finding out what Labour's policy is. In the autumn, the Labour party conference may give us a chance to see whether the so-called new policy has any support among the rank and file, who pride themselves on being so democratic in their decision-making. Perhaps they will support the policy change—if, indeed, it is a change. However, we should all be much happier if we could be convinced that if the negotiations that Labour constantly talks about do not come to fruition, a Labour Government would definitely keep our independent nuclear deterrent and we would continue to possess Trident.

High Court Judges

4.20 am

Mr. Peter Archer (Warley, West): I am grateful, despite the hour, for the opportunity to air this issue. I am also grateful to my hon. Friends, and to the Solicitor-General and his hon. Friends, for their long vigil. This problem is causing some disquiet and the debate may enable some misunderstandings to be resolved.

At the Lord Mayor's dinner for the judiciary, the Lord Chief Justice said that the Government had failed to respond to repeated calls for more High Court judges, particularly in the Queen's bench, and that the system was near breaking point. The Lord Chancellor, in what was widely taken to be a reply on the launching of the court services annual report, announced that he had no plans to appoint more Queen's bench judges. It was reported in *The Guardian* on 17 July that judges were being asked to complete time sheets to measure their output, in order to reinforce the case for more judges.

On 15 July the matter was raised in another place, in the form of a question from my noble Friend Lord Mishcon. The Lord Chancellor said that, while waiting times for some types of case were considerably longer than he would wish, there had been some reductions. With respect, however, that is not the real cause of concern. I understand that, in the non-jury list, it is possible to secure a fixture in about a year. That is no matter for congratulations, but it certainly does not represent crisis point. Those who are content to take their place in the queue for the warned list may have a hearing in as little as eight weeks.

As Lord Ackner pointed out, the real measure of concern relates to the number of deputy judges who are required on a regular basis to man the Bench. At any one time, it appears that nearly half the Queen's bench judges are out on circuit or hearing criminal cases at the Central Criminal Court.

There will now probably be four courts sitting in the criminal division of the Court of Appeal, requiring probably four Queen's bench judges. There will probably be two judges dealing with the jury list, judges hearing commercial cases and judges dealing with the Crown Office list; and there will need to be judges sitting in chambers. By the time we come to the non-jury list, there are not many left. It appears that, when the Lord Chief Justice spoke, some 58 per cent. of cases in the non-jury and chambers lists were being heard by deputy judges. By October, there could well be no High Court judges available to try cases in the non-jury list.

Of course, no one can predict with accuracy how many judges will be available at any particular time. If two long commercial cases are settled, two additional judges may suddenly become available, but the likelihood is that all non-jury list cases will be heard by deputy judges.

As the Lord Chancellor said in the other place, it is true that for many years cases have been allocated to senior silks sitting as deputy judges, chiefly in order to test their suitability for appointment to the High Court. *The Times*, in a leader on 11 July that fell short of its usual reflective standards regarded that as a complete answer to the argument. But that is not the present position. Senior silks have been sitting regularly for long periods as deputy judges. If there were any likelihood of their being appointed High Court judges, their appointment might have been expected long ago. Judges who have passed

retirement age are recalled to sit as deputy judges. Circuit judges sit regularly as deputy High Court judges. That is now a regular, standard feature of our legal system.

I intend no personal reflection on any deputy judge. Some of them are extremely able and try cases with a competence that cannot be faulted. We may wonder why some of them have not received High Court appointments. However, there are aspects that give rise to anxiety. The first, as Lord Oliver pointed out, is that section 9(4) of the Supreme Court Act 1981 permits the appointment of High Court judges only as a temporary measure. For how long can a deputy judge continue to sit, week in, week out, as an integral part of the system, with that situation continuing to be described as temporary? If it is not temporary, cases are being heard by judges for whose appointment there is no statutory authority.

Secondly, litigants may feel that their concerns are of sufficient importance to them to merit being heard by a judge. The consideration of their case may have been of an impeccable standard, but they may leave the judgment seat with a feeling of dissatisfaction. Recently I heard the question asked: what if a disgruntled litigant challenged the judgment on the ground that the judge had not been properly appointed under statute?

It has been remarked that some of the cases in the non-jury list may involve sums amounting to more than £1 million. I confess that I have never subscribed to the view that the importance of a case can be measured wholly in financial terms. To someone who, by reason of industrial injury, will never work again, the sum of £60,000 may represent the difference between total penury and a degree of comfort. Working people are as entitled to have their cases considered by the best judicial minds as is a commercial company. But the point is well made that these are all cases of the greatest importance to those involved.

We may be told that the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990 is only now about to become effective and that we should wait to see the effects of the Act, particularly the proposals for moving more work to the county court. However, I am bound to feel some scepticism about that. Many cases involving sums of up to £50,000 have been transferred regularly to the county court for some years. I am not sure that appreciably more cases will in practice be heard in the county court, particularly since it became apparent during our debates on the Courts and Legal Services Bill that county courts are far from ready to take on much additional work, and we were assured by the Solicitor-General that no more work would be sent there until they are ready.

The next reason for anxiety relates to the strains that are being applied to some categories of case that at present are being heard by High Court judges and which may suffer if this trend continues. One area where it has been suggested that fewer High Court judges may be available is for work on circuit, particularly criminal work. Some cases, such as murder trials, are normally heard by High Court judges, although at some centres specific circuit judges are empowered to hear them. I know of no reason to complain that those cases are not properly and fairly disposed of, but I have heard anxiety expressed that if the stresses on High Court resources increase further that practice may be extended until fewer High Court judges travel the circuits. One day, it may be said that as the circuits manage quite well without High Court judges, why not withdraw them altogether?

It is sometimes pointed out that if a substantial case does not occupy the court for as long as was predicted, a High Court judge may find himself trying cases that would not normally be brought before him. That is no bad thing, because he sees how the circuit goes about its less dramatic business and can make appropriate comments.

Perhaps the greatest value of High Court judges visiting circuits is that they come back, they meet in London and visit other circuits. The presiding judges of the respective circuits meet together and the justiciary is a co-ordinated whole. A series of self-contained, isolated geographical centres without co-ordination would be far less capable of drawing attention to problems that occur over a wide area or countrywide or, where necessary, of monitoring the resources being made available by the Executive or of expressing the criticisms that are being made.

Indeed, judges who went out from London to the localities under Henry II and his successors changed the patchwork of local customary systems into the common law and brought about a central government, just as in the early 19th century, the circuit riding judges of America forged the federation into a nation. It would be appalling if that process were reversed.

One of the other concerns relates to the Crown Office list, which includes a wide and increasing range of cases on housing, education, the health service, immigration and the poll tax. Judicial review is being used for more grievances. If High Court judges were not available to hear them, and quickly, individuals would suffer. I entertain the unworthy suspicion that some Ministers and officials might not be greatly distressed if that were to happen. But I say at once that I am not alleging any deliberate policy to bring that about. I do not believe that there is any deep-laid conspiracy, and if there were no one who knows the present Lord Chancellor would believe that he would have any part of it.

The shortage of High Court judges derives more from Treasury policy and from the financial valuation that is placed on an effective legal system than from any plans for reviving the new despotism. I do not believe that the current situation resulted from any conscious action. It has crept up on us, although not wholly unnoticed and unheralded. We need to review it, lest it extend further.

We may need to reassess what classes of case are heard by High Court judges. There may be room for a reappraisal, but, if so, let there be a reappraisal about which we are all told and where those who wish may express a view. Indeed, I thought that that was what the civil justice review was intended to be. I believe that the outcome of any reappraisal would be to confirm the need for more High Court judges.

That brings me to the greatest cause for concern. Whatever else may be said of deputy judges, one thing is certain—they do not have security of tenure. If it is suggested that that is an academic point, we should reflect that generations of students of our constitution have been informed as a matter of the greatest importance that our senior judiciary have security in office. They cannot be dismissed by the Executive, as happens in some countries, with results with which we are tragically familiar.

It may be argued that there are situations in which there should be less difficulty in removing judges from office. If so, that is a matter to be fully debated, and a clear and precise procedure should be laid down. If, as we have always declared, it is a matter of the greatest importance

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that cases are heard by judges who need not fear dismissal, it is a cause for the gravest concern when that is not happening and is seen not to be happening.

There is broad consensus on the matter among the senior judiciary. That should encourage us in the House to concern ourselves. I do not subscribe to Lord Radcliffe's theory that there is a wisdom, which gathers together all that is best in our national traditions, reposing in the breasts of the judiciary and which is necessary to control the excesses of Parliament. On the contrary, I believe that the rule of law, operated by an independent judiciary, is essential to effective parliamentary government. Without that, our legislation cannot fasten upon the actions of those officials whom it is intended to control. In that matter at least, the interests of the legislature and of the judiciary coincide.

If the warnings go unheeded, that may lead to a loss of confidence in the legal system and to a subtle, but real, change in the balance of the constitution—the beginnings of a slide which it is easier to start than to arrest. The additional cost of a few High Court judges over the cost of deputies is a modest price to pay to prevent those consequences.

4.36 am

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): The hour is late, but the subject is important. I declare an interest, because I have been both a solicitor and a barrister—I practised both at some levels—some minor, some major —and I share great concern about what is happening to our legal system today.

When I was a student, I was taught a very simple lesson —that it was important that the state, or the Executive, was controlled, because sometimes it gets a little bit out of line. It makes mistakes because of the pressure of politics and because of the need for expediency. The judiciary and the courts were there to restrain and control. They were independent and they mattered.

For the judiciary and the courts to restrain and control —if they get it wrong, Parliament can always correct what they do—one must have in place the doctrine of excellence. One must have judges who are of superb integrity, great skill and great learning, and who have been enticed—I use that word because they are enticed by the nature of the office to give up what is often a lucrative and well worthwhile career—into sitting on the Bench. That is worth while and is a career in itself.

In the past 10 to 15 years, those of us who practise have seen, from time to time, because of pressure, because of shortage of manpower and because the courts are not always manned properly—and I am not as kind as my right hon. and learned Friend when I say this—hurried judgments, strain and people who are not quite up to it being asked to perform functions and duties for which they are not yet ready. It is sad.

When the Lord Chief Justice made his speech recently about the shortage on the High Court Bench, he was right. It is sometimes silly to deny the Bench the manpower that it needs. There is no doubt that in our increasingly complicated society, issues come before the courts that require more and more judicial hours. I put the matter as simply as that.

One cannot ask the Bench to cope with the existing workload, but, to a mere practitioner, that seems to be happening. In cases of judicial review one is told that one might get a hearing in year's time. I do not practise in that area, but if something needs to be tested, why cannot it be tested now? The answer is simple—there are not the judges available to do it.

Major fraud cases and cases involving murder, robbery or rape are now heard before a circuit judge. I do not intend any disrespect to that judge, but for something that serious one should have the most experienced judge from the High Court to try it. Sometimes rulings are wrong and the circuit judge's experience is not great enough to deal with the problem. That may lead to a miscarriage of justice and someone being incarcerated for years until the matter is reviewed on appeal and something changes. A civilised society cannot afford such a mistake.

What on earth are we doing? The Lord Chief Justice said that he needed perhaps 11 more judges. That is not an awful lot, but it would mean that the High Court Bench was to be staffed adequately. Is it right that those who exercise a judicial capacity at that level, who are subject to that type of stress, should be pushed to the nth degree through the case load that they face? Why is it that we cannot have the appropriate number of judges? What is the Executive seeking to do?

In the past I have been criticised for commenting on Mold Crown court, which is a nice court. Why cannot we have a visiting High Court judge in that part of the world? He could deal with the murders, the manslaughters and the more serious cases, including serious civil matters. Why is that not possible? Is it because we do not have enough judges?

When a High Court judge visits a court, what does he bring to it? He brings the experience that he has gained from visits to other places. I am not seeking to be unkind when I suggest such a breath of fresh air. Such outside influence does no harm to the local circuit judiciary—they welcome it. Such visits would bring new thinking. If we continue as we are, that will no longer happen.

What will the future hold? Perhaps we will have legal circuits, if that is the right word—areas in which no outside influence is brought to bear. In such circumstances everyone can get too cosy, which is not a good idea. The object of the circuit system was that judges should move about so that they learnt about different parts of the country and about things that mattered. They brought experience from area to area. That helped the circuit and the legal system.

Our society is becoming more complex and the way in which we deal with things is becoming more difficult. Therefore, we must train the judiciary of tomorrow to meet those needs. Nowadays fraud trials and others may last a year or more. When I was a law student any trial that lasted more than seven days was a miracle—it was unheard of. Now at any Crown court in any part of the country there are three or four-week trials running at any one time. That is the world into which we are moving.

When we ask someone to sit in judgment on a difficult trial that may last five or six weeks, we are putting an enormous strain on them. At the end of a trial on a criminal matter they must sum it up to a jury. Complicated civil cases may involve weeks and weeks of detailed argument. At the end of the trial the judge must provide an assessment of the merits of argument A against those of

argument B. That requires infinite skill. It requires a career structure in the judiciary that calls on those who are best able to sit in judgment.

I regret to say that nowadays the doctrine of excellence is beginning to slip. Instead of encouraging, recruiting and developing the judiciary, we seem to be restricting and restraining it. To say that we are using cheap measures would be an insult to those who sit and I would not wish to insult any of them, because they all seem to do their best, but if we are to cope with a difficult society tomorrow, we must encourage the lawyers of today. It passes by people like me, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer), my hon. Friend the Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) and the hon. and learned Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground), but we have a duty to the future and we must encourage people to seek such office. By restricting the High Court Bench and seeking to diminish the scope of the areas in which people can practise we, in turn, diminish the number of applicants who will wish to follow that path. That will be a tragedy because, in the past five or six centuries, we have built in this land a judicial system which is the envy of many. If the Government of the day—the Government of tomorrow may not think in the same way—seek to restrict simply by compacting the scope of the lawyers of tomorrow and, perhaps, the ambitions of tomorrow, we shall give future society a poor deal.

I hope that the Solicitor-General will take on board—it is meant in the kindest possible way—the fact that penny-pinching in the servicing of the High Court Bench today builds a disaster in our judicial system tomorrow. I urge him to encourage the Lord Chancellor to think a little more broadly. It might not be a bad thing if he realised that encouraging an increasing number of people to go to the High Court Bench would serve our society of tomorrow well.

4.47 am

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): If I congratulated my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) on getting a debate at 4.20 in the morning, my congratulations might be less than enthusiastic, so I shall not pursue that traditional line. However, he makes an important point and I was surprised at the figures that he gave, which suggested that between half and all the cases in the non-jury list may be heard by part-time deputy judges. That high proportion must give rise to concern. My right hon. and learned Friend also said—he made the point with considerable force—that judges who, although they are deputy judges, regularly hear cases in the High Court have no security of tenure. That seems to be wrong when the balances are as he described.

The Opposition have said time and again that it is important that business in the High Court and in county courts—I hope that there will be no competition between them—must be conducted efficiently and expeditiously, because justice delayed is far too often justice denied. Incidentally, that principle of expeditious business conducted by first-class judges applies not only at the top but at the level, for instance, of masters and summonses in the High Court.

It is outrageous that a case in which there may be no meritorious defence, and which proceeds under Order 14, may take four or five months to move from the issue of the writ—now called the acknowledgement of service—to when Order 14 proceedings can be heard in chambers, even if it is a short case. That puts a premium on holding up cases simply for the chance of winning time. Therefore, I want to see improvements in that sector and at every level, including the taxation of costs—a matter which is important to both solicitors and counsel, but counsel say less about it.

It is disgraceful, particularly in relation to legal aid cases, that a case may have been conducted for several years, have to wait one year in the list to be heard and then those involved in it have to wait between six months and a year for the costs to be taxed. Matters are not always conducted efficiently. What has been said about judges, expedition and quality must apply across the spectrum. We do not want the Government to solve the problem of a shortage of judges in the High Court simply by transferring more and more business into the county court and creating log-jams and problems there, so as to avoid them in the High Court.

Will the Solicitor-General confirm that no attempt will be made to reduce the number of cases coming before the Crown Office? There have been murmurings that some judges want the number of cases coming before judicial review reduced. There are a number of ways of achieving that. We could have a tougher sieving process when getting leave for judicial review. Another suggestion, opposed by the Lord Chancellor, is that legal aid should not be made available for as many cases coming up for judicial review. There is no doubt that the ending of legal advice and green form assistance to those seeking to challenge cases involving immigration and political asylum matters could lead to a reduction in the number of cases going for judicial review simply because it would not then be possible for lawyers to put a case in hand quickly, which is necessary if leave is to be obtained for judicial review. Therefore, I hope that the Solicitor-General will confirm that no attempt will be made to curtail access to the divisional court for those purposes.

It is equally important that judicial review cases should proceed quickly. Once leave has been given for judicial review and—if the Crown is the respondent—once the Crown has filed its affidavit, for which it has 56 days, I believe that it could be months, if not a year, before the judicial review case is heard. That is not good because it puts a premium on delay. It is right that bad decisions by immigration officers and the Home Office should come before the courts for review and decision as quickly as possible. It is not helpful for the good administration of law that, when a decision is challenged, a premium is involved in having the matter delayed, with more interest in the delay than in the outcome of the case. That is one of the dangers that we must avoid in judicial review proceedings. I await with interest to hear what the Solicitor-General has to say in response to my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West.

4.53 am

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): I must congratulate the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer), even in the dog watch, on giving the House the opportunity to debate this important subject, about which anxiety was expressed by the Lord Chief Justice at the recent Mansion House dinner for judges. It gives us an opportunity to consider not only the

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precise number of High Court judges but the strength and deployment of the higher judiciary generally; the areas of current pressure, in particular the Court of Appeal criminal division and the divisional court; other areas where, happily, good progress has been made; the effects to be expected from the implementation of the civil justice review; questions relating to the effectiveness or otherwise of the use of High Court judges on circuit, and related problems such as the increase and sometimes daunting length of certain types of trial and how they can be overcome.

My noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor recognises those problems and the duty of the Government —any Government—to provide an independent judiciary with the resources that it needs to maintain—in vigour —a prompt, efficient and independent judicial system, which is fundamental to our free society. I state that not to gloss the problem but to set out what are the accepted ground rules.

Before proceeding to an analysis of the current position, I take the opportunity to pay tribute to the work of the judges of the supreme court and the judiciary generally. At a time when, recently, too many criminal trials have been shown to have given rise to serious miscarriages of justice—and in consequence our whole system of justice is rightly the subject of the review by the royal commission—there has been a tendency in some quarters to use the judges as a scapegoat and to forget that cases must be tried on the evidence. Unless one has been privileged to appear regularly in the courts, it is hard to appreciate the burden of judicial life, and easy to fail to realise that behind the wigs and trumpets and judges' lodgings lie the concentration and sheer strain of the judicial day—constant attention, careful analysis, the burden of long cases, the weight of background reading, the anxiety of setting the right sentence, and generally, for those who undertake this work between the ages of 50 and 75, of life away from home for weeks on end. At different levels, I pay tribute to the patient work of the circuit judges handling a huge variety of smaller cases, developing an understanding of housing matters, of social security, the burden of criminal work on the circuit bench, and to the expertise of district judges whose major input into cases where representation is less expert or, often, non-existent causes such heavy reliance on the court. They deserve our support, appreciation and admiration more often than they get it.

Having said that, we must also remember that resources are finite both in money and in skilled manpower and, therefore, there is a duty on the Lord Chancellor and the Lord Chief Justice to deploy those resources efficiently and effectively.

The subject of the debate is the number of High Court judges. The fact is that today they are the highest number in our history. They have increased from 31 in 1945 to 42 in 1960, to 75 in 1979, and today, with the imminent appointment of a further High Court judge in the chancery division, to 84. Over the same period the number of Lords Justices of Appeal has risen from six in 1945 to 27 today. The present Lord Chancellor has obtained over the past three and a half years an increase of five High Court judges and four Lords Justices. The increase since 1979 in the numbers of Lords Justices, who are so essential to the work of the Court of Appeal criminal division and the divisional court is no less than 50 per cent.—from 18 to the current 27 who are in post. Furthermore, with the civil justice review, much of the civil work of the High Court is being transferred to the county court. In the past 10 years there has been an increase in the number of circuit judges by no less than 110, or 50 per cent., with 49 of them appointed by the present Lord Chancellor.

The task is, therefore, to analyse the problem highlighted by the Lord Chief Justice and restated tonight in the debate, and to show what the Government are doing to tackle it. If more High Court judges are necessary, we must not shrink from the problem, but first we must be sure that we have deployed those whom we have to the best effect.

I acknowledge straight away that there are pressures in both the Court of Appeal criminal division and the divisional court. The number of cases heard by a full court of the Court of Appeal criminal division has increased from 2,528 in 1979 to 3,627 in 1990, an increase of 43 per cent. over the position 10 years before, but with the number outstanding at the end of the year having been reduced by 12 per cent. Likewise, the number of applications for judicial review has increased markedly in the past few years. In 1990-91, a total of 2,149 cases were disposed of by the divisional court, an increase of 33 per cent. over the previous year.

It is the view of my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor that an extra court is needed in the Court of Appeal criminal division now and that increased resources should be devoted to the divisional court with its heavy workload of judicial review. Incidentally I should make it clear that it is the view of the Law Officers that in our complex society, where there is an ever-increasing need to rely upon secondary legislation, the development of judicial review of administrative action is entirely right and healthy. Although my ministerial colleagues have sometimes suffered its effects, I have never heard any of them suggest that such judicial powers should be curtailed. On the contrary, the response of the Government by means of such publications as "The judge over your shoulder" has been to ensure that departments of state understand better the ambit of their powers and the way that they should be exercised so that rights are respected and the law obeyed as it should be.

The picture is not uniformly gloomy.

Mr. Fraser: The Solicitor-General has paid great respect to judicial review. Is he aware of the rule that is laid down by the Home Office in immigration cases? The Home Office will withhold removal of a person from the United Kingdom for only 48 hours in order to get the case before a judge. Does he not think that that is placing far too great a burden on judges and is effectively denying individuals access to judicial review by setting such a short period between the taking of instructions and getting the matter before a judge?

The Solicitor-General: The hon. Gentleman raises a difficult and important matter, but I am not at all sure that I do hold such a view. As I have said, it is a difficult matter and it is not the subject of the debate. There are competing aspects of the problem and I cannot say that I hold the view that the hon. Gentleman has set out.

Returning to the deployment of the judiciary, the picture is not uniformly gloomy. Waiting times in the

Queen's Bench division have been reduced to two months on the warned list, 13 months on the fixtures list and seven months on the after-fixtures list. Indeed, the number of outstanding trials in that division has been halved since June 1989. A great deal of judicial effort has gone into clearing that backlog which, I am given to understand, has now reached a level at which it is no longer sensible, or perhaps even possible, to reduce waiting times. In other words, the parties need this sort of time to prepare themselves for the trial.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the Solicitor-General agree—I speak with some experience of this field of the law—that 13 months' waiting on the fixtures list in civil matters is far too long? Many years ago I was involved in the settlement of damages in a series of fatal accidents, and I know that families have to wait a long time for settlements. Surely 13 months is far too long and the period should be reduced.

The Solicitor-General: It is difficult to comment on individual cases, but I wonder why a case of settlement of damages requires it to be on the fixtures list when it could be brought on a great deal faster if it simply went on to the warned list.

Mr. Bermingham: If the right hon. and learned Gentleman will listen, I will tell him why. It was a matter of quantum. That cannot always be agreed, and sometimes there is a point of principle in what is meant, for example, by continuing loss or by future potential earnings.

The Solicitor-General: It is difficult to dispute at this time of night, but it is not self-evident why the case had to go into the fixtures list as opposed to the warned list.

The picture in the Crown court, which was causing justified concern just five years ago, is also greatly improved. The waiting time for custody cases in London is shorter than at any time during the past 14 years during which records in the present form have been kept. Since 1979, waiting times have dropped by 31 per cent. or by seven weeks. That is in spite of a doubling of the workload of the Crown court. In this age of rising crime, those figures suggest that, although there is never room for complacency, far from collapsing, the system is coping extremely well with the challenges that face it.

Thus, while the Lord Chancellor is both concerned about and sympathetic to the problems that we are discussing, the House will realise that before he can increase further the number of judges on the High Court bench, he will need to be able to be satisfied that existing resources are being deployed to the best effect that they reasonably can. Two points in particular need to be focused upon. The first is the substantial transfer of work from the High court to the county court under the civil justice review. It will also be remembered that paragraph 82 of the review stated expressly:

"It is the leading objective of the Review that the business of the civil courts should be allocated to the various tiers of judiciary in such a way as to ensure that it is handled at the lowest level appropriate to each case."

The second point——

Mr. Archer: The right hon. and learned Gentleman has been most courteous in giving way. Does he recollect the debates in which we both participated on the Courts and Legal Services Bill, when I thought that it was common ground, first, that the county court was not yet ready to absorb more cases and, secondly, that no more cases could be transferred to it until it was ready?

The Solicitor-General: That is common ground in principle, and it was common ground in fact at that time. However, there has been a very considerable increase in the number of county court judges as circuit judges, as I have already shown from the statistics. There has been a considerable improvement in the deployment of those judges, with trial centres giving an opportunity for much more effective use of those resources. I know that the Lord Chancellor keeps a careful watch on the way that those matters are being progressed. The opportunity for that transfer, which was contemplated by the civil justice review, nevertheless remains.

The second point concerns the deployment of High Court judges on the circuit and the question—I put it no higher than that—whether at present what they find themselves doing represents the best use that can be made of the time, expertise and formidable experience that they can bring to bear.

In the context of the civil justice review I should say something of the widespread use of circuit judges sitting as judges of the High Court in accordance with section 9 of the Supreme Court Act 1981, and the use of silks as deputy judges—a topic of current concern, rightly mentioned by the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West.

Mention has been made of 58 per cent. of those trying High Court cases in recent weeks falling into one or other of these categories. It is a fair criticism if what is intended as a back-up measure or a valuable training ground for those who may go on themselves to be High Court judges is allowed to become too constant a feature of the lists, but I wish to put the problem into perspective and to link it with the correct deployment of circuit and High Court judges.

To put the figures into perspective over a full year, in 1990—the last full year for which figures are available—55 per cent. of sitting days were sat by High Court judges, 21 per cent. by section 9 circuit judges and the balance of 24 per cent. by the deputies. As a proportion of all High Court sitting days, the proportion of cases tried by other than full High Court judges was rather smaller, but I recognise that the problem is principally to be found in the Queen's bench division.

A significant part of the solution to this problem and to the lightening of the burden on the High Court judiciary of the less heavy civil cases can reasonably be expected to come from the implementation of the civil justice review. Already in 1990—one knows that the transfer must anticipate the actual trial—some 22,959 cases were redirected from the Queen's bench division to the enlarged county court system.

Nevertheless, of the total of 2,489 civil trials heard by the Queen's bench that year, 1,274 of them being heard in the Royal Courts of Justice, some 1,670 or 67 per cent. were claims for personal injury, of which more than a third —578 or 36 per cent.—involved amounts below the new county court threshold of £25,000 and a further 262 or 21 per cent. fell in the £25,000 to £50,000 band eligible for trial either in the High or county courts. Those figures must be treated with some caution, since not all would be appropriate to be heard by circuit judges, but they show the considerable weight of work that can properly be transferred. That will release not only some High Court judges but a number of senior circuit judges for work including, directly or indirectly, important criminal work out on circuit.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that in civil matters the problem is not always the sums involved but the legal issues? A case may concern £10,000 or £1 million—it does not matter.

The Solicitor-General: I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman. As he will have noticed, that is why I astutely said that such figures must be treated cautiously.

The deployment of High Court judiciary on circuit is by no means an easy matter and the questions that I wish to raise are not asked in any spirit of dogmatism. They are matter largely for the Lord Chief Justice and the Deputy Chief Justice who, under our constitution, are responsible for the day-to-day distribution of judicial resources as between the different areas of the Royal Courts of Justice and the circuits. Such matters are among the subjects of their regular meetings with my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor, who, as president of the Supreme Court, retains ultimate responsibility.

There is, however, reason to believe that many High Court judges out on circuit do not always find themselves used to the best effect. That seems to be supported by analysis and anecdote. The Lord Chancellor's Department has been not unaware of the difficulty for some time and a careful analysis has been carried out which the Lord Chancellor is looking forward to discussing with the heads of division.

Based on experience in 1990-91, at any given time there are between 22 and 28 High Court judges out on circuit. On this basis, some, at least, of the cases they are to try might be appropriate to a circuit judge of suitable experience. A way of reducing the backlog of cases in the Court of Appeal criminal division and the divisional court may be to transfer back to those areas of greatest need some High Court judges who would otherwise be on circuit, at least for a temporary period.

In summary, therefore, may I say this. My noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor fully recognises the anxiety on this matter. Both the present Government in the past 10 years and my noble and learned Friend during his three and a half years of office have continued the policy of significant increase in the number of the judiciary, marked indeed in the numbers of Lords Justices and circuit judges which have gone up by no less than a third and 50 per cent. respectively since 1979.

My noble and learned Friend fully recognises the burdens on the Court of Appeal criminal division and the divisional court deriving from the increase in judicial review. He is anxious to see extra judicial resources transferred in each of those directions. He is himself considering very carefully the match between the tasks to be carried out and the judicial resources available and looks forward to reflecting carefully on all that has been said in this debate and to continuing to work closely with the higher judiciary to tackle and overcome the problems in whatever way he is satisfied is necessary.

Trade Union Reform

5.16 am

Mr. Lewis Stevens (Nuneaton): First, I apologise to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State of Employment for bringing him to the Chamber at such an unearthly hour of the morning.

The topic that I wish to debate is trade union reform. Since 1980 the Government have adopted a step-by-step approach to industrial relations in Britain by means of five Acts which have had considerable success.

The change in approach can be seen in the number of stoppages in recent years and the number of working days lost in industry and in service. In 1990 some 1·9 million working days were lost compared with almost 13 million on average during the 1970s, which is a dramatic change.

There have been important cases, such as the National Union of Railwaymen in 1986 and the Ford workers in 1990, where on a ballot, despite the advice of union leaders, workers have decided not to strike. Since 1980, despite the apparent lack of publicity, the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service has been notified of more than 1,000 ballots.

Since the first of the Acts came into force, there has been a great reduction in trade union membership. That is not something about which I would gloat. It is rather sad that people should not look on the trade unions as an important part of their working lives. Perhaps part of the problem is that the unions have not managed to keep themselves attractive. Their functions have tended to become blurred with the passing years. Some of the reasons for their traditional efforts on behalf of their members have disappeared. They have frequently attained some of their early objectives.

The unions fought long and hard to reduce hours of work. I can remember the pride that my father, a shop steward, took in obtaining a reduction in the working week in his company—from 48 to 44 hours—which meant that the workers did not have to work on Saturday mornings any more.

Many grassroots members of trade unions still work as they always have done to obtain the best possible conditions for their people. But their leaders have often created problems.

The success of the legislation of recent years can be seen in the differences brought about in industrial relations and in bringing inward investment to this country. The United Kingdom has become an attractive prospect for companies from overseas. In 1989, 54,000 jobs were created by inward investment—the highest number ever. I doubt whether that could have occurred under the old-fashioned industrial relations set-up.

Unfortunately, some unions are still in the dark ages. According to *The Independent*, Keva Coombes, the former Labour leader of Liverpool city council, has admitted that "the roots of the council's problems were the entrenched attitudes of its trade unions, which had not shifted since the 1950s".

The unions must bring themselves up to date and make themselves attractive to the membership.

There has been a great shift: whereas trade unions in the private sector used to have the most members, now the public sector unions have the most. There has also been a move away from blue collar unions to white collar unions. Because of changes in the law, the individual has greater

powers within the union nowadays; and employers can take action to prevent the worse effects of strikes—yet quite a number of people still, somewhat surprisingly, consider strike action. Only this morning I read in the *Daily Mirror*——

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Why the *Daily Mirror*?

Mr. Stevens: Because it was the only available paper. The back page carried the banner headline, "Strike", and continued:

"Everybody out, says the PFA."

Even in the world of soccer there seems still to be a tendency to consider striking. Given the problems of the football world I should have thought that that was the last course of action the Professional Footballers Association would want to take—it will hardly be attractive to the players and clubs. I gather that the reason has to do with the proposed super league, which would apparently disadvantage some people—so they are thinking of striking. I do not believe that matters need come to that.

As for the future, there are still one or two changes in trade union legislation that could prove beneficial. In his citizens charter my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister proposed an entirely new legal right for the citizen. Unlawful industrial action, such as an unballoted or political strike in a public service, can currently be challenged by an employer or a member of a union who is called upon to take part in the action. Such strikes have a widespread and devastating effect on the everyday lives of ordinary citizens. Under the new proposal the citizen would have the right to bring legal proceedings to halt any unlawful industrial action affecting services covered by the citizens charter. That will deal with cases in which people are severely affected and will cover people in business or those trying to get to work.

Many trade unions in the private sector have no-strike agreements, which are an important advance in industrial relations. People who work for some public services are not permitted to strike, but perhaps workers in those services should consider voluntary acceptance of the fact that strike action should form no part of their armoury for carrying out negotiations. Pay review bodies, which were introduced by the Government, have taken away the likelihood of strikes.

I read in *The Sunday Times* about the sacking of the chief of the National Union of Journalists. The report said:

"For subscriptions of up to £165 a year, among the highest in the trade union movement, members have complained that they get little more than a laminated press card and a newspaper that spouts left-wind ideology."

Surely the purpose of trade unions is service to their members. Earlier I spoke about the leadership of trade unions. The report in *The Sunday Times* says:

"Turner, . . . formerly letters editor at the *Mirror*, sees himself as the champion of working journalists standing up to professional trade unionists more interested in bickering than bylines."

That suggests that some trade unions do not properly serve their members.

We should examine further three areas that need reform. The law calls for a ballot before industrial action can take place, but there should be a period of perhaps a week before a strike can occur. Such a delay is commonly called a cooling-off period, but during that time frustration could grow. My reason for calling for such a period is that it would enable people to reflect on the effects of what might take place. That could be taken into account by individuals and companies and other groups who could then try to establish how to meet their various needs without resorting to industrial action. That would be of considerable advantage. It seems only fair play to give people a breathing space to adjust their needs.

There could also be reform on the right of people to join a trade union of their choice. This still creates some problems. There are still inter-union rivalries. No doubt some of the new arrangements such as no-strike agreements have developed because they are usually tied up with single union agreements. We know that a number of unions have been involved in some rather unseemly squabbles and that the Trades Union Congress has threatened to expel its largest union, the Transport and General Workers Union, for poaching members from two other unions—the Amalgamated Engineering Union and the National Union of Public Employees. The desire to join the union of one's choice is not unreasonable. The laws that we have passed over the past 12 years have given trade union members a great number of freedoms and it would be reasonable to give people the right to join the trade union of their choice. That might encourage some to rejoin or join the trade union movement.

The third area where change can take place is the basic area of agreements between trade unions and employers, which at the moment are not enforceable in law. It would not be a bad thing if we moved to a system similar to those of other countries, so that such agreements are enforceable in law, although only with the agreement of both parties. It is odd that many contracts are enforceable in the courts, although people do not always insist on enforcement and may come to a mutual agreement, when this one is not. I cannot see why, as we move into new areas of trade union and employer relations, we cannot make that change.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): The hon. Gentleman talks about agreements being enforceable in law. He may be aware that there was an exchange between the Minister and myself some months ago about the situation at Rolls-Royce, where the management arbitrarily threatened to tear up the contracts of employment of all its employees, without any notification or negotiation. Does he think that such agreements should be enforceable in law? Where a trade union has been recognised as the legitimate negotiating body over many years, but the employer arbitrarily tears up negotiating rights, should that be enforceable in law?

Mr. Stevens: It is open. If we agreed that the contract should be enforceable in law, it should be binding on both sides, not just one. The agreements are made; that is the position, so if they are enforceable one way, they must be enforceable the other. That could protect both employer and employee. Our industrial relations legislation has been intended not only to strike a balance, but to make the employer-employee relationship reasonable and workable, as opposed to one side dominating the other. We have seen too much of that in the past, particularly in the 1960s.

There is room for us to develop trade union law and reform the existing legislation. That would benefit trade unionists and others. Employers would have more concrete arrangements on which to work, especially if agreements became enforceable in law. That would

[Mr. Stevens]

remove the uncertainty that is still to be found in many industrial disputes: only when they escalate into direct conflict does it become clear what will happen.

If the Government do not introduce such reforms, the Opposition almost certainly would not. Essentially, the Labour party remains dominated by the trade unions. The policies of which we have heard so much—or, perhaps, not enough; we do not know the details—would rely on the union barons to take us forward into the future. Today, the unions sponsor a higher proportion of the parliamentary Labour party than at any time since 1935; that includes the majority of the shadow Cabinet. Since 1981, they have controlled the lion's share of the vote in the election of the party leader. As far as I am aware, the Leader of the Opposition has no plans to alter either arrangement.

In deference to their paymasters, the Opposition have opposed every trade union reform since 1979, including the introduction of pre-strike ballots and ballots for union elections. They have not opposed a single major strike in recent years: they did not oppose the miners' strike, the transport strike or the health service strikes. They seem determined to repeal much of the successful and welcome legislation of the past 12 years. Their policies would almost certainly bring about the return of secondary action and flying pickets, and would grant the unions unprecedented legal immunities and privileges. They would be protected by effective sanctions if they broke the law.

Labour's latest document, "Opportunity Britain", still contains policies that would benefit trade union leaders, and the unions continue to influence Labour's policy in many major areas of the economy, training, health and transport. The threat to the economy, productivity and growth is as real as ever. Labour's trade union reforms would almost certainly prove disastrous.

I believe that we need a further step on the step-by-step approach that the Government have taken over the past 12 years to discourage precipitate action and protect third parties that play no direct part in disputes. A cooling-off period following ballots has proved successful in other countries. I also believe that it is time that people had a statutory right to belong to the unions of their choice. That would remove the effects of the Bridlington procedures and take away some of the functions of the TUC.

We should also consider the status of agreements between trade unions and employers. They should be made legally binding, as they are in some other countries. In years to come we shall want to introduce further reforms. During the past 12 years we have passed both major and minor legislation to improve industrial relations. That legislation has proved to be enormously successful. It has also proved to be very popular both within the trade union movement and outside it. We need, however, to do a little more. I hope that the Minister and his Department of Employment colleagues will include some of the points that I have made in their Green Paper. If we do not continue trade union reform in order to improve industrial relations, the Opposition will never do so.

5.40 am

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens) for providing the House with the opportunity to debate this subject. He has raised a number of interesting points and ideas for taking trades union reform forward. He has told us about the work still to be done, but he will probably agree with me when I say that we shall essentially be dealing with fine tuning. We shall have to look at the pattern of trades union reform since 1979, adjust it and get it right in the light of developments.

If one looks at the pattern of trades union reform since 1979, it is easy to see what a very long way we have come. I refer to pre-strike ballots, ballots for the election of trades union officers, the developments relating to secondary picketing and the outlawing of the closed shop. All this, and a great deal more, forms the pattern of legislation and trades union reform since 1979.

It is not surprising that a pattern of reform such as that should be introduced by a Conservative Government. It very much underpins Conservative philosophy, which is all about making sure that the rights of organisations do not become bigger than their aggregate parts. It is a question of ensuring that major organisations do not lose sight of the fact that if they have been created to serve the interests of their members, that is exactly what they have to do.

It is not surprising that a Conservative Government, not a Labour Government, should have been very keen to ensure that there is proper freedom for members to operate within those organisations and to embark on such a course of reform. The interesting aspect of that course of reform is that it should have been so overwhelmingly popular, as is evidenced by the results of three general elections. It will be common though not comfortable ground between us that whatever other reasons people may have had for voting Conservative at the last three elections, the question of trades union reform has featured significantly and resulted in some people, many of whom were trades union members, voting Conservative for the first time.

The fact that a Conservative Government embarked on such a course of reform and the fact that it has been popular is not, in a sense, surprising. What is surprising, perhaps, is the fact that the Labour party has now decided that it is in favour of these reforms. It is prepared, superficially at least—I stress the word "superficially"—to say not that it has been in favour of these reforms all along, but that for some particular reason, not yet specified, it intends to look at this matter in an entirely different way from the way that it has looked at it in the past.

An interesting feature of our debate is that two questions can be asked. First, is it likely that the Labour party has truly changed its position—has the leopard truly changed its spots? Secondly, is it actually true that it has done so? On the question whether that is likely, it is worth considering the history of the Labour party and what that tells us. To be fair, I ought to make the point that, in view of what I am about to say, I imply no criticism of the Labour party. On previous occasions I have stated the argument in a slightly different way. A debate such as this, however, attended only by aficionados concentrates the mind and makes one behave in an even fairer way than one might otherwise behave.

The point that must be made is that it would be quite wrong to accuse the Labour party of being a mainstream

political party. Nothing in its history or origins gives rise to that supposition. It does not pretend, and I use that word in both senses, to be a popular movement. It cannot pretend to be rooted in the general traditions of this country. It cannot be said to be a popular movement based on ordinary sentiments of common sense and patriotism. Its genealogy is short, obvious and brutish: it was created to be the mouthpiece of the trades union movement. That is what it has been over the years and in a sense, even if we do not particularly like what the mouthpiece says, it is no criticism of the Labour party to say that that is what it is. Much though the Labour party may try to avoid the fact, it is the mouthpiece of the labour movement and of the trades union movement. That is its purpose and why it was created.

We are given to understand that, despite the Labour party's origins and history, all has changed in recent times. We are asked to accept that, because of the dynamism and sheer intellectual force of the Leader of the Opposition, the Labour party has entirely changed its spots and can no longer be regarded as merely the mouth on a stick of the trades union movement.

Is that likely? We are told that the Labour party has introduced significant reforms to ensure that it will not be dominated by the union movement. The problem is that the most significant of the reforms is due to be made after the next general election, when Labour party policy will be decided, as always, by its conference. Even after the major reforms that the Leader of the Opposition has introduced, 70 per cent. of the votes cast at the Labour party's conference will be the block vote of the trades union movement. That is after reforms have been made to reduce union domination. It is a funny reduction in domination if, after the event, 70 per cent. of the votes to decide party policy are cast by the trades union movement.

In deciding whether the Labour party has changed its position on trades union reform, or is likely to do so, one must consider the sponsorship of Labour Members. They would be the first to correct me if I were to pretend that 100 per cent. of the parliamentary Labour party is sponsored by trades unions. Some 33 per cent. of Labour Members are not; only 67 per cent. are sponsored by trades unions.

If that worries Labour Members, they need have no fear, because the shadow Cabinet shows solidarity. Every one of its 20 members is sponsored by the trades union movement. In case any members of the general management committee are lurking up in the gallery, listening to our debates or will study them later, Labour's Front-Bench spokesmen will confirm that all the members of the shadow Cabinet, which is represented here tonight by the second division, are sponsored by the trades union movement.

Even if one were prepared to ignore the raw figures, it is worth considering what some of the reformers say about trades union matters. We should consider the two leading lights and moderates of the labour movement. The views of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith)—he of the lunchtime offensive—were interestingly described in his house. He spoke of a legal requirement for pre-strike ballots. He described the proposition for pre-strike ballots and ballots for union elections——

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): No, he did not.

Mr. Nicholls: It is interesting that although only four Labour Members have come here to defend their position on the trades union membership, they already know I want to draw to the attention of the House. What does the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East, the hero of the lunchtime offensive, think about trades union ballots? Does he think that they are a useful extension of trades unions' members' rights? Is he pleased that it strikes a libertarian blow? No. He describes it as "an irrelevant effrontery". He went on to say that statutory requirements for ballots were "intellectually disreputable" and that for unions, they would

"gravely undermine the effective pursuit of their members' interests."—[*Official Report*, 8 November 1983; Vol. 48, c. 170.]

That is from someone who is a leading light in a party which would have us believe that trades union reform is now safe in its hands. That is from a person who, when Labour suffers its next election defeat, will be well poised to take over leadership of the Labour party.

Let us look to the younger generation and put the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East to one side for the moment. Let us go for the young Lochinvar and look at the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) when he was trying to describe how he felt about trades union ballots. What did he say about the Bill that made them a reality? He described the ballots as a "shabby, partisan strategy" and as "a disgrace". Just in case he had not made his position abundantly clear at that stage, he said that he saw a ballot as

"a scandalous and undemocratic measure against the trade union movement".—[*Official Report*, 8 November 1983; Vol. 48, c. 210.]

That is the reality of the way in which leading lights in the new, revisionist, squeaky-clean Labour party feel about trades union matters.

Every single trades union reform that the Government have introduced since 1979, which the Labour party says is now safe in its hands, was opposed root and branch by the Labour party, often in the most lurid terms. There is not a single major strike that members of the Labour party have opposed in recent times. If one needed to consider for one moment whether it was likely that the Labour party, or the Labour party as it is likely to be constituted in the foreseeable future, could be anything other than a tool and pawn of the trades union movement, one would not have to listen to my words—good idea though that may be. All one has to do is to look at what the Labour party says about itself—[*Interruption.*] This is one of the occasions on which my innate fairness can bubble to the surface, because in making my point, I have only to quote those who now seek to deny it from sedentary positions.

The answer to the first question—whether it is likely that the Labour party would now change its spots—is that it would not. Even if it is not likely, is it true? It is worth considering four areas in which the Labour party will say, superficially, that it has changed its position. Let us consider the publication "Opportunity Britain". Let us ignore for the moment that a noun has been used as an adjective. In one area of the publication, while proclaiming itself to be squeaky clean, revisionist and modern, the Labour party has managed to pledge itself to go further down a left-wing, trades union road than it has ever done. It now makes it clear in "Opportunity Britain"—on page 39 for those who wish to have a look at its latest policy on these matters—that it would for the first time be impossible for employers to be able to dismiss strikers. It

[Mr. Nicholls]

is a bizarre proposition that, after all possible safeguards, an employer should employ people to work in his concern, yet not be allowed to dismiss them when they decide that their idea of a contract of employment is merely an opportunity to strike. That proposition and that move towards making it impossible to dismiss strikers are so extreme that they were not even adopted by the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) when he was in government. That proposition was even too extreme for that right hon. Gentleman. It is a bizarre proposition from the Labour party and far more extreme than anything that a Labour Government have adopted.

It is interesting to discover the position of certain leading lights in the Labour party on ballots. We are [illegible] to believe by the hon. Member for Sedgefield that the tiger has changed its spots and that the Labour party has been in favour of pre-strike ballots all along. Those who pay the piper call the tune and it is interesting to consider what the trade unions say about——

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): Tigers do not have spots.

Mr. Nicholls: It is interesting that I am now being heckled. Opposition Members are upset because if they stand in favour of some of the reforms it means that they will go against those who pay the funds of the Labour party.

It is worth considering those who pay the piper, for example, Ron Todd, the recent relatively moderate leader of the Transport and General Workers Union and what he says about ballots. It appears that he is now in favour of ballots for strikes, but he made it clear in an article in *The Independent* that he does not mind if those ballots are not held until after the strike has been called. It is a odd commitment to pre-strike ballots and ballots generally if one believes that one can have a strike first and perhaps a ballot later. That is what lies behind the Labour party's being in favour of ballots.

What about secondary picketing and sympathy action? It is clear that the public are thoroughly fed up with such action. There are still many people who can remember the chaos to which the country was reduced in the winter of discontent specifically because secondary picketing and sympathy action were allowed. We are now told by the Labour party that slight secondary picketing and slight sympathy action will be allowed. If one considers what the trades union apparatchiks say about that, one sees that it is slightly different from what Labour party spokesmen say.

That great luminary of the trade union movement, and to be fair, its greatest paymaster, Mr. Todd, has made it absolutely clear to those whom he seeks to fund what his position would be. Presumably the Opposition would want to hear about Mr. Todd and the TGWU. After all, many members of the shadow Cabinet are sponsored by that union. The Leader of the Opposition is sponsored by that union. They all know where their marching orders come from. When Mr. Todd was asked about how he felt about secondary picketing he said:

"We need fair rules on picketing. We need the right to enforce our own rule book"

He was speaking to that well-known moderate journal, *The Morning Star*. That paper said that he went on to stress that his definition of secondary action included the right to strike in support of those "in unorganised workplaces". Just in case anyone might miss what Mr. Todd thought was a necessary right of secondary picketing and sympathy action, he said:

"if you want the bottom line that is it and we'll consider any means of getting there."

That is the true reaction of the Labour party to the restoration of rights on secondary picketing and sympathy action.

One need only consider the tortuous definition that is proposed by the Labour party. It says that it would allow secondary picketing and sympathy action, but that there would have to be mutuality of interest to justify such action. What does that mean in practice? On the BBC programme "On the Record" the hon. Member for Sedgefield admitted that that connection would be there for National Union of Mineworkers' pickets—if there is anyone left in the NUM these days. He said that NUM pickets would be entitled to go out and picket in support of electricity workers. The hon. Member was also able to confirm again that that would mean that National Union of Seamen pickets would have been entitled to bring cross-channels ferries to a halt. It would mean that the TGWU would have been entitled to carry out its threats against Ford, even though those threats prevented substantial investment at Ford at Dundee. Although the headline is that the Labour party now has a responsible attitude on those matters, the small print turns out to mean something else.

When one is trying to form a view on the matter and work out what the situation might be, it is worth looking at what some of the more honest members of the Labour party are prepared to say. The hon. Member who springs to mind is a member of the shadow Cabinet who, whatever his other attributes and characteristics, fiercely speaks his mind, such as it is. He is the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), who is much maligned. We all think of the skit that we often see of the hon. Gentleman on "Spitting Image", which has been unfair to him because, in reality, he is much worse than he is portrayed. It is interesting that when he was asked recently to reflect on the position of the trade union movement in relation to the Labour party he said:

"There is no way the Labour party can be distanced from the trade unions"—

[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

I am pleased that Opposition Members realise, as all good puppets should, their position in this matter. He continued:

"I don't think there's any doubt in anybody's mind about our alliance with the trade unions. We sit down and discuss our policies and come to agreements before we go to conference. Nobody will be able to break that link."

So the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East has made it absolutely clear that there is no question of breaking that link.

Ultimately, the Labour party realises that its position on trades union reform has been a vote loser. Because it is moving into new times, it now goes in for realpolitik. It has suddenly discovered that it is even more in favour of trades union reform than we are. But its structure and funding and the trades unions' say in the framing of its policies show that it is unreal to think that, if it were in office, the Labour party could ever be anything other than it was created to be: the mouthpiece, for better or worse, of the trades union movement. There is nothing wrong or dishonourable with that position. In a sense, it has now

become part of British tradition and is very praiseworthy. However, it becomes less than praiseworthy, and becomes intellectually and historically dishonest, when such a party denies its history and pretends that it will abandon it in the future. There is no evidence whatever for that proposition. This debate gives us an opportunity to reflect on that fact.

6.3 am

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): I congratulate the hon. Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens) on deciding to debate this subject, although I am at a loss about what he wanted to say. I had been concerned that two good speeches would be spoilt by the hour of the night and the lack of an audience, but events have proved me wrong because two not-so-good speeches have not been spoilt.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Eric Forth): We are about to hear another.

Mr. Lloyd: The Minister must follow me in whatever form he chooses.

There is little that I can say to the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) except that he is right in at least one accusation, because the Labour party has no intention of turning its back on its history. Why should we? Our history makes the party what it is and I do not seek to justify our position, because it has been justified many times before. If the charge is simply that we recognise that we hold certain values in common with different sectors of society, the Labour party is and will continue to be committed to the pursuit of those values through the political mechanisms of this place.

As for the subject of this debate on industrial relations in Britain and the need for trade union reforms, may I say to the hon. Member for Nuneaton that there may be a need for a seven-day cooling-off period between Conservative Members coming up with ideas and the publication of Green Papers by the Secretary of State which say, essentially, what is in the hon. Gentleman's speech. That is because the only possible justification for the speech of the hon. Member for Nuneaton is that the Minister and the Secretary of State for Employment felt that they might be lucky enough in the ballot to obtain some prime time. Instead, the poor old Minister had to turn up at 5.30 am to justify and possibly throw some light on the debate.

The sad reality is that Conservative Members felt, and still feel, that trade union bashing will give them an electoral bonus. They normally start on the process before a general election. For those who do not already know it, it is a good indication of the fact that a general election is on the way. The unfortunate news for Conservative Members is that the British public do not give trade union legislation a high priority.

A recent opinion poll convincingly showed that 93 per cent. of the public support an employee's legal right, not only to trade union membership but to trade union representation when in dispute with an employer. The public even allow for the concept of an employee being in dispute with his or her employer because they recognise that such things occur.

Some 85 per cent. of the public support the legal right to a minimum wage—something that is advocated by the Labour party and most of the rest of Europe, but scorned by the Government. Some 66 per cent. of Conservative voters are strongly against the idea of any further legislation to limit trade union rights, which means that 66 per cent. of the supporters of Conservative Members do not believe them when they say that there is a need for further step-by-step, lemming-like moves over the cliff to which the Government would take the country in terms of trade union legislation.

The simple reality is that the British public recognise, as does the Labour party, that industrial relations—far from being one of the Government's successes—contain many sectors in which the Government's policies have totally and abysmally failed. That failure is meted out to the detriment of some of the most vulnerable people in society.

The Government have for many years been in dispute with many international organisations, including the European Community and the International Labour Organisation because of their total failure to provide an industrial relations regime that is seen to be fair on all sides of industry. We know that the International Labour Organisation—the United Nations trade union agency—has condemned the Government roundly and soundly for their abuse of trade unions and trade unionists. It contrasts the Government's concern to prevent what they would describe as the abuse of industrial power with their "lesser concern for the rights of trade unions".
That is absolutely right, because the Government have run away from the concept that employees should have any rights in the workplace.

One of the ILO's most ringing condemnations, from which the Government have constantly run away, is of their decision to ban employees at GCHQ from being trade union members. That issue is still unresolved and we do not hear Conservative Members raise it when they speak of the abuse of the ordinary people of this country. When Conservatives abuse the most vulnerable people, Parliament should draw its own conclusions about the unkind and unpleasant nature of the modern Conservative party.

There has been a denial of the negotiating rights of teachers, which was condemned by the ILO. The Government have refused to take action on the blacklisting of people—*[Interruption.]* That, as the hon. Member for Teignbridge should know, is common in many parts of British industry. People, simply because of a history of trade union activity—or sometimes not even that—are prevented from obtaining any further employment in those parts of industry because they are deemed to be unacceptable to employers. We saw that in relation to work on the channel tunnel, where active trade unionists were unable to obtain employment. It is a disgrace.

Mr. Nicholls: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that he does not believe that an employer should have the right to take into account that a trade unionist may have a history of industrial disruption? Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that an employer should be obliged to employ such a person? The answer that the hon. Gentleman is groping for is yes, but it would be interesting to hear it from the hon. Gentleman himself.

Mr. Lloyd: We have said consistently that blacklisting is an outrageous principle, by which an employer can use his so-called right of hire and fire for narrow and sectarian political and industrial ends.

Mr. Nicholls: The hour is late, but I am not sure that I heard the hon. Gentleman answer my question.

Mr. Lloyd: Does the hon. Gentleman seek to intervene again? I will give way to him, if he asks politely. The hon. Gentleman's behaviour is not something to which one is normally accustomed in the House, or elsewhere.

Mr. Nicholls: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lloyd: In a moment. The hon. Gentleman is beginning to learn some of the customs and traditions of the House, and I am sure that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, can only approve of that.

Blacklisting has been condemned by international bodies such as the ILO. If the hon. Member for Teignbridge wants to tell the House that he believes that the ILO and others are wrong to say that blacklisting is an outrageous abuse of human rights, I will listen with considerable interest.

Mr. Nicholls: Will the hon. Gentleman answer the question that I put to him a few moments ago? Does he accept that an employer should have the right to refuse to employ a trade unionist who has a history of industrial disruption? The answer is either yes or no.

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman chooses to phrase his question in that way, but I repeat that an employer does not have the right to blacklist a person when, in some instances, he or she has not even been an active member of a trade union, and organisations such as the Economic League have got it wrong. The Labour party has already sought, in previous Employment Bills, to make blacklisting illegal.

Mr. Nicholls: Will the hon. Gentleman allow me to intervene?

Mr. Lloyd: Not on the same issue, no. I have made it clear where Labour stands. We do not accept the abuse of individual human rights by blacklisting.

The hon. Member for Teignbridge might want to leap up and down in the same hysterical fashion in respect of sympathy action. Again, the ILO condemned the Government for making the concept of sympathy action illegal—particularly where it is associated, as was the case with the notorious Wapping dispute, with a move by the company artificially to split its work force by using the law as a direct weapon against its employees. The hon. Member for Teignbridge has already made it clear that he supports the sacking of workers who strike. He is clearly out of step with international opinion in that respect as well. The Government and their supporters are far from the norms of conventional and decent opinion throughout Europe and the world.

It is claimed that Britain has a successful record in terms of stoppages in industry. Let us be realistic and compare the numbers of days lost through industrial dispute, and the number lost through death and injuries at work.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): Does the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) accept that the citizens charter should allow the public to know of the secret and often spurious information on their private lives that is held by organisations such as the Economic League, and to correct it where it is wrong? Every individual has an inalienable right to be employed in commerce or industry. Does the hon. Member for Teignbridge share that view —yes or no?

Mr. Lloyd: The reality is that the Government do not agree with that proposition. They have made it clear on numerous occasions that they do not agree with the concept of individual basic human rights at the workplace. They believe that an employer has a right to do what he feels is right in his own interests. The Government's attitude is that if that means trampling down the rights of employees, so be it. That should be evident to anyone who believes in human rights in a free society. The idea that an organisation can store information covertly is a dubious one; the notion that that information should be uncheckable is so outrageous that there is an overwhelming case for banning the activity.

Mr. McCartney: If we accept from the Prime Minister that the citizens charter relates to the public sector rather than the private sector, we must recognise that within British Telecom and British Coal there is a tendency to use organisations such as the Economic League. If someone is employed in the public sector, he will have the rights that are set out in the citizens charter. Surely he should be able to seek out and challenge the information that may be held on him, which might be fallacious. At present there is no right of challenge. An individual's career might be blighted irrespective of whether he agrees with trade unionism. His views on trade unionism could be described as irrelevant in the circumstances.

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend is right. I ask the Minister to confirm that part of the citizen's rights will be an entitlement for those who work in the public sector to challenge both the use and abuse by public sector employers of blacklists of the sort that my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) has described.

Mr. Nicholls: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lloyd: With respect to the hon. Gentleman, I suspect that he is no longer in a position to answer authoritatively for the Government or the Prime Minister, to tell us what will be introduced in the citizens charter. Being ever interested in his views, however, I shall give way to him, but perhaps for the last time in this debate.

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. Gentleman and I have been round this course before. In the context of the debate, perhaps he will remind the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) that the Government introduced the right of an employee not to be denied employment because of trade union membership. We are talking about an entirely different proposition, and one that obviously escapes the hon. Member for Makerfield. The proposition is not that someone should be denied work because of trade union membership. As I said, the Government have made that an impossibility. The hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd), with his usual cheap remarks and jibes, chooses not to recognise that. He will not give a straight answer to my question, which is whether an employer should be entitled to refuse employment to someone with a history of industrial disruption—not someone who is merely a member of a trade union. The hon. Gentleman knows full well that the Government introduced the right that a person should not be refused work merely because of trade union membership.

Mr. Lloyd: I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman still practises law, but he suggested in his little diatribe that

if a law is passed that gives rights to trade unionists, that makes it impossible to discriminate against trade unionists. He merely demonstrates——

Mr. Nicholls: I did not say that.

Mr. Lloyd: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman should read *Hansard* when this exchange appears within it. I think that he will find that my quotation is accurate.

The simple reality is that in Britain there are many who are denied employment only because they are members —not active ones—of trade unions. That is the position in the construction industry, for example, and in other parts of other industries. The Government can pass any law that they like, but unless they are prepared actively to prevent the use of blacklists they merely provide themselves with a fig leaf of respectability—I think that the Minister know this—while failing to give people legal protection. People's lives have been blighted by the actions of vicious employers. Actions have been taken that were designed to maintain a degree of control in certain industries which should not be tolerated in a society such as ours.

The hon. Member for Nuneaton talked about Britain's great success in terms of the present industrial climate. There is a contrast to be drawn between the number of days lost through industrial stoppages and the ever-increasing number of days lost through deaths and injuries at the workplace. That is one of the scandals of our time, and it falls directly on the doorstep of the Government. During recent years, the number of deaths has once again increased. The latest figures available show that some 200,000 people each year are injured in the workplace in Britain. That is a frighteningly high figure. A phenomenal number of people are suffering because of the incompetence and indifference of Conservative Members and the Government whom they seek to support.

The Government have systematically underfunded the Health and Safety Executive and have systematically attempted to drive a wedge between the people at the workplace and the protections that they should be entitled to enjoy in any society that claims to be civilised. If we are serious about a proper industrial climate in a modern economy, a right to healthy and safe working practices is not simply something to be afforded when the economy is put to rights, but something fundamental to our sort of society. It is a fundamental right for our fellow citizens at the workplace.

I draw the Minister's attention to the case of Jan Leadbitter, who died at work recently and whose employer, Bovis Construction, was taken to court. The family contacted me because they were devastated that the company, which has a poor industrial safety record, was fined a mere £1,000 by the court. It is an outrage that a company that allowed one of its employees to die, through its negligence—there is no doubt that it was negligence by the company—was fined only £1,000 by the court, which deemed that to be sufficient penalty. Conservative Members may think that that is a reasonable response by the courts, but we do not. Companies that are irresponsible to the point of allowing their employees to die should suffer penalties considerably greater than that.

Mr. McCartney: A year and a half ago, an 18-year-old constituent of mine was electrocuted and died after a fall. His employer was found guilty in the magistrates court of four offences, for which the highest fine was £400. His mother and father are devastated and his fiancée's life has been destroyed. Despite its negligence, the employer walked away with a minimum fine.

Because my constituent was killed three weeks after his 18th birthday, his family has no claim in law for compensation. He was deemed to be an adult with no wife or children, yet in reality he lived in a family and looked after his parents. The company offered to pay for the lad's funeral, which cost about £1,500, and then walked away. Had that lad been killed in the street by, for example, a nightclub bouncer, that person would have rightly served 15 years. Because the gentleman concerned calls himself a managing director, he walked away from the court with a £400 fine for negligently killing a person.

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend draws attention to an important point. Obviously, compensation can never be enough in such cases. What we should be determined upon —but the Government are not—is to make such events so rare as to be exceptional. The sad reality is that there are 623 deaths and 200,000 injuries a year, with probably another 2,000 people dying through work-induced health disorders and about 80,000 people joining the list of those whose health has been ruined in the workplace. For this Government, the health and safety elements are not a priority. While that charge is real and fitting, I say to Conservative Members that every time that they speak about industrial relations, they speak with——

Mrs. Golding Forked tongues.

Mr. Lloyd: Not only with forked tongues, but with gross hypocrisy.

The Government of law and order are faced with the problem of the 100,000 firms since 1979 that have been found to be illegally underpaying their workers. If the data that I have are accurate, about 1 million people who are covered by the wages councils do not receive the wages to which they are entitled.

The Conservative party, which claims to have respect for the law, has never been strong in defence of those 1 million people or in pursuing employers who are prepared to flout the law. The Government unashamedly do not pretend to support that law. When we know that about 10·4 million people at work are paid below the level of the Council of Europe's decency threshold, we know that Britain has a crisis of poverty wages. The problem will not be resolved by pious aspirations about driving people back into work. That has not happened. Once again, unemployment is increasing massively. That explains why the hon. Member for Nuneaton said that there were fewer industrial stoppages this year than previously.

Low pay is holding back our economy and our fellow citizens. It stops our employers investing in training and in deriving the maximum potential from those at the workplace. The Conservative Government do not aim to crack down on the illegal underpayers. A Labour Government will introduce a minimum wage, as Labour Members have said publicly, and we will ensure that it is used to the advantage of people in the workplace.

Wherever we look, the Government's record on industrial relations bears no comparison to that of the rest of western Europe. The Government are blocking European Community directives dealing with the burden of proof in cases involving sexual discrimination at work, parental leave and working hours.

[Mr. Lloyd]

I shall quote the case of Robert George, a practising Christian, who works for Plant Breeding International in Cambridge, a subsidiary of the multinational firm, Unilever—a name known to every hon. Member here.

Mr. McCartney: That company is a big contributor to the Tory party.

Mr. Lloyd: As my hon. Friend said, that firm is a big contributor to the Tory party. Mr. Robert George has been working for the company for many years. During the harvest, lasting from July to October, he is expected to work 12 hours a day, seven days a week—an 84-hour week. *[Interruption.]* The Minister sniffs—I am not sure whether in commiseration with Mr. George or in indifference. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will respond to my point. *[Interruption.]* It is interesting to note that the Minister has revealed that he will not respond.

The Government unashamedly blocked the directive on working hours, which would have meant that, for the first time, Britain would come into line with every other country in Europe, bar one, in defining a maximum working week. The Government are not prepared to comment on the case of Mr. Robert George, who is not even able to exercise his right as a practising Christian to take Sunday off. It is a disgrace that that should happen and that the Government are not prepared to investigate the problems faced by that individual and many others because of abuses by big, respectable employers. It is a disgrace that the Government stand alone in Europe in blocking the working hours directive. It is about time that we had a Government who were prepared to put the interests of working people to the fore and to accept directives on working hours that affect the liberty of our fellow citizens.

The Government are out of touch on leave entitlement and the right of workers to be represented at the workplace. Britain is virtually alone, other than Ireland, in having no system whereby the British worker has a right to representation on health and safety issues. On a minimum wage, maternity leave and parental leave Britain is again out of touch. In addition, Britain is blocking a directive which would give rights to part-time workers and it stands virtually alone in Europe in having laws which discriminate against part-time workers.

When the hon. Member for Nuneaton tells us that Britain's industrial relations record is a success he is far from the truth. I accept that he was put up to this debate tonight by a Government who want to maintain their trade union-bashing approach. But millions of people in Britain are suffering under the lousy industrial relations climate that the Government have created. The next Labour Government will be committed to introducing a climate at the workplace which embodies the values of civilisation and which protects those who are abused. The Government want industrial conflict, so beloved of Conservative Members who thrive on it. A Labour Government will ensure that conflict at work is rare and that the British worker will be able to operate in the workplace with dignity.

The Labour party is unashamedly close to the trade unions. It is because we value the role of trade unions in protecting people at the workplace that I stand here tonight to say that there is a better way than that put forward by the Government. That better way is coming soon.

6.32 am

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield) *rose*—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The hon. Gentleman has already spoken. I take it that he has the leave of the House to speak again.

Hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. McCartney: I thank hon. Members for giving me the opportunity to speak again. I do not wish to repeat the arguments that have been made tonight on a party-political basis. At the end of the day we can agree or disagree. But in practical terms, industry today provides a clear, unequivocal picture of the modern industrial management structures of companies, whether private or public, that have a real interest in developing a meaningful relationship with the work force.

My constituency is the home of Heinz, the largest food production company in the world. It has the largest food production plant in the world for baby food, soups and other household items which are mainly sold to the largest supermarket chains in Britain.

Some eight years ago it was clear that for Heinz to survive in the marketplace in the United Kingdom and Europe it had to enter into a massive research and development programme. That meant a massive change for the work force and management structures.

The company took the view from the outset that it considered the work force and the trade unions not to be against investment and reorganisation but to be a catalyst for change. During the past eight years there has been a massive change in attitudes in the company to the point where Heinz has not only maintained its market leadership in the food industry but has led the way in showing how trade unions and management can work together to develop, restructure and win new markets at home and in the EC.

Before Ministers start attacking trade unions, they should consider what happens in companies such as Heinz where the management uses the skill of the unions and involves them in a meaningful dialogue about the changes that are necessary. The management also allows the unions to put forward practical solutions to the problems of the marketplace.

After millions of pounds of investment, Heinz recognises that were it not for the role played by the unions in the changes in the company, the advantages that the company has gained in the marketplace would never have happened.

In London and Wigan the shop stewards are principal partners in the changes in the company. *[Interruption.]* The Minister seems rather fed up with this debate—

Mr. Forth: I have been up all night.

Mr. McCartney: So have we all.

Mr. Nicholls: Give the Minister a chance to reply then.

Mr. McCartney: The hon. Gentleman spoke for hours and hours, making party-political points.

If the Minister is serious about his interest in industrial relations and in trade unions, I invite him to come to my constituency between now and the autumn and meet the

management and trade unions at Heinz. He could look over the factory, where working relations have been transformed. The management realises that it has to take the unions with it when effecting such multi-million pound transformations. That in turn leads to a better company and to better products. It enables the company to win hands down against European competition.

Heinz has proved that taking the trade unions with the management means a better company and product in the long run. I hope that in the next debate on employment policy we shall not hear from Conservative Members the sort of petty-minded attitudes which we have heard tonight. They are 20 years out of date, and they have no place in the sort of modern industrial society that we have in Britain today.

6.36 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Eric Forth): A new technique has unfolded during this debate: the Minister is given only a few minutes in which to wind it up. Perhaps the House will have to get used to that, but it came as a surprise to me.

The hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) referred to a debate on employment policy. If he had read the Order Paper he would have seen that the debate is supposed to be about trade union reform. That oversight should not surprise us. This morning trade union-sponsored Opposition Members have come trotting along, no doubt at the bidding of their paymasters in the National Graphical Association, the National Union of Public Employees and the Transport and General Workers Union. They have done everything they can to avoid talking about trade union reform. That, too, should not surprise the House.

My hon. Friends, by contrast, including my hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens) who initiated the debate, wanted to talk about trade union law and trade union reform. It was sigificant, but not surprising, that Labour Members wanted to talk about almost anything else—deaths and injuries at work, for instance. As usual, the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) got his facts wrong and ignored the fact that this country has one of the best records in Europe in that area. Other European countries look to us to establish best practice in health and safety. That was confirmed recently by the Health and Safety Executive's mapping project, which I recommend to the hon. Gentleman.

Again as usual, the hon. Member for Stretford made an inaccurate reference in passing to underfunding of the Health and Safety Executive. He should know by now—I have told him often enough—that the chairman of the Health and Safety Commission has publicly confirmed that the commission and the executive have the resources that they require to do their job properly.

The hon. Gentleman went on to refer, as he always does, to prosecutions under the wages council regulations. This is yet more evidence that the Opposition are obsessed with the need for prosecutions, completely ignoring the methods used by the Health and Safety Executive and by the wages inspectors—information and persuasion. Those techniques seem alien to Opposition Members, who seem constantly to lust after prosecutions in every possible circumstance. That is a frightening taste of things to come if the Opposition ever get the chance to run the country.

My hon. Friends wanted to talk about industrial relations and their reform and to point to our record of improved industrial relations which, among other things, have led to a flow of inward investment that is second to none and an impressive record of job creation. The Opposition were candid enough to admit that they are still wedded to their minimum wage policy, even though it has been demonstrated over and over again that such a policy would cost the jobs of hundreds of thousands of low-paid people. Perhaps the Opposition have calculated that to force up the pay of some at the cost of jobs of others is a price which they are prepared to pay. The Government are certainly not prepared to pay that price. Our job is time and again to tell the people of this country that whereas a small number of them may benefit in the short term from a statutory minimum wage, a large number of people would lose their jobs and suffer the consequent and disastrous fall in income. The electorate will ponder that between now and the next election.

The hon. Member for Stretford inaccurately tried to tell the House that a recent opinion poll showed that a large number of people were against further limitations on trade union powers. I think that I have quoted him accurately. That signifies a profound misunderstanding by Opposition Members of what the past and, I hope, future reforms of industrial relations are all about. They have nothing to do with limiting trade unions' powers, but are concerned with the enhancement of the role of individual trade union members and members of the public. We want to safeguard the democratic rights of trade union members within their unions and vis-a-vis their leaders. We sought to establish a fair balance between the trade unions and the employers and to protect employers and the public from the abuse of trade union power of the kind that is long behind us, such as the closed shop and the flying pickets.

Opposition Members again raised the spectre of the return of pickets, secondary picketing and violence on the picket line. We have put all that behind us, but apparently the Opposition are undertaking to see its return if they are returned to government.

Mr. McCartney: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Forth: No, because the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friend the Member for Stretford monopolised the debate to the point where I do not have enough time fully to answer the issues that they and other hon. Members have raised. Given the limited time that is left, it would be inappropriate for me to give way.

Employees are free to decide for themselves whether to join a trade union in which they have the right to vote in a secret ballot for the election of leaders. All union members can decide whether to go on strike, and they are free from any threat of disciplinary action. Employers are free to decide whether to recognise and negotiate with trade unions.

Perhaps most importantly, the law protects businesses and jobs against flying pickets, secondary action, unofficial strikes and other abuses of industrial power. All those major advances have been recognised not only by the electorate in the three successive election victories that we have enjoyed, but, perhaps more importantly, by investors from other countries who have flocked to the United Kingdom because of the favourable industrial relations

[Mr. Forth]

framework and atmosphere that have been created by the Government. Those investors provide an ever-increasing number of quality jobs in quality companies.

What the Opposition would do is in doubt, and it is time for them to come clean. We had some hints from them about what they would do about the closed shop, secondary picketing, the rights of trade unions over their members and the role of strike ballots. In all these sectors, where we have made such advances, the Labour party either does not want to come clean with the electorate or, if it does, has demonstrated a remarkable capacity to turn the clock back and to restore to trade unions and their leaders the frightening powers and overwhelming role that they had in the dim and distant 1970s. If this is the reality of the Opposition's industrial relations policy, it is truly frightening.

Thanks to my hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton, we are able to get a glimpse of what the Labour party would do if it could. The significance of the debate is that Labour Members have shied away from discussing what they would do with trade unions under the law, and have instead concentrated on irrelevancies and marginal issues. That, if nothing else, shows full well the nature of the Labour party. I regret that the opportunity to explore these issues has been all too brief. I hope that, over the coming weeks and months, the House will have ample opportunity fully to explore what Labour Members have to say about these issues, so that the electorate will see their policies in all their horror.

Economic and Employment Prospects (London)

6.45 am

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I am always happy to have an opportunity to introduce a debate and generally happy to have one even at this hour of the day. I am returning to an old habit. I had a fallow year last year, but in the two previous years I drew the 4.1 am straw and the 4.21 am straw in the debates on the Consolidated Fund Bill. At least I have moved to a slightly more civilised hour. I welcome the Minister to this early morning debate on London matters, and in particular on economic and employment prospects for Londoners.

This is a debate about the London economy. Colleagues who represent other parts of the country sometimes forget that one reason why the London economy is very important is that it is the area with the largest number of people in it. It is the most populous economic region. It is also the capital city. Sadly, it also has the greatest disparity of wealth. Increasingly, it is becoming two cities.

The figures in a report issued a few weeks ago by the London Research Centre for the London borough grant committee makes it clear that the average gross weekly income of households in Greater London conceals a far wider disparity between the highest and lowest income groups anywhere else. In 1988, the wealthiest 10 per cent. of households received £687·39 a week, more than 12 times as much as the lowest 10 per cent., whose average income was £56·97.

It is unfortunate that, until recently, we had a Prime Minister who did not seem to understand these things, despite representing a London constituency. In her final speech as Prime Minister, in the debate on the motion of no confidence in the Government, when I pointed out that there was one unchallengeable statistic—that during the years of her premiership the gap between the poorest and the richest had widened—the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) gave what can only be described as a fatuous answer, which was:

> "People on all levels of income are better off than they were in 1979. The hon. Gentleman is saying that he would rather that the poor were poorer, provided that the rich were less rich."—[*Official Report*, 22 November 1990; Vol. 181, c. 448.]

Nobody would argue that case and it shows how little she understood or cared.

One further complication about London is that it has one of the most diverse communities. It is diverse in terms of age range and background, including ethnic background, language and the rest. Therefore, the London economy has great potential, but tragically, after 12 years of Tory rule, London increasingly is not working.

Let me give a few anecdotal examples before confirming them by means of some Londonwide statistics. My riverside constituency—or part of it—is supposed to be in the docklands corporation area and, as such, the beneficiary of Government goodies over the past 10 years. The corporation was set up 10 years ago this month. Yet some of the last manufacturing industries have closed this year: Paynes tea factory closed earlier this year and Sarsons vinegar factory is closing in a matter of weeks. One of the most established firms in the construction industry—Sir Frederick Snow and Partners, which is about 100 years old and has a worldwide practice—went

into liquidation a few months ago. The construction industry is experiencing increasing difficulties. Jobs in the public service are also being cut: London Regional Transport is cutting its staff and—somewhat embarrassing for the Government—Guys hospital has done the same.

At a lunch with representatives of Price Waterhouse, a leading British accountancy firm and one of the largest employers in my constituency—if not the largest—I learnt that it had had to lay off a good many staff, for the first time ever. Constituents who run businesses complain to me that they are increasingly being priced out by massively escalating rents imposed by, for example, the British Rail Property Board on the one hand and the local authority on the other. A Conservative Member told me the other day that he had never known the position to be so bad that there were a number of shops which could not even be let on this side of the river, down the King's road.

The economic situation is far from good. I have compared the unemployment statistics for March 1983 —the month in which I took my seat—with those for the current month. I am sad to report that the figure for Southwark and Bermondsey was 18·6 per cent. in March 1983 and is 18·5 per cent. now. That is hardly a great improvement to show for eight years of Tory Government.

Not only businesses but ordinary London residents are finding life increasingly difficult. The cost of housing is constantly rising. The average rent for a London room or bedsit is now £385 per calendar month. For a one-bedroom flat, the figure is £619; for a two-bedroom flat or house it is £774; for a three-bedroom flat or house it is £974; and for a four-bedroom house it is £1,075. Rents for bedsits, rooms and studios rose by 17 per cent. between November and May. In the same six months, retail price levels, which the Government use in setting housing benefit levels, rose by only 2 per cent.

Let us examine the disparity between those costs and people's earnings. The average rent per week for a bedsit is £76.15. The net income that someone under 18 would need to be able to afford that without recourse to housing benefit is £146·07. Fewer than 50 per cent. are earning that much, and thus able to afford such rents. A couple over 18 living in a one-bedroom flat with a weekly rent of £143·25 would need a net income of £278·30 to pay for it. Only half those living in the capital could afford that. The average rent of a one-bedroom flat for a single pensioner is £143·25 and that pensioner would need an income of more than £269. Not surprisingly, fewer than 10 per cent. of London's pensioners could pay that.

Those who have bought their homes have stretched themselves to the limit to take out mortgages. Record repossessions have resulted from their inability to keep up the payments. As those of us who served on the Standing Committee considering the Housing Bill predicted, housing benefit did not keep pace with those developments, and there is an increasing disparity between the rents of available properties and the housing benefit that would enable people without sufficient incomes to pay those rents.

Fares and prices generally in London are higher than elsewhere in the country. Thames Water rates have escalated enormously. London holds the record for the highest poll tax. Business rates in London are substantial. More and more people come to see me, having been served with summonses, with the bailiffs threatening to come to their door. When I hold a surgery, more people come to see me now than ever before. More people are in economic difficulties than ever before.

One of the blackest trends is that unemployment has been mounting increasingly for over a year. Ten of the 30 constituencies with the highest unemployment in the United Kingdom are in Greater London. Four of the top 10 in London include, I am sad to say, my own constituency. About 6,500 people in my constituency are registered as out of work. About 320,000 in Greater London are registered as unemployed. There are patches in my constituency—the area around the Elephant and Castle, for example—where unemployment is over 25 per cent. There has been an increase in unemployment in the London Docklands development corporation part of my constituency. In some areas it amounts to over 25 per cent. The age groups affected are those under 25, or those between 25 and 35.

There are always some chinks of light. The London chamber of commerce, in its quarterly economic trends survey published on Monday, said that there were some improvements and that

"36 per cent. of service-sector companies now predict that profits will increase in the next 12 months, compared with 26 per cent. in the last quarterly survey."

However, those companies make it very clear that they want and need interest rate reductions if they are to improve their business. They also say that jobs are now being lost at a faster rate in manufacturing companies than in service sector companies. The London chamber of commerce says that a total of 62 per cent. of manufacturers reported a fall in domestic orders in the second quarter and that 89 per cent. of businesses are now operating below full capacity, compared with only 81 per cent. in the previous quarter. The proportion of manufacturing employers reporting an overall reduction in staff rose from 41 per cent. in the first quarter to 52 per cent. in the second quarter of the year. The London chamber of commerce, concludes the article yesterday in the *Financial Times*, predicts that

"London will continue to suffer disproportionately from job losses."

The reality is that the economy in London is not in good shape. There are very few signs of encouragement. There are very few signs that the recession is bottoming out and that things are getting better.

One of the things of which the Government claim that they are proudest is that they have chosen London as the flagship for their inner-city initiatives. In 1981, during the first term in office of the Secretary of State for the Environment, they chose to set up the London Docklands development corporation. Earlier this month there was a great beano to celebrate the establishment of the LDDC in 1981. There was, however, some subtle disinformation about the success of that venture. In the press release that was published to mark the first 10 years of the LDDC the claim was made that by the end of the century,

"jobs in London Docklands will increase from the present 53,000 to over 200,000."

The press release continued:

"This compares with 27,000 when the LDDC began its work in 1981."

The reality, according to the Government's own answer, given by the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key), on 8 May 1991, at column *520*, is that the figures do not come to the same total. He says that there are about 48,000

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

permanent jobs and just under 5,000 temporary jobs, of which about 41,000 have become available since 1981. The majority of those—almost 25,000—are not new but relocated jobs. Fifteen thousand jobs have been lost and if one disregards temporary jobs, in the past 10 years the number of permanent jobs in docklands has therefore reduced. That is not a record of which the Government can be proud.

The Government have tried various measures. There have been plenty of programmes and initiatives, such as urban programmes, city grants, task forces, city action teams, city technology colleges, opted-out schools and opted-out hospitals. Some of them have had some success. In addition, Ministers were appointed not long ago to oversee seven inner cities—the hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) was made Minister for London—but, as an editorial in *The Times* said about them on 20 April last year,

"They have sunk without trace."

Sadly, the majority of the Government's initiatives have equally not succeeded. London has as many problems now as it had 10 years ago. New houses have been built and more are being built now than in recent years, but few are being built for rent, and many that were built to buy are still empty. There is much concern that if the docklands corporation is winding down, much of the social infrastructure, which is supported by Government and local authorities, will be lost. Day nurseries, creches, the Surrey docks farm in my constituency, youth centres and adult education classes are a source not only of social cohesion but of employment and training.

We have a terrible housing crisis. To show how ridiculous the housing policy for London is, I cite but one example. A constituent of mine who could not be housed by the local authority moved into private rented accommodation in a "Quality Street" home just off St. James's road. She moved there with her children. Her fiancé returned from duty with the Army in Germany. If he went to live with her—he wanted to do so because they wanted to marry and be together again—she would have to forfeit the housing benefit that she received. He has moved back in and if he works, which he wants to do, they risk losing their benefit. The rent will be more than they can afford. They are likely to lose their home and as a result will be in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, or a hotel at best, if not worse. Any housing policy that offers people a disincentive to work is not compatible with getting our city working again.

We have reached a crisis in the way in which we look after and provide for young people. I put that point to the Prime Minister during Question Time the other day. Massive cuts have been made in the budget of the youth service in all London boroughs. Cuts have been as high as 50 per cent. in Haringey, 25 per cent. in Hackney and £1·5 million in Southwark. Without a properly funded youth service, the prospect of adequately providing for the needs of young people will be reduced and the chance of their moving to criminality will be increased. The crime figures are increasing.

The Government cannot claim to have a wonderful record on providing for the skills of young people. I quote the *Financial Times* of 14 March 1990. The article says:

"The Thatcher Government has not achieved a significant increase in staying-on rates which remain low by international standards. Academic achievement"—

I remind the House that this is after 10 years or more in office—

"is unimpressive. Only about 30 per cent. of 16-year-olds gained the equivalent of five or more good GCSEs while just 16 per cent. of 18-year-olds gained two or more A-levels. The number of apprenticeships has fallen since 1979—apparently by almost two thirds in manufacturing. At the same time, only a tiny proportion of YTS graduates have gained worthwhile vocational qualifications. Around a third of 16 to 19-year-olds received no education or training."

The current state of youth training is almost disastrous. A central London careers officer is quoted in this month's "Youthaid" working brief publication as saying that "July and August" is the "crazy season" in the careers service with no work and "no YT places". The mismatch between youngsters going to look for training or employment and the number of vacancies is becoming increasingly embarrassing. In employment exchanges—I went recently to my local one—the ratio between applicants and jobs is about 45:1. In some employment offices and jobcentres, the ratio is 70:1. People are desperately looking for youth training places. For many of them, there is none available. Unless the Government put significant new funds into the training and enterprise council programme and into youth training, those young people will go without the training or skill which, I remind the House, the Government have guaranteed that they should have.

What is needed? I and my colleagues in the House believe that we have to start by getting the economic strategy right and by getting the fundamentals of the British economy in order. That requires one to do fundamental things, such as cutting interest rates. We must ensure that we have a proper fiscal policy that encourages growth. We must invest in the sectors of the economy which desperately need investment, such as education and training. Unless we do that, we shall not be able to get the economy going again.

My hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) set out succinctly a summary of proposals in his speech on the Budget. We proposed that almost £2 billion should go into education, training and child care, and £1 billion or more into public transport. In London, that would include a fast link to the channel tunnel and an increase in the London Transport external financing limit. We proposed a £1 billion package for business, including legislation to tackle the late payment of bills. We said that a transitional relief scheme was needed for the uniform business rate. We proposed a package for jobs, particularly jobs that are environmentally friendly.

The country and London need such an investment package. Without such a strategy, the economy of London will not recover. We need a regional strategy, too. One cannot have a regional strategy without a mechanism for delivering it. We are more certain than ever that, without co-ordination of economic regeneration policy by a Londonwide authority, we shall never get the capital city moving again.

We need to deal with the disparity of income to which I alluded. That can be done only by a decent citizen's income to ensure that the gap between the rich and the poor does not increase, but decreases. We need to ensure that there is a series of measures to encourage enterprise, training and the rest. At our conference in Nottingham in the spring Liberal Democrats approved the establishment of regional development agencies to stimulate and

encourage regional economic activity. We proposed local development agencies as a method for injecting extra resources from outside the area. We proposed the decentralisation of local authority services. We have to ensure that the political, democratic process is the vehicle through which economic regeneration happens.

We need more money in vocational training. We need to ensure that there is a better link—there are some good examples—between education and jobs. We must ensure that there is a bias towards those who find it difficult to obtain work, for example, those with disabilities. Child care provision is needed by many women who would like to get back to work. We need to help those from the black and ethnic minorities who are, according to all the statistics, the most discriminated against in terms of their economic and employment opportunities.

We will be unable to fulfil those needs unless people have adequate housing in which to live at a cost they can afford. That is why we believe that housing cost relief should be introduced. Mortgage tax relief should be abolished and replaced by a more equitable system. We must ensure that a new form of funding is introduced through an intermediate level of rented accommodation.

We must deal with our skills shortage. Walworth school in my constituency has converted its top floor into something called the "world of work". That teaches secondary school pupils how to prepare for the world outside and it does a good job. Yesterday a training and access programme whereby one can obtain information from a machine in the shopping centre in Surrey Quays was opened. Such initiatives are good, but they are not sufficient unless we have an economic strategy to back them up. Unless we undertake co-ordinated economic planning we will not succeed.

The transport system of the capital city must deliver people to and from work without frustration and often delay. The London chamber of commerce and the Confederation of British Industry have made it clear that our reduced efficiency and reduced ability to compete with other nations is the price we pay for the congestion of our capital city.

In the short term we must introduce an urgent package of measures to bring jobs to the capital city. If that does not happen we will pay the price not only in terms of increasing poverty, homelessness, poor health and increased expenditure on social security, but in terms of bad morale. It will also lead to a capital city that looks increasingly dirty, tacky and in poor repair. One cannot have a successful citizens charter if those citizens do not have the ability to earn a decent wage with which they can enjoy the services, public and private, in relation to which the charter seeks to give them rights.

We must have immediate economic activity, stimulated by the Government, to bring jobs to the capital city. We could invest in housing, school buildings and hospitals. We could do that in a practical way by reducing the controls on capital receipts and relaxing the controls on local government by exempting some of its activities from capping. We could employ a large number of people in energy conservation activities to make our homes better insulated and draught-proof. We could put more money into the training and enterprise councils so that they can provide a much more wholesome and wide-ranging service. We could second people by transferring them from employment to train people who are not in employment.

We could put money into seedcorn businesses through loan guarantee schemes and business expansion schemes. We could help businesses by giving them a statutory right to interest after 30 days so that they are not increasingly in trouble because of the late payment of bills. We could also give those businesses the power to enforce more effectively the payment of their debts. We could give local authorities the opportunity to be much more effective generators of wealth.

If we do all those things, our capital city stands a chance of taking its place in the post-1992 Europe. If we do not, many of the jobs and economic benefits of a united Common Market will go to Frankfurt, Paris or even Glasgow or Birmingham.

In my time in the House I have never felt that, in one respect, London risks going back to the dark ages that prevailed a decade ago. But it seems that economic history could repeat itself. Crime is rising, and youth crime in particular. Racial tension is increasing and the British National party is finding it easier to recruit and is working harder at it. The tension between the traditional long-standing communities—principally white, and including the Irish as well as the British—and the more recently established communities is growing. It is growing because there are not enough jobs and houses for both, so people are feeling aggressive and defensive. The police will confirm that the number of incidents of racial violence and threats is growing in our capital city.

One reason why so few people vote Conservative in a constituency such as mine—this goes back to before the war—is that they realise that, although the Conservatives may promise much for the inner city, the minority will obtain the majority of the benefit while the majority will remain relatively as poor as ever. Many will continue to struggle because the goodies simply do not trickle down as the former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), and her advisers thought that they would. That is not to say that my constituents have not been failed by others, too.

After 12 years of this Government, London's economy is in a bad way. On balance, the Government's initiatives have not rescued the capital city or prepared it for the 1990s, let alone the next century. Unless they realise what is needed soon, Londoners will have to look elsewhere for an economic agenda that will meet the job. My hon. Friends and I offer an agenda that will give London and Londoners the opportunity to get back to work.

7.16 am

Mr. Henry McLeish (Fife, Central): This is an important subject and I congratulate the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on selecting it for debate.

In a sense, our capital city is in crisis. The economy and employment structure of the city are also in crisis. Twelve years of economic mismanagement have been added to in the past year by a unique recession that was born in Downing street and is not shared by any of our European competitors. The debate is also about a capital city in which one in seven of the population lives. It is at the centre of the world's financial services and it makes an enormous contribution to Britain's wealth and production. Naturally, it is rich in traditions and in the history of democracy and government and still stands as a beacon throughout the world. Therefore, it is worth fighting for.

[Mr. Henry McLeish]

I wish that the same could be said of the Government. London is now experiencing circumstances created in the past 12 years by deregulation, deskilling and the casualisation of much of the labour market. We cannot afford that to continue, especially as we move toward the challenges of the late 1990s. The Government cannot be trusted with London's economy or the employment prospects of Londoners in the next few years.

London is also suffering from the unfettered free market excesses in which the Government indulge and from which they try to take credit. In the mid-1980s the capital experienced a boom but it has also experienced the ravages of the current recession. They are made much worse by the fragility and vulnerability of an economy created by 12 and a half years of Conservative Government.

It is important to catalogue some of the reasons why the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey and many others feel anguished about what has happened and are apprehensive about the future.

A key statistic that must be thrown into the debate is that of unemployment. In Greater London in the past year of the Government's term of office, unemployment has risen since June 1990 from 199,267 to 329,524—an increase of 130,257, or a 65 per cent. growth in unemployment. That speaks volumes about the misery created for individuals and their families, the waste of skills and the capacity lost in both the services and manufacturing industries over that period.

As we are talking about the party of "sound economics" and "economic competence", Londoners will want to know that the current bill for unemployment—the cost to the Treasury in benefits and lost receipts—is a staggering £2·5 billion. That is the cost to Londoners and the country of the Government's incompetence. Over the past year, from June 1990 to June 1991, the Government have added almost £1 billion to the price that we are paying for unemployment, which gives a new resonance to the Chancellor of the Exchequer's comment that unemployment is a price well worth paying. That price is often measured in human misery, and is now also being measured in financial terms. That dents the Government's capacity to preach, as they frequently do, that they are the Government of sound finances.

The other issue often raised by the Government is their employment record. If we consider the Government's record on employment growth in London from 1981—when we were first able to obtain the statistics—we find that only 69,000 more people have been working in London during the past decade, of whom 34,000 have double jobs. Another 29,000 people occupy training places. If one subtracts the double jobbers and the training places from the civilian work force in employment, one discovers that in the United Kingdom's capital city only 6,000 more people are in work now than in June 1979, which is simply deplorable. No self-respecting Government could present that record to the people of the capital and suggest that it was a success.

Another key indicator of the labour market is the number of people chasing every vacancy. We have interesting statistics to show the results of Government failure over the decade. In London, in January 1980, 2·3 unemployed people were chasing every vacancy. In March 1991, 26·2 unemployed people were chasing every vacancy. That is a massive rise of more than 1,000 per cent. in the number of people chasing jobs in the capital city. Is that a record of which the nation can be proud? Is it a record of which the Government can be proud? I hardly think so. Once again, we find that employment growth is a myth. Vacancies have slumped dramatically, and more and more Londoners are in the agonising position of chasing fewer and fewer jobs. That can never be a record of success.

It is more important to consider what is happening now in the capital city. In our surveys of job losses over the past year—we have carried out quarterly surveys—we find that the south-east has lost almost 80,000 jobs, and we think that that figure is only 50 per cent. of the total. What a catalogue of misery and failure there is in London: 150 jobs have been lost at Ford of Dagenham, 100 jobs have been axed at BBC television in London, 600 jobs are to go at Lewisham hospital trust, 550 jobs are to go at Marks and Spencer in London, 34 jobs are to go from *Mirabella* magazine in London, 435 jobs have been lost at Charing Cross and Westminster hospitals, 430 jobs have gone from Riverside health authority, 500 jobs have been axed from Rolls-Royce cars in London.

The story goes on and on. Is there no end to the misery that Londoners must experience before the Government start to take seriously not only the capital's economic problems but, more important, those of the nation—from which we cannot divorce the economy of London, which has been hardest hit by a combination of mismanagement and recession?

The Conservatives will never face up to the fact that, in a modern economy, one cannot pursue a policy that allows unfettered free market excesses to co-exist with poor skills and low investment in technology and capital equipment. That is a recipe for chaos. Sadly, chaos and crisis are facing not only London's economy, but the people of London.

If we need a reminder of how badly out of line we are with other G7, OECD and Community states, we need look no further than the OECD's July report, which shows that the United Kingdom's gross domestic product fell 2·5 per cent. between the first quarter of 1990 and the first quarter of 1991. In comparison, GDP in Germany is growing by 5·2 per cent., in France by 0·9 per cent., and in Japan by 5·9 per cent. It cannot be claimed that Britain's recession is shared by other developed countries. That myth has been propagated by the Government to ease the concern felt by their supporters and others in London, who believe that the Government can still deliver. However, their track record proves that they can never deliver what the capital needs.

The OECD report shows also that unemployment in the G7 countries as a whole will rise from 17·2 million in 1990 to 19·7 million in 1991, and that Britain will account for one third of that increase. What a reflection that is on the British economy when measured against the six other most productive and wealthiest nations on earth. Why is it that after 12 years of Conservative government the statistics suggest that one third of G7's unemployment burden will fall on London and the rest of the United Kingdom?

According to the OECD's report, the Government are breaking another record, because in terms of investment, growth and employment, Britain has not only been at the bottom of the league for the past two years but is destined to occupy the lowest place in the league table for the two

years ahead. That makes four years of the most unenviable economic record of any country in G7, the European Community or the OECD.

I hope that when the Minister replies he will mention the macroeconomic dimension, because that clearly influences prosperity and development in the country as a whole, and has a major bearing on the capital over the next few years.

London is facing a whirlwind of the factors I described. Londoners want to know what the Government intend to do about the problems which they identify but which the Government are no longer willing to acknowledge. What steps do the Government intend to take to invest in Britain's productive economy or to reverse the massive national cuts in training budgets that are hitting the capital particularly badly?

What do the Government intend to do about the youth training guarantee, which is now a shocking indictment of the Government's couldn't care less attitude? The Government offered every 16 and 17-year-old a place on youth training, and the London boroughs and the London training and enterprise councils are anguished because they cannot deliver the necessary volume of places with current Government financial commitments. Equally, they cannot deliver any quality in YT because their budgets are stretched to the limit as they attempt to provide volume. That is another problem which the Minister should examine, because it has a bearing on the future of skills in London and on the prospects of young people to be able to exercise opportunities to gain the skills that their fathers and grandfathers had before them. The Minister must tell us why a generation is being let down in the capital.

It is clear that we need real solutions to real problems. We can no longer trust the Government to indulge themselves with the unfettered free market and its excesses. We can no longer allow them to indulge in economic mismanagement on a grand scale. We also cannot allow the Government to get away with suggesting that we are faced with a unique recession that is part of a worldwide phenomenon which they can do little about.

We need sustainable low interest rates that give certainty to industry so that it can invest in the productive economy and thus create jobs. We need to use the tax system to promote investment and innovation. We need to have a legislative framework to ensure that employers invest in skills. We can no longer leave everything to the whims of the market or leave employers to invest if they think fit. There should be a partnership between the nation and industry and between industry, young trainees and adult trainees. We must move forward together. We need, above all, a partnership economy in which the Government, the unions and employers work together.

We can look to Germany, to France and, increasingly, to Italy—Japan is different for cultural reasons—and we can see success born of partnership, of investment and of a national desire to seek consensus on our way forward in the 1990s. We need, as the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey said, regional devolution for parts of the United Kingdom, including London. That would allow the capital once again to have a voice at the top table on matters that are important to it.

I have set out the real solutions that the nation and the capital need. I challenge the Minister to say whether the Government intend to continue to con the capital or whether they will introduce a new industrial strategy in the 1990s that will help Britain and London.

7.32 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Robert Jackson): It is always a pleasure to have debates with the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), even at this ungodly hour of the morning. It is a pleasure also to debate matters with the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish), whom I have recently been getting to know as he speaks from the Opposition Dispatch Box.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey is an old sparring partner. I look back with pleasure on our past encounters. He offered us a sober analysis of London and its problems, and the Government welcome the opportunity that he has given us to debate London and its problems, even though we do not share his conclusions.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey attacked my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher). He described as fatuous her comment on the problems of inequality. On the contrary, she expressed very well the classic dilemma of the problem of income redistribution. There is a choice between a degree of inequality leading to incentive and greater wealth creation —in other words, a system where there is a higher standard for all with wider differentials than there would otherwise be—and a policy of equality that leads to a diminution of incentives, and less wealth creation, the end result being a lower standard for all with narrower differentials between the better off and the less well off. That is the classic dilemma which my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley expressed correctly. If the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey wants to see how those choices work, let him compare eastern Europe and western Europe, and East Germany and West Germany as they once were, which exemplify the choice that my right hon. Friend was describing. His remarks about fatuity were wrong and unjust and could be retorted on his own comments on the matter.

The hon. Members for Southwark and Bermondsey and for Fife, Central expressed their concern about unemployment in London. It is no secret that over the past year unemployment has been rising faster in London and the south-east than in some other parts of Britain. However, that rise has been from a very low base, so the unemployment rate in London is still below the United Kingdom average. We must put unemployment in London in perspective. It is 15·9 per cent. lower today than its peak of 396,400 in June 1986. Long-term unemployment in April 1991 was 70,894—56·2 per cent. lower than it was at its peak in January 1986, when the figure was 161,817. That reflects real progress.

Despite what the hon. Member for Fife, Central said about the growth in employment, the fact is that employment in London has grown. In March 1991, the latest available date, London's civilian work force in employment was 122,000—that is 3 per cent.—higher than in March 1983, and it includes a 55 per cent. rise in self-employment. The hon. Gentleman chose a different base year from the one that I have chosen, so the argument is really about which is the appropriate year.

Mr. McLeish: I accept that we can all be selective about the periods for which we produce statistics. However, the Minister must surely accept that we are comparing the Government's record, so that record must start in June 1979. Does he accept that in London in January 1980 the

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number of people unemployed was 104,000, and that it is now almost 300,000? That is a significant increase measured over the 12 and a half years of Tory Government. How can the Minister defend that?

Mr. Jackson: The hon. Gentleman was fair in saying that we should look at the year in which a Government take office. However, there are different stages in different economic cycles. From a political viewpoint it might be appropriate to compare 1979 with 1991, but if we want to compare like stages in the economic cycle a different choice of base year is appropriate, and that is what I did.

There is every reason to believe that activity in the Greater London area will pick up once the overall economy bottoms out of the recession. We must accept that any reduction in unemployment will lag a little behind that upturn in economic activity. However, as the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey was fair in observing, there are signs of recovery. He referred to the London chamber of commerce quarterly economic trends survey, which has just been published, and which shows that the rate of decline in the London service sector is slowing and that there are signs of economic recovery and confidence. Some 36 per cent. of the service sector companies predict that profits will increase during the next 12 months compared with 26 per cent. who thought so in the last quarterly report.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey asked for a further reduction in interest rates. He was joined in that by the hon. Member for Fife, Central, who was pleased to introduce into the debate what he called the macroeconomic dimension, and he wanted me to comment on that. Of course the Government want to bring interest rates down, and we have done so by 4 per cent. over the past six months. Hon. Members must question the compatibility of the drive to reduce interest rates with the commitment—which the Labour and the Liberal Democrat parties share with the Government—to membership of the exchange rate mechanism and to a parity of DM2·95 to the pound. Indeed, the Liberal Democrats add to that a commitment to move to the narrow band. The Government are also interested in doing that, but the Liberal Democrats are especially strong in emphasising it.

What is the compatibility between the acceptance of that discipline by the major Opposition parties and what is being said about the rapid and precipitate reduction of interest rates? The fact is that those commitments to the ERM and to the parity within it limit our freedom of manoeuvre on interest rates, and hon. Members must accept that.

The hon. Members for Southwark and Bermondsey and for Fife, Central must also consider the implications for this exchange rate commitment of the plans that they have described for increasing public expenditure dramatically. Their policies do not add up. I do not think much of the "new economic agenda" of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, as he was pleased to describe it.

Mr. Simon Hughes: One could criticise the amount that my colleagues and I suggest on the ground that it is too little rather than too much, even though the difference between us and the Labour party is that we are prepared to ask people to pay 1p in the pound extra on basic income tax to fund the education and training component. I do not believe that it is valid to criticise on the ground that it is too rapid an injection of additional investment. If anything, given the extent of the economic need, it might be too slow, which might be a more valid criticism.

Mr. Jackson: Whether it is too much or too little must be determined in relation to the overall commitment that the hon. Gentleman and his party have made to ERM and to parity within it. The market will judge whether it is too much or too little. I am sure that the market will conclude that the scale of the increase in public expenditure that both parties urge is inconsistent with that commitment. There would be a perceived loss of control of the public finances, causing a fall in parity and a return to rising inflation and undoing all the work that we have done.

Mr. McLeish *rose*——

Mr. Jackson: I see that the hon. Gentleman wishes to intervene. In the interests of debate, I happily give way to him.

Mr. McLeish: I am grateful to the Minister. The hon. Gentleman misrepresents the policies of my party. Skills training is a key aspect of investment. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that in the 1990s we need increased productivity and growth in all the sectors of the economy? The supply-side initiatives of other countries are much sharper than ours—their investment is leveraged and targeted and they can see returns. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the Government's cuts in training are counterproductive because they will not lead to the skills base that we require or to our having the qualified people whom we need? Does not the hon. Gentleman accept that any sensible Government should spend more on that key aspect?

Mr. Jackson: I was going to comment on training, but I shall respond to the hon. Gentleman's point. Of course the Government believe that investment in training is important. That is why, since we came into office in 1979, we have increased by two and a half times in real terms the amount of spend on training and vocational education. That is a significant increase.

There is a certain element of "fatuity" in the debate, to use the word of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey. One must recognise that the skills base and investment in it are not achieved by the Government alone. In 1986, the Department of Employment conducted a survey of training funding, which the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey has seen. That survey clearly established what one would have expected to be the case if one thought rationally about it—that the vast bulk of the investment in training is made by employers or their work force. Quoting from memory, in 1986 the Government spent about £7 billion a year on training, most of it in the form of tax concessions to employers; individuals spent about £7 billion a year, most of it being lost income of students while studying—I do not know whether I regard that as a cost, but the economists did so—and employers spent £18 billion a year.

Anyone who is seriously interested in the amount spent on training should consider employers' investment in it. We have lots of evidence that that investment has been increasing, including evidence that it has been holding up in the present recession. The Confederation of British

Industry surveys of industrial behaviour show that a much larger number of companies are increasing their investment in training than are decreasing it. During the 1980s, there was substantial investment by the Government and employers in training, and that is significant for the 1990s.

Mr. McLeish: Does the Minister accept that any investment must be measured in terms of return? If we are to believe the figure of £18 billion investment by employers, which we do not, we would be spending roughly twice as much as the Germans, in which case, would not the Germans be getting a far better return on their investment than we are? If we are talking about all that investment being ploughed into the British skills base, why do we still have no coherent system for 16 to 19-year-olds and why do we have a poverty of programmes for the unemployed, with 20 per cent. of British employers spending nothing on training and 52 per cent. of employees receiving no training—figures from the same report that the Minister quoted?

Mr. Jackson: The hon. Gentleman talks knowingly about the German spend on training, but there is no equivalent figure on training from the Federal Republic of Germany. No OECD country has carried out a survey as thorough and far-reaching as our 1986 funding study. That is why it is difficult to make international comparisons in this area. The hon. Gentleman will be interested to know that so far as one can judge, compared with all other Governments, the British Government's spend on training in 1986 was relatively high. But the hon. Gentleman is not in a position to make that judgment about the scale of spend between Britain and Germany because the German figures are not as complete as ours.

The hon. Gentleman tempts me to make the point that if one looks at the outcome of training—he is right that that is the bottom line; we do not train for training's sake but for the return—one of the most interesting points is that during the 1980s the rate of growth in the British economy significantly exceeded that of, for example, Germany, and other countries which, historically, have a better training record than we have. That suggests that one must recognise that training is only one of a number of inputs into improvement in productivity in the economy. That would lead one to consider the other factors and they would include such considerations as industrial relations, the ability of management to manage and all those kinds of considerations which Opposition Members tend to overlook for the obvious reason that their commitments are all designed to make it more difficult for those factors to be improved.

Just as the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey betrayed a certain lack of grasp in his economic analysis and incoherence between his exchange rate commitments and his spending and interest rate plans, so the same can be said of the hon. Member for Fife, Central and his comments, particularly on recession, which he described in that part of his speech devoted to the macroeconomy as being unique to the United Kingdom. Has the hon. Gentleman read the OECD report from which he quotes? I strongly suspect not. Has he read the conclusions of the G7 summit—they are shorter and may be easier to read—where he will find that the different member states around the table only a few days ago here in London were talking about the recessions affecting their economies and welcoming the signs of a recovery from those recessions?

The hon. Gentleman talks about unemployment rates, but a number of other western European countries have significantly higher unemployment rates than ours. Spain has an unemployment rate of 15·4 per cent. and in Italy, France and the united Germany unemployment rates are considerably higher than ours. The rate of rise in unemployment in the United States and Canada is greater than ours. There has even been a rise in unemployment in recent months in Japan. The hon. Gentleman has got the world economy completely wrong.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The hon. Gentleman is right in saying that other countries have higher unemployment rates than Britain, but he must now amplify the comments of the Chancellor by saying what he believes is an acceptable rate of unemployment in Britain. It is not the implicit message of Government speeches that the present rate of unemployment is acceptable, unless the Minister is now saying that such is the unimportance of high unemployment relative to reducing inflation that such a rise is acceptable. What is the acceptable unemployment figure either nationwide or in London that the Minister would commend as part of the Government's economic strategy?

Mr. Jackson: The hon. Gentleman talks glibly about acceptable levels of unemployment. There is not a great deal that the Government can do about them. The hon. Gentleman should compare notes with his hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) with whom I had a discussion on the radio the other day in which he used a phrase that I am happy to echo. He said that there was no miracle cure for unemployment. There is indeed none. Unemployment rates are determined by millions of independent decisions being taken in pay bargaining in firms across the country.

In a nutshell, the most recent figure for wage rises was 8·25 per cent. Inflation is falling rapidly, towards 4 per cent. by the end of the year. Productivity increases in this phase of the recession are about zero, or perhaps even below zero. People are pricing themselves out of work. The Government cannot control that process—unless the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey is advocating a return to incomes policies. But the consensus emerging in the House is that such policies are not feasible propositions, irrespective of their merits, in the modern economic climate.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The vast majority of workers are not pricing themselves out of work; they are accepting relatively low wage settlements. If anyone is setting a bad example of pricing themselves out of work it is the people at the top end of the market—

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): The leaders of the unions.

Mr. Hughes: They are less reprehensible than the leaders of industry. We heard the boss of the post office workers union mention a figure of £40,000 as his salary on the radio yesterday—

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Not bad.

Mr. Hughes: Not as bad as what the chairmen of the water industry have awarded themselves. The pressures, in

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any case, do not come from people pricing themselves out of work. The London chamber of commerce has made the point that one of the greatest pressures on jobs comes from the Government's interest rate policy and from the other economic levers under their control. They are far more influential than the levels of wage settlements.

Mr. Jackson: I enjoy seminars of this kind, even at this time in the morning, but the hon. Gentleman must be serious. The fact is that although many people are accepting lower increases in wages—perhaps even reductions in wages—averages are always derived from figures above and below a line. The present average settlement is about 8·25 per cent.—well ahead of productivity increases and inflation. People are being priced out of work.

The hon. Gentleman says that all this is the Government's fault because it has to do with interest rates. Obviously, they play their part, but all parties are committed to the exchange rate mechanism and to parity within it. It imposes limitations on each and all of us—on the extent to which we can reduce interest rates. So other factors bear on interest rates and it is not possible to reduce them more rapidly than we are reducing them, in the light of the probable market response to doing so.

Mr. McLeish: Is there any measure on which the Government are willing to stake their record? In the past 12 and a half years, unemployment has doubled—a key measure of success or failure. Vacancies have slumped. Are they a measure of success or failure? Only the equivalent of 166,000 full-time jobs have been created in 12 years. Are they the measure? Despite what the Government say, our skills base is still not up to the standard of that of the Germans, the French or the Japanese. Is the Minister prepared to admit that the Government have failed on any of these counts? There is certainly no miracle cure for unemployment or the problems of the labour market, but how long do we have to wait? The Chancellor has talked of vague stirrings. Will the Minister predict when the recession will bottom out and improvement will begin?

Mr. Jackson: I am delighted to have the hon. Gentleman join the ranks of those who say that there is no miracle cure. I shall probably have future opportunities to remind him of that. Some people sagely and soberly nod their heads and say that there is no miracle cure, then chant some mantra and attempt to produce rabbits from a hat as if there was a miracle cure. We have strayed from the terms of the debate.

The most significant measures of economic success, at least in a liberal economy but not with a capital L, are the increases in per capita income and wealth. By those measures, Britain did well in the 1980s and our record stands comparison with that of other countries. The economy is now much stronger than it was in the late 1970s. That is generally recognised throughout the world and the Opposition should also recognise it.

Mr. Simon Hughes *rose*——

Mr. Jackson: The hon. Gentleman should not have interrupted so often with general points about economic policy. I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman again, lest he tempts me to stray from the straight and narrow path.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey was extremely critical of the London Docklands development corporation, and was quite wrong. When the LDDC was created the underlying trend was of a sustained loss of dock-related industry. The hon. Gentleman spoke graphically about jobs in the area in recent years. About 150,000 jobs were lost in the five relevant London boroughs in the preceding two decades. There was no diversity in the local economy and there was fast-rising local unemployment. The LDDC dramatically turned the tide and created the conditions for employment. That process is not yet complete, because it has largely been a matter of developing infrastructure, environment and confidence and encouraging the development of a diversified range of factories and offices.

The LDDC is also helping the main providers of education and training to improve their services and it aims to create a stronger, more up-to-date diverse local economy. There has been 14·1 million sq ft of commercial development and a further 21 million sq ft is under construction or committed. The number of firms in the area has doubled from 1,100 in 1981 to 2,300 in 1990, and more than 50 per cent. of those were start-ups and not transfers. Employment has also grown, with 17,000 jobs in new business start-ups and 24,000 in relocation. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey should pay tribute to the considerable progress made by LDDC rather than knock it.

The hon. Gentleman also criticised the Government's training record in London. We discussed the macro figures. London's youth training budget for 1990-91 is £47·83 million, which is slightly higher than the actual spend in 1990. The employment training budget is £48·44 million. There are more than 15,000 trainees on youth training and more than 11,000 are benefiting from employment training.

The hon. Member for Fife, Central asked about the youth training guarantee. The Government are fully committed to that guarantee and it is too early for Opposition Members to say that we are not delivering it. We shall not know about the demand for youth training places until we are clearer about the plans and intentions of summer school leavers. We are monitoring the situation and are in close contact with the TECs, and we shall act to ensure that the guarantee can be met. That cannot be contradicted, because we will not know the figures until later.

Mr. McLeish: The Minister will be aware that the Department carried out a review on or around 26 March after the Secretary of State expressed concern about the delivery of the guarantee. He will also know that on or around 24 May there was yet another survey of supply and demand for youth training places all over the country. This is July, and Government documents now show that it will be September before the picture is clear. Plainly, the youth training guarantee is not being delivered in many TECs and local authority areas. Will the Minister concede that and tell the Secretary of State that TECs need more money and that if they do not get it the youth training guarantee will not be worth the paper on which it is written?

Mr. Jackson: The hon. Gentleman is a great expert on purloined documents, and I liked the language of the

police courts that he used—"on or around." It sounded like the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), and his talk of the Belgrano.

The hon. Member for Fife, Central knows from his purloined documents that the Government are concerned, as they must be, about their ability to deliver a guarantee that they have given. He has recorded the fact that we have been monitoring the position. We continue to do so. Nothing that he said has controverted the point that I made—that we cannot know the position until we know the state of the demand that there will be for YT places. I assure him that it is our intention to deliver on the YT guarantee. I have said that at least a dozen times in the House. The hon. Gentleman should stop pressing us, because he is not implying that we do not intend to honour the words that we have uttered in the House.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey for instigating this debate. Unlike some, I do not believe in selling London short. We in this House have the honour of working in one of the world's greatest capital cities with an outstanding economic and employment history. And in my opinion London's prospects for the future are just as exciting as its past has been.

Firms in London employ 3·5 million people, twice as many as in the whole of the east midlands. It contributes 15 per cent. of Britain's gross domestic product, and though we hardly think of it as a manufacturing centre, there are 21,500 manufacturing premises in the capital. It is true that, like other areas of the United Kingdom, London is suffering job losses and rising unemployment. But when Opposition Members talk as though London is derelict, polluted, impoverished, and grinding to a halt, I wonder whether they ever spend any time out and about the capital.

London has some of the finest museums in the world. As I went to see it only a couple of days ago, I mention in particular the new Sainsbury wing of the National gallery, so generously endowed by my hon. Friend the Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury). We have great orchestras, theatres, parks, leisure attractions and sporting venues that match the best in the world.

London also represents one of the most important, arguably the most important, financial, commercial and telecommunications centres in the world.

As the economic policies of the Government bring about a return to prosperity, London is well placed to be a major beneficiary. Our inner city policies are encouraging economic regeneration in partnership with the private sector, with the docklands as a shining example. London's transport system is currently being strengthened, at a cost of billions of pounds, through projects such as the extension of the docklands light railway to the City, and the Dartford crossing. All these urban and infrastructure improvements will provide huge opportunities and benefits for London's businesses and workers.

I recommend to the hon. Members for Southwark and Bermondsey and for Fife, Central that they reflect on these developments in a more balanced way, to give a more balanced presentation of the opportunities as well as the problems that face London.

EC Agricultural Policies

8.3 am

Mr. William Hague (Richmond, Yorks): I am pleased to be able to raise the subject of the European Community agricultural policy. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary for being here to reply to the debate. This subject is of vital concern to my constituents and many thousands of others throughout the country who work in agriculture or depend on it in some way. It should be of concern to all those who believe that food should be produced efficiently, that trade between the nations of the Community should be fair, and that our rural environment should be well looked after and preserved.

I raise the subject now because the launch of a new set of agricultural policy proposals by the European Commissioner, Mr. MacSharry, has brought discussion about future agricultural policy to a critical point, and because these discussions inevitably have implications for the success of the GATT round to which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and his colleagues among the G7 leaders have committed themselves.

The debate in the Community is only the latest in a long fight to reform the inefficient and wasteful common agricultural policy that has already gone on for years. In the 1980s, we took a leading role in arguing for reform, often in the face of unrelieved complacency and a near-paralysis of decision-making in the highest councils of the Community. Now, at least, the need for change is being more widely recognised, as continuing budget pressures and the demands of the GATT negotiations finally force some sense into the collective mind of the Community's agricultural policy makers.

How the Community responds to those pressures is important. The agricultural policy that emerges from the next few months will constitute a significant statement about—and an indication of—the sort of entity that the Community will be. Will it be open, fair and competitive, or protectionist, closed and discriminatory? The danger now is that the Community will adopt an agricultural policy that favours the inefficient, high-cost producer at the expense of the efficient, low-cost producer and that, in doing so, it will damage the interests of Europe's agricultural industry and its consumers and the cause of more open and effective competition around the world.

In particular, there is a danger that the Commission's proposals will discriminate against, and disadvantage, the average British farmer simply because he tends to be more efficient and to develop his business on a more viable scale and has adapted to changing circumstances more effectively than his average continental counterpart.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Is not one of the difficulties the definition of family farms? Many of our farms have a number of people living and working on them—a father, a couple of sons and often a daughter. They are quite small units, but because they are all under one umbrella they are subject to all the disadvantages that MacSharry is trying to wish on them now—or would have, if we did not have a very effective Minister who will fight for us.

Mr. Hague: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. On many British farms several generations, or different branches of a family, work together. Such families have

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been penalised in the past by Community arrangements and they will be penalised still further by some of the proposals that are on the table now.

The danger to which I have referred is nothing new. Britain joined the European Community too late and the agricultural policy that was already in place when we joined was tilted towards the small farmer and, in general, the continental farmer. The common agricultural policy pursued by the Community before we joined—and ever since—has led to more expensive food, the production and costly storage of huge unwanted surpluses and the maintenance of many tiny, uneconomic, part-time farms in continental Europe, which add to the surpluses at the expense of the taxpayer and to the detriment of larger, more efficient and more professional farming businesses around the Community.

One would have thought that the GATT round presented an opportunity for the Community to break with the inefficiencies of the past. As the whole world looked to freer competition and fairer trade, surely the Community would move in step with the times. In almost every other industry, the Commission is busily at work ensuring fair competition, reducing state aids and insisting that industries learn to compete on equal terms. Not so in agriculture.

Mr. MacSharry's latest proposals go deliberately and unerringly in the opposite direction from the policies set by the Commission for other industries and the policies that the whole world seeks for agriculture. His proposals would indeed cut the support prices offered to European farmers for most of their products; but they would go on to compensate fully all farms below a certain size for the reductions envisaged—and possibly do more than fully compensate them. They would also discriminate against the largest and most efficient farmers and probably lead to a further growth in the budget required to carry the common agricultural policy, without any significant benefits for the consumer of for the farmer who runs a sound business.

The proposals must be fiercely opposed and I am delighted to learn that my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Ministry have opposed them vociferously. I hope that they will continue to do so. Let us look at a few examples of what the proposals could mean.

The Commission proposes to reduce the intervention price for cereals by about 35 per cent. Compensation per hectare would be paid to farmers to help them to withstand the cut, but to qualify for payments a farmer would have to enter a set-aside scheme. Here is the rub: a farmer producing less than 92 tonnes per year would be exempt from the set-aside obligation. On United Kingdom farms, the compensation payments for set-aside would effectively be limited to the first 6 hectares, with the rest unpaid.

The net result would be severe discrimination against the larger farms. The National Farmers Union has calculated that a small arable farm of 15·6 hectares would suffer a 2 per cent. loss of income as a result of the proposals, while a 100 hectare farm would suffer a 28 per cent. loss. As farm size increases, the fall in income becomes more severe. The National Farmers Union estimates that United Kingdom cereals production would fall by about 2·5 million tonnes—a 10 per cent. cut out of a normal output of about 24 million tonnes. The total cost of this policy for the whole of the European Community would be additional payments of thousands of millions of pounds, mainly going to small farms on the continent, which are not economically viable units anyway, and keeping them for ever in competition with the less subsidised farms in this country that can produce cereal products more cheaply for the consumer.

The cereals policy is bad enough, but it is only the beginning. In the milk sector there would be a 10 per cent. cut in intervention prices and a 4 per cent. quota cut, but compensation would be paid—this is the problem—on the first 40 cows. Once again the result would be to disadvantage severely the large farmer and, therefore, generally the British farmer. European Community expenditure on the milk sector could rise by up to £500 million a year, if these proposals are implemented. The extra money once again would go to the tiniest farms.

The NFU has again estimated the implications for farms of different size. Its estimates show that a small farm with 30 cows would be 6 per cent. better off, that an average dairy herd of 70 cows would leave its owner 12 per cent. worse off and that a herd of 140 cows would mean a 25 per cent. reduction in income. That is even after allowing for the reduced cereal prices resulting from the measures already discussed. Once again the successful farmer who has expanded his business would suffer. The one who had sat on his hands and collected his subsidies each year would, yet again, be better off. That cannot be the right policy to take European agriculture into the 21st century.

The greatest horrors are still to come. These are the implications for the livestock sector to which I, representing the hill farmers of the Yorkshire dales, take particular exception. For one thing, the reductions in cereals prices are likely to encourage increased production of poultry and pigmeat. That would mean a reduction in the price for these products, which in turn would exert a downward pressure on the price of beef and sheepmeat. Paradoxically, the result could be increasing surpluses of beef and rising intervention stocks, producing yet more expense for the taxpayer.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): I thank my hon. Friend for introducing this debate on behalf of the farmers of this country. It is high time that the points he is making were brought out so that they are understood. There is a myth that the common agricultural policy is costing the average family £17 a week. Do my hon. Friend and Mr. MacSharry honestly believe that, by reducing output and prices, prices to the consumer will be reduced?

Mr. Hague: My hon. Friend has made an extremely valid point. Any analysis of the proposals now before the Council of Ministers does not lead to the immediate conclusion that prices to the consumer would fall. However, expense to the consumer and taxpayer has every chance of increasing.

I was examining the possible consequences for the livestock sector and how beef surpluses might increase still further. On top of all that, a 15 per cent. intervention price cut is proposed for beef and veal. We can reasonably expect sheepmeat prices to fall by about the same proportion. In addition, the Commission's proposals would limit the number of sheep eligible for the ewe premium on each holding to 350, instead of 500, and to

750 in the less-favoured areas, instead of 1,000. The result for livestock farmers in the less-favoured areas would be a fall in income of 26 per cent. on average and a staggering 43 per cent. fall in the lowlands. Such reductions would mean the abandonment of large parts of the British countryside and the dereliction of much of our finest rural landscape. And for what? The policy would need £500 million in additional ewe premium and £600 million in additional suckler cow premium. What sort of saving would be made in the face of such increases in costs?

We can see, therefore, that British agriculture would suffer considerably from these proposals, without the British taxpayer gaining much in return. The people who are best at producing our cereals, milk and livestock would all be hard hit, yet farmers of some other products in the Community would not need to lose a moment's sleep over what is proposed. If a farmer produces olive oil, he can rest easy. A fruit farmer need not worry. These are areas where the Commission believes that it would not be right to reopen the debate, given that so-called comprehensive changes have been agreed recently. In reality, the producers of southern Europe are left alone while northern European producers are expected to bear the burden of the Commission's policy in price cuts and tax.

To be fair to the Commission, its policy incorporates reasonable proposals that are by no means as lunatic as those that I have listed. It has introduced a number of schemes to aid environment, including an extensification scheme, an environmentally friendly management scheme and a scheme for the environmental upkeep of abandoned land. It also proposes an afforestation scheme and an early retirement scheme, which in principle are not bad ideas. Much of the help that it proposes needs to be less indiscriminate and more carefully targeted, but let us at least give it credit for those measures.

Nevertheless, Britain should fight the overall proposal all the way. Mr. Rodney Swarbrick, president of the Country Landowners Association, put it well in his letter to *The Times* last week. He said of the proposal:

"It attempts to throw the whole process of economic development into reverse. Mr. MacSharry has openly stated that his objective is to retain the maximum number of farmers on the land, the great majority of whom in his own words could never be described as competitive or viable. He, therefore, proposes that billions of extra ECUs of taxpayers' money should be spent to preserve an antiquated EC agricultural structure.

Worse, the heavily subsidised production from these farmers will compete with the unsubsidised production of those bearing the brunt of the discrimination in his proposals and facing keener world markets after a GATT settlement. This can only lessen the viability and competitiveness of EC agriculture in precisely those areas where these qualities are most needed.

There can be no economic rationale for this. It removes the much needed incentive for structural reform of European agriculture and the CAP budget implications would be colossal."

That is a good summary of the position. I hope that Ministers will do their utmost to persuade their counterparts on the continent that this cannot be the right way to proceed. We need price cuts in the GATT deal—but cuts which mean that efficiency pays and which take place at a pace that the efficient farmer can withstand.

We must ensure that new European policies will not lead to huge expense and mountains of surpluses. They must therefore exclude the blanket subsidies to every part-time farmer in Europe, as envisaged by Mr. MacSharry. They should make environmental considerations a more integral part of the policy, with set-aside linked to provision for environmental protection and more selective direct payments for delivering specified and valuable care for the countryside or for those who maintain the finest rural environment in the face of permanent handicaps imposed by climate or geography such as in the less-favoured areas of the United Kingdom.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The stone walls.

Mr. Hague: My hon. Friend refers to the stone walls of northern England. They would soon be gone without the farmers who work in those areas.

Surely the Commission can be brought to see that the policies that it proposes are a futile retreat before the advance of economic reality and a terrible advertisement for the Community and the principles on which it operates. To have a sound future, the Community must be fair to all its citizens, must bring the best out of its industries and must encourage its people, who can compete successfully with anyone else in the world. With its ludicrous agricultural proposals, it is being true to none of those objectives and I implore my hon. Friend the Minister and his colleagues to do all that they can to ensure that the proposals end up in the waste bin, where they properly belong.

8.18 am

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): I congratulate the hon. Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague) on giving us the opportunity to discuss these important issues. The MacSharry proposals are important to people who are involved in agriculture and farming. More farmers are leaving the industry than at any time since the war, which is of grave concern to many parts of the country.

The hon. Member for Richmond, Yorks referred to the need to reach agreement on reform of the CAP and the subsidy to agriculture because of the importance of reaching a conclusion on the GATT round. We all acknowledge the importance of that for Britain's trade in manufactured goods and other commodities. The two points are linked and the hon. Gentleman was right to draw attention to that. We also recognise the importance of that.

Another reason why it is important that we should discuss these issues and why any reform of the CAP is of extreme importance is that we face changes within the European Community that we may not have envisaged two or three years ago. Many eastern European countries may come into the EC before the turn of the century. We must have policies dealing with agriculture that will recognise the completely changed situation when other countries come in. We have already absorbed East Germany; it was incorporated into West Germany and became a united Germany, which we welcomed so much only a year ago.

When we recognise that countries such as Romania and all the other eastern European countries may enter the Community before the turn of the century and that before the war cereal production in Romania was second only to that of the Ukraine in European output, we recognise the implications for change. We have the opportunity of having policies that meet the needs now, allow us to reach agreement on the general agreement on tariffs and trade and take account of the rapidly changing situations which

[Mr. Peter L. Pike]

many of us welcome. I believe that it is in the interests of Europe and the world that other countries are admitted to the EC as soon as they meet the criteria.

There is widespread opposition—which we share—to the MacSharry proposals and there is concern about them not only in this country, but in the other countries of Europe. Many farmers are very canny people. Some whom I have met suspect that, because there is such widespread opposition, by the quirks of the way in which the Community works, the proposals may go through. We must reassure farmers that we will ensure that we get a better and more acceptable arrangement not only for those who are involved in agriculture, but for the consumers and the country generally.

When the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food answered questions last week, he made his position clear. In reply to questions, he said:

"I will then place on record again our opposition to those parts of the MacSharry plan that discriminate against British agriculture, northern agriculture, specialist agriculture, efficient agriculture, the interests of the consumer, European agricultural ability to compete with the rest of the world, and use reform not to reform agriculture itself, but to put forward Mr. MacSharry's personal views."—[*Official Report*, 18 July 1991; Vol. 195, c. 488.]

The hon. Member for Richmond, Yorks emphasised that point.

The Opposition and the farmers want to hear exactly what the Government believe should be done. *[Interruption.]* When we sit on the Government Benches, we shall be glad to say exactly what our position is. In all seriousness, we want to hear what the Minister proposes.

I draw attention to one item—the subsidy for tobacco. Some £1 billion is given as a subsidy for the benefit of two member states of the EC that produce a tobacco of unusable quality. That seems nonsense. It has been said that we want to spend money on research to develop more usable tobaccos. I am a smoker, so I am not anti-smoking, although I know that I should give up. It seems nonsense when other sections of the Community are leading campaigns to stop advertising and to discourage smoking altogether. I believe that most people would argue that to subsidise tobacco from Community funds is nonsense.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The hon. Gentleman has raised an excellent point. It was absolutely crazy to spend money on producing tobacco which nobody smoked and which went straight into store.

Mr. Pike: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for underlining a point on which there is universal agreement.

The present agricultural policy costs the average family of four in this country £16 a week. We pay £23 billion for storage, disposal of surplus and export refunds. That money does not go to the farmer. People would be extremely surprised to learn that 60 per cent. plus of the budget does not go to the farmer. It goes to the intermediary. We do not have a cheap food policy either, which is another nonsense.

The price of sheep in cash terms is less now than it was a few years ago. If one allows for inflation, however, the price in real terms is even worse. Many sheep farmers work difficult land and they are finding it hard to manage. In the supermarket the price of lamb is no cheaper than it was all those years ago. The farmer is therefore entitled to ask where the difference in price goes.

I know that the Minister visited the Trough of Bowland last week. Last year a number of colleagues and I visited a number of farms as part of an all-party tour. Those farmers gave us the relative figures on what they received in subsidy and what they spent. I found it extremely difficult to understand why those farmers remained in farming. Their take from the income they received and on which their families were expected to live was so abysmally low that there was no encouragement for them to continue to farm. As the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) said, younger generations are extremely discouraged from remaining in farming.

The environmental implications of the MacSharry proposals should strike a chord with everyone. We should consider the proposals sympathetically. They are in line with the Labour party proposal on green premia. Such environmental proposals should be considered carefully in future. We should discourage the use of pesticides and fertilisers beyond a certain necessary level, particularly as the environmental implications of their use is already well known from experience.

We must also consider what is happening with set-aside. Some claim—I do not know whether the allegation is true—that farmers set aside the least productive parts of their land while increasing production on the other parts. That achieves exactly the opposite of what was intended. That must be nonsense.

My generation learnt in school that farmers laid certain sections of the land to rest and practised crop rotation. Perhaps in the years ahead we should revert to some of the old systems with a lower intensity and fewer fertilisers and pesticides.

Those issues are extremely important and, although we recognise the complexity of reaching agreement with our European partners, we must do so. Obviously, many other aspects of European harmonisation are also taking place. Our farming industry differs greatly from those of our European competitors because our farms are much larger. In many countries, farms are extremely small and farmers' circumstances are completely different from those in this country.

It is nonsense to have milk quotas but insufficient milk to produce all the dairy produce that we need, so that we must import so many higher value products. Anyone who goes around the supermarkets will see an increasing number of imports of such products. We must consider whether reforming the milk marketing board is the right way to proceed. We must also consider milk production and the effect of quotas, because there are some anomalies.

How do the Government see the way ahead in the negotiations? We recognise that they are extremely difficult, but we want a deal that will encourage and enable our farmers to remain in business and live a reasonable lifestyle without experiencing poverty. Many farmers in less-favoured areas are finding it extremely difficult to survive. We also want a fair deal for consumers so that they do not have to subsidise inefficient agriculture in Europe to an unfair and unacceptable extent. Finally, we want to reach an agreement that will enable the GATT round to be concluded in the best interests of this nation.

8.33 am

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague) for introducing this important debate in such an authoritative way, even if he brings us no cheer.

We must ask ourselves what we want agriculture for, because there is considerable confusion about that question in Europe. The purpose of agriculture used to be to produce good food as cheaply as possible so that we could feed our populations, but those days seem to have passed. However, I would not put it past us to create a policy that would cause some sort of food crisis in about 20 or 30 years' time. Many countries in the European Community see agriculture as a sophisticated form of relief for people whom it would be difficult or expensive to introduce to a more urban lifestyle.

We must look carefully at the age structure. I was surprised when I was given some figures about the age structure of French farming that showed that it was younger than I had expected. But the age structure of the farmers in many European Community countries is becoming older and older. It would be short sighted and absurd to create a policy that effectively turned out to support a generation that is coming out of farming.

If we want our farms to be a system of sophisticated countryside gardening—as I suspect many people in this country see it becoming—we shall have to debate much wider issues. One factor that makes it hard for our farmers is that they are regulated up to their necks on what they may do with their land. They are prevented from selling it for any purpose, yet we are exposing them to fiercer and fiercer competition across Europe.

I come from a constituency where most of the population would, I think, be hostile to considerable development. However, at present, we face considerable development that is being haphazardly added on to the urban sprawl. It is hard on farmers and makes it difficult to create an effective set-aside policy or take land out of production. We must reconsider those issues.

I believe that this country's farmers must do more direct marketing. The distribution chain in this country is far too long and far too expensive. That is true across Europe, but especially in this country. The Kingdom Cox campaign, which put the Cox's orange pippin back into the shops of Europe, is a fine example of what can be done if the farmers get their act together and start selling British produce in a way that causes other people to take it seriously.

We need to achieve wider alliances in Europe—not just in the European Community but within those countries that would like to join it. In addition, my right hon. Friend the Minister, who is fighting hard on behalf of British agriculture, needs to have more weight behind him. There are a great many people in Europe who, if the MacSharry proposals go through, will wake up and discover that they are a rotten deal for them. At present there is a tendency for others to say that the British are once again trying to protect their agriculture, which draws a veil over people. They stop thinking clearly and merely say, "It is the bloody Brits trying to protect their industry—we'll stop listening."

One place where my right hon. Friend the Minister might look for allies and an energetic debate is the Council of Europe, which takes in a wide range of European countries where many of the parliamentarians in the general assembly have no idea what the proposals are about.

8.37 am

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I support my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague) and my hon. Friend the Minister, who has done so much to help farming since he came to office.

There is no doubt that farmers' incomes at present are as low as I remember them for many years. It is incongruous that, when the cost of the common agricultural policy increases, farmers' incomes seem to go down. I know that the Government are doing all that they can to fight the MacSharry proposals, which will make matters infinitely worse than they are at present.

Mr. MacSharry seems to be under the impression that all large farms make profits when, in fact, many of the largest farms, particularly in Scotland, are in hill sheep districts, where incomes are low and largely supported by the sheep premium, the suckler cow premium and the hill livestock compensatory allowance.

It is important that we look ahead, perhaps in terms of marketing, or in other ways, so that when we lose the intervention price for sheep next January, we know what will happen. At times this summer, lamb has been down to 100p per pound and it may be stabilising now at 120p. Even that means a huge intervention price, and what will happen when that support disappears?

I support the remarks of the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) in respect of milk products. Large manufacturing processors in my constituency are short of milk and it seems ridiculous that Europe should be saying that we must cut production by 2 per cent. or more when there is a shortage in this country of milk for processing. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister has taken that point on board and that I need say no more about exporting milk products to the Mediterranean, middle east and Russia and the unnecessary difficulties that seem to be put in the way of our producers.

Farming is certainly going through a difficult time. The set-aside scheme is of minimal importance to the industry's overall problems, and we must devise with Mr. MacSharry proposals that are more acceptable to the farming industry. Farming has a right to see a fair return on its capital and it is not achieving that at present. No one is using the word "prosperous"—we only want a reasonable level of profitability for an industry that can help the rural countryside to maintain its present high environmental standards. If we do not all work together to that end, the nation will be the loser.

8.41 am

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): Farming in Wales is dear to my heart. My parents were born in Malvern in Worcestershire and, as a result of the depression that hit the country at one time under the then Conservative Government, my father had to move to the Rhondda valley to work in the mines. He always wanted to return to farming and most of my colleagues and friends in my constituency are farmers.

I had hoped to contribute to the next debate, on training and enterprise councils, because they are also a subject close to my heart and to my constituency activities.

[Mr. Ray Powell]

We were once advised by the Minister of State, Welsh Office, to invest in a farm in the Garw valley so that we could train people to become agriculturists and horticulturists. We embarked on a programme by employing a farm manager from Leigh Sinton in Malvern, who came to the Garw valley. The £100,000 farm that we established employed 45 agriculturists—young people interested in the farming industry.

Within two years, the same Minister told us that it would be far better to invest Community funding in computers, because the Government no longer required as many agriculturists or horticulturists. As a result, the farm programme was abandoned. Having listened to Ministers over the past few months, I am beginning to wonder whether they are true to their beliefs, because if they do not want to train people, it does not seem likely that they are interested in encouraging the farming industry.

Many of my Welsh hon. Friends—and one in particular, who is not a member of my party but is a farmer—constantly impress on me that farmers are losing a tremendous amount of money and have done so for years as a consequence of Government policy.

I have met many farmers, and I have noticed that they seem always to wear old and tattered tweed coats with leather patches on the elbows. They wear shirts that I have seen on them over the past five or six years. They usually have a good, strong pair of boots that have lasted them longer than the pairs of shoes that I wear to wander about the house. They look as though they have just picked up the mean social security benefit to which they would be entitled from the Government.

Lo and behold, as happens to us all, Father Time comes along and these men come to the end of their days as farmers. The son inherits the Rover, or sometimes the Rolls which is in the cowshed. There is often a great dispute within the family about the wealth that is left by the farmer. We do not know the wealth of a farmer until his will is published.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The farmer's wealth is the value of the land that he leaves. He cannot sell off bits of land to live by.

Mr. Powell: I thought that the hon. Lady was writing a speech. I was in full flow, but I find that the hon. Lady's interjection——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I know that the hon. Member will not allow an interruption to divert him from what he intended to say about EEC farming.

Mr. Powell: That is right, Madam Deputy Speaker. If the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) had not interjected in my speech, I would now be concluding my brief speech.

I remember a recent sitting of the Welsh Grand Committee when my right hon. and hon. Friends were all on the list of speakers in a debate on Welsh farming. A group of farmers travelled here from Wales—no doubt they had left the cows to be milked in the evening—to attend a sitting of the Committee. They listened to the debate and a strange thing happened during it. They cheered my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) as he spoke from the Opposition Front Bench. I was pleased when I saw him enter the Chamber a short while ago to take his place on the Opposition Front Bench. Cheering is unusual in the Public Gallery of a Committee Room. Indeed, it would be unusual if the Public Gallery of the Chamber were crowded with farmers and they started to cheer during a speech. My hon. Friend made a speech on behalf of farmers and the farmers on the Strangers' Seats cheered him because of the promises that my hon. Friend made to sustain them until the coming to power of a Labour Government, perhaps in November this year, March or April 1992, or whenever the general election takes place, after the Prime Minister has the guts to call it.

The farmers cheered in the hope that what was being said by my hon. Friend on behalf of the Opposition as shadow Secretary of State for Wales meant that policies would be introduced to assist farmers in Wales. Such policies are long overdue. After all, farmers and others have been waiting for them for the past eleven and a half years. We have been waiting for the Government to make a positive contribution to farming and to save a great many farms.

I have referred to the farm that a trading organisation took over. There was one section for trainee farmers and another for trainee horticulturists. The farm is now up for sale. Its value two years ago was £220,000. The highest offer that CATO—Community Activities and Training in Ogwr—received for the farm was £100,000—substantially less than it paid for it.

I mention that case because that is happening throughout Wales. Hill farms, sheep farms and dairy farms are for sale, but the farmers cannot get a price that reflects the worth of their properties. The farm in the Garw valley has only 88 acres, but we cannot get an offer for it to cover the outstanding mortgage. I appreciate the difficulties of farmers at the present time. The promises from Ministers about what they will do for farmers both in Wales and throughout the United Kingdom do not appear to assist them in any shape or form.

Of the list of debates that should be held on the Consolidated Fund, some 20 are still to be called. Hon. Members are in the Chamber with prepared speeches hoping to speak on matters just as important—perhaps even more important—than agriculture. Only last week the House debated the sittings of the House, when it was suggested that there should be shorter hours. There should be longer hours so that all debates could be held. The Consolidated Fund is the only occasion when hon. Members can deploy their arguments on their chosen subjects. Perhaps you could help us, Madam Deputy Speaker. For the past 12 months I have campaigned about the way in which training and enterprise councils conduct themselves. I am sure that—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I fear that the hon. Gentleman in now testing the patience of the House. The debate is about European agriculture policy and the hon. Gentleman must refer to that or allow other hon. Members to speak and the Minister to reply.

Mr. Powell: I realise that hon. Members are eager to participate in the debate and that the Minister is eager to reply to it. I have waited all night for my subject matter to be called, but it is now too late for that. However, this debate is important, and I wanted to contribute to it and to refer especially to my constituency.

Hill farming in Wales and in Ogmore faces great problems. North Wales has had, and still has, a problem because of contaminated lamb. Some people in parts of north Wales are afraid to buy Welsh lamb. When, on a previous occasion, I said that a butcher in north Wales was using a geiger counter to prove to his customers that his lambs were free from contamination, the Minister suggested that I was scaremongering. But that has happened in north Wales, and there is still doubt about the lamb.

Farmers are suffering because of the Government's attitude and the lack of compensation for the shortfall in the amounts for which lambs would be sold at market.

I hope that there will be sufficient time left in the debate for me to introduce my subject.

8.55 am

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Maclean): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague) for raising this issue and for providing me with an opportunity to set out the Government's proposals on reform of the common agricultural policy.

It was interesting that, when I tempted the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) by saying, "I shall tell you my proposals if you tell us the Labour party's" he said that the Labour party would tell us when it was in power. I suspect that we will wait a long time before we hear the Labour party's proposals for reform of the CAP. In the next few months, we shall tell all farmers that the Labour party has nothing to offer on CAP reform.

It is also interesting that, when I tempted the Labour party to tell us its policy, it rushed in the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) to try to ensure that I would not have enough time to answer the debate properly. *[Interruption.]* To hear Opposition Front-Bench Members saying to the hon. Gentleman's little filibuster, "Nice one" just proves that they do not want to hear the facts. Although the hon. Member for Burnley might not have told us his policies, I shall tell the House the principles in which the Government believe as we argue for CAP reform. It must be sensible reform, not the MacSharry proposals.

Our objectives for reform can be met only if MacSharry's proposals are modified to include a progressive reduction in the level of prices and other support, at a pace that will enable efficient farmers to adjust. We want measures that bear equally on all producers, regardless of size of enterprise or location. Budget costs should be kept within the guideline. Direct aids should not be paid to all farmers but should be more selectively targeted at particular objectives: for those who deliver specified care for the countryside, meeting a need that market forces alone will not meet; and for those who face permanent handicaps of climate and geography.

If help is judged essential to assist any producers to get through the period of change, payments should be limited in time and degressive in amount, constituting real adjustment aid. There is no harm in retirement payments for outgoers. Such payments could play a useful role, at least in some member states. Set-aside should be on a voluntary basis and used to help the environment. To ensure that it is applied effectively in all member states, the idea of national targets should be seriously considered.

Environmental considerations should become an integral part of the CAP. The Commission's idea for agri-environmental programmes should be extended, but the opportunity should also be taken to incorporate environmental conditions in other forms of agricultural support wherever practicable.

I believe that our message is clear. We all agree that reform of the CAP is essential for farmers, consumers and taxpayers alike. Reform along the lines that MacSharry proposes would not encourage efficient farming, but would let budget costs go up even further and would discriminate against efficiency, particularly of producers in all parts of the United Kingdom—in Yorkshire, Cumbria, Dumfries in Scotland and even in Wales.

MacSharry's proposals would cost the taxpayer much more. They would not provide cheaper food prices and would devastate our countryside. MacSharry is rightly treading the path of reform, but he has lost his way and we believe that we should get him back on course.

Mr. MacSharry's proposals would devastate our rural economy. Thousands of small tenanted farms, not just big estates, would be devastated and the consequences for our rural economy would be appalling. As a Government we must not allow that to happen. Thousands of sheep farmers would be driven off the land and the public must understand that we would have no idyllic dales or lovely fells without active sheep farmers, no more dry stone walls repaired or hay barns saved from dereliction and no more trees planted or hedgerows relaid.

It being Nine o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Insolvency Service

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

9 am

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am sure that in your customary way you will be able to advise me, since Back Benchers often need to raise matters of great importance to them, on how to deal with a problem created by the shortness of time between now and when the House rises for the summer recess. During the past nine months in the House I have introduced a ten-minute Bill, I have presented a Bill to the House and I have asked questions on the training and enterprise councils and, in particular, Mid-Glamorgan TEC, asking for a public inquiry. I was hoping to be able to ask again today, and I wonder whether you, Madam Deputy Speaker, could advise me on how to put that request again to the House in the short time available between now and when the House rises for the summer recess.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): The Chair does not usually offer advice on such procedural matters on the Floor of the House. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is ingenious enough to find a method himself. He does not have to look far down our Order Paper to see that before the House rises there is a debate on economic policies when he might try to catch Mr. Speaker's eye.

9.1 am

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): I welcome this opportunity to debate the Insolvency Service, the first since the service became an agency of the Department of Trade and Industry.

The service was established more than 100 years ago to protect the public. At that time, when the Bankruptcy Act 1883 was being debated in the House of Commons, Joseph Chamberlain said that it should

"improve the general tone of commercial morality . . . protect the salvage and diminish the risk of wreck".

The service has a strong and honourable tradition of commitment to those purposes. It provides an essential means of coping with financial failure and, through its investigatory functions, contributes to confidence in the market.

The service is now a vital part of our contemporary economy. It has a clear identity within the Department of Trade and Industry. It enjoys greater freedom to manage its affairs and to respond flexibly to the changing needs of the society it serves.

This year, the Insolvency Service has a budget of some £45 million, of which about 65 per cent. is accounted for in staff costs. Most of our debate today concerns the DTI, but nevertheless I appreciate that the Treasury is involved as it has a number of specific responsibilities as set out in the Insolvency Act 1986 for certain issues of finance, accounting and investment and for certain fees. The Treasury also has some other order-making powers and the Insolvency Service executive agency is subject to Treasury staff inspection.

The Insolvency Service initiates legal action based on reports submitted by official receivers where the reports allege that criminal offences have been committed or where a director's conduct is such that he is unfit to be a director of a company and an application should be made for him to be disqualified. In both cases, official receivers are targeted to submit reports within 10 months of the winding-up orders in at least 80 per cent. of cases identified for investigation.

I shall examine shortly the service's interpretation of when to prosecute or not. It may, though, be appropriate to ask what expertise is held within the service. Currently 632 officials in the Insolvency Service studied for accountancy or allied qualifications. Of these, 84 are fully qualified, 14 will shortly be sitting their final examinations and others are still studying. Additionally, a number of officers are members of the Insolvency Practitioners Association. While some entrants to the service have law degrees, what surprises me is that there is not a single fully qualified lawyer in the service. That is a source of concern. Such legal expertise as is required is provided at arm's length by the solicitors division of the Department of Trade and Industry.

I come now to the approach adopted by the Insolvency Service. The official receivers submit reports to the DTI when investigations have shown that criminal offences appear to have been committed. After vetting by the service they are forwarded to the investigations division of the Department with a view to prosecution. Criminal proceedings are normally instituted by the Secretary of State, although a small number of cases are referred to the Serious Fraud Office or the Crown prosecution service. In considering whether criminal proceedings should be instituted, the principles and criteria laid down in the code for Crown prosecutors are applied, and the prosecutor considers whether he is satisfied that there is admissible, substantial and reliable evidence that a criminal offence known to the law has been committed by an identifiable person; and, if he is so satisfied, whether the public interest requires a prosecution. The objective is to institute criminal proceedings within four weeks of that decision being taken when the case is to be taken summarily. When the case is to be taken on indictment, the period is eight weeks. When these criteria are not met, criminal proceedings will not be instituted.

Last year, official receivers submitted 569 reports, compared with 627 in 1989, alleging that criminal offences had been committed. During the year convictions were obtained in just 290 cases, compared with 352 in 1989, resulting in 309 persons being convicted—388 in 1989—of 769 different offences. The latter figure for 1989 was 671.

The Insolvency Service had, at 30 June 1991, obtained 1,009 disqualification orders against individual directors of failed companies. Additionally, 94 warning letters were issued to individuals last year—107 in 1989—where there was evidence of an offence having been committed but where it was not considered that proceeding with a prosecution would be in the public interest. During 1990, official receivers also assisted the police or other investigatory authorities in 412 criminal investigations. During the year, 166 persons were convicted in such cases.

William Shakespeare frequently made allusions to insolvency. In "Venus and Adonis" he refers to the "blessed bankrupt"; three years later in "Romeo and Juliet" his adjective had changed to the "poor bankrupt"; while the advice given in "Timon of Athens" was:

> "Bankrupt, hold fast,
> Rather than render back, out with your knives
> And cut your trusters' throats."

Against this background, I turn to the case of Mrs. A. My constituent met Mr. A about four years ago. They

married in 1988 and divorced the following year. She was not aware that Mr. A had been declared a bankrupt in 1982 and discharged from his bankruptcy in December 1989.

In June 1989 Mrs. A was persuaded to take out a personal loan with Mercantile Credit which was countersigned by Mr. A. She was forced by her husband also to take funds from her account in a building society.

On 11 May 1990, Mrs. A visited the official receiver in Hull, who advised a week later that there was insufficient evidence. Yet she had shown five specific examples of evidence: Mr. A advertising his business, using cars purchased by Mrs. A as tax.s; taking credit over £250 while still an undischarged bankrupt; registering his business for VAT; and securing a mortgage by deception. Mrs. A was even advised that she could not have her own property returned.

The official receiver said that the evidence produced, "was not sufficiently conclusive of the offences alleged and that the case, taken as a whole on this evidence, was unlikely to be successful".

Subsequently, Mrs. A forwarded further documents to the official receiver which provided "clearer and better evidence" in the words of the service's senior official receiver. The Hull office agreed to contact the finance companies involved.

In the year ended 31 March 1991, official receivers covering the Yorkshire area submitted 209 reports, alleging either the commission of possible criminal offences or recommending that applications be made for the disqualification of directors whose conduct appeared to make them unfit to be concerned in the management of limited companies. At the end of June, there were 191 cases under investigation. The service's offices in Yorkshire have 29 officials who have studied for accountancy or allied qualifications. Rather worryingly, only three are fully qualified and no one has a law degree or any legal expertise as is required by the Department of Trade and Industry.

Mrs. A was awarded maintenance on 18 June last year, but no funds were forthcoming. She returned to court on 3 August and the maintenance was actually reduced. Again, no funds were secured. At that stage she estimates that Mr. A owed £62,000 in tax and she warned the authorities that her ex-husband was investing in a property on the Algarve.

Despite receiving an assurance on 5 June that a full investigation would be initiated by the official receiver, I heard nothing further and therefore wrote to the service on 11 September for a progress report. That was tardiness itself. A guarded response dated 4 October, four months after the last letter, referred to a difficulty in securing documentation from hire purchase companies. At the same time inquiries were made of the Inland Revenue as to whether it was trying to recover funds from Mr. A. For reasons of confidentiality, no information was available, although the Inland Revenue's special branch appreciated being informed. No further information came from the Insolvency Service until 28 March this year, hardly a speedy reaction. This stated that the official receiver's report had been passed to the investigation division solicitors.

I am reminded of the words of Lord Meston, speaking in the other place on 15 January 1985. He said:

"A cynic has observed that if you go 'bust' for £700 you are probably a fool; if you go 'bust' for £7,000 you are probably in the dock, and if you go 'bust' for £7 million you are probably rescued by the Bank of England."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 15 January 1985; Vol. 458, c. 914.]

Sad to say, in an undated letter from the Insolvency Service which was received on 30 May, I was advised that, "having regard to the criteria in the Code for Crown Prosecutors, it was not in the public interest that further action should be taken."

Clearly, that was an unhelpful reply and one acknowledged as such in the letter. No explanation was given for this amazing decision.

On 30 May I asked for an explanation and on 14 June the official receiver drew my constituent's attention to paragraph 8(i) of the code, which states:

"When the circumstances of an offence are not particularly serious, and a Court would be likely to impose a purely nominal penalty . . . Crown Prosecutors should carefully consider whether the public interest would be better served by a prosecution or some other form of disposal such as, where appropriate, a caution. This applies particularly where the offence is triable on indictment when Crown Prosecutors should also weigh the likely penalty with the length and cost of the proceedings".

Surely the offences were serious if they involved obtaining credit and carrying on a business without discussing that Mr. A was an undischarged bankrupt. Surely the courts would have awarded an appropriate penalty, and not a "purely nominal" one. Surely bankrupts should be warned that such action will not be tolerated in a civilised society. Fourthly, surely proceedings would be repaid by obtaining the funds illegally acquired.

Meanwhile, Mrs. A had information that her ex-husband was living in Spain, owed £44,000 in tax, and had not had his passport removed. She has since discovered that Mr. A has admitted to earning in excess of £51,000 last year. If someone decides to go abroad leaving debts of tax due, apparently the Inland Revenue has no power either to prevent him from leaving or to have him brought back from his destination. If there are assets in the United Kingdom depending on the size of the debt and the individual circumstances of the case, it can and does take bankruptcy action through the United Kingdom courts involving the service of a writ or statutory demand outside the jurisdiction. This allows the defaulter's United Kingdom assets to be put towards settlement of the debts.

So, in this long saga, Mrs. A still does not have title to the house she owns. She has even had to ask the trustees in Mr. A's bankruptcy for their approval to the building society—which loaned the mortgage—transferring title to her sole name. It would have been helpful if the official receiver had offered to undertake this. I should remind the House that the offices for the receiver in Yorkshire cost £135,200 this year and in Hull £454,000. Earlier this month —on 8 July—after pressure from me, the Hull office confirmed that it had no objection to the property being conveyed into Mrs. A's sole name. Mrs. A has been left with £18,000 worth of unpaid debt.

In my hon. Friend's reply of 8 July, he said it was not possible to calculate an average penalty. The code for Crown prosecutors, which comes under section 10 of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985, was reviewed as recently as this June.

Therefore, what lessons do we learn from this sad case? Could Mrs. A have supplied any additional information to secure justice? She is rightly owed a full explanation. The public must be alarmed at the complacency of the Insolvency Service, its inordinate delay in investigating a straightforward case, and failure to protect the innocent

[Mr. Conal Gregory]

citizen. Just how large must a fraud be before action is taken? The code needs clarification. Otherwise, the clear message from this case is that fraud still pays.

Gibbon, in "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire", referred in 1781 to

"the cruel treatment of the insolvent debtors of the state."

Will our state ensure that it recovers its rightful dues from Mr. A?

9.16 am

The Minister for Corporate Affairs (Mr. John Redwood): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) for drawing the attention of the House to the important work of the Insolvency Service and for his kind opening remarks about the central function that it performs. I shall try to answer in some detail the criticisms that he made in this individual case. Listening to his liberal quotations from Shakespeare, the one that was on my mind was:

"Neither a borrower, nor a lender be".

As the Minister responsible both for financial services, where things sometimes go wrong for investors, and for the Insolvency Service, where things always go wrong for our clients, that is probably the one that should be engraved on my heart.

My hon. Friend asked whether the absence of lawyers in the Insolvency Service is a worry. As he said, official receivers make reports to the Insolvency Service headquarters. If there appears to be evidence of a prosecutable offence, they are passed to my Department's solicitors. They decide whether to prosecute. Official receivers and the police investigate, and solicitors decide whether to prosecute. As my hon. Friend said, departmental solicitors and the Treasury solicitor are available to advise the Insolvency Service on all legal matters and staff in the service are happy with those arrangements and feel that they have access to the right level and degree of legal advice that they need.

As my hon. Friend said, a number of restrictions are imposed on bankrupts. If they obtain credit of more than £250, they must say that they are bankrupt when they are trying to obtain it. They must always use their own name. In this way, potential creditors can be protected. Most post-bankruptcy offences are brought to the attention of the official receiver by creditors who have suffered a loss as a result. If they come to light in some other way any potential prosecution must weigh that while an offence might have been committed no individual creditor may have suffered.

On 25 July 1983 a receiving order in bankruptcy was made against Mr. A in the York county court on a creditor's petition. Mr. A was adjudged bankrupt on 3 August 1983. The case was administered by the official receiver at Hull. On 23 November 1983, Mr. A was publicly examined at York county court. According to Mr. A's amended statement of affairs, submitted in the bankruptcy proceedings, as at 25 July 1983 his only asset was his interest in the then matrimonial home which was fully charged to secured creditors. He had gross liabilities totalling £121,752, of which £38,470 was due to secured creditors. Only £5·15 was realised in the bankruptcy proceedings and so there was no distribution to creditors.

The official receiver obtained his release as trustee on 8 September 1988. On 3 October 1986, Mr. A's bankruptcy was reviewed by the court, which is an automatic procedure. He did not attend and he was not granted a discharge from his bankruptcy. Mr. A obtained his discharge from bankruptcy on 29 December 1989, as a consequence of the Insolvency Act's general amnesty for bankruptcies over three years old.

In May 1990, the official receiver at Hull was given information to suggest that, while undischarged, Mr. A had contravened restrictions placed on him. He was said to have obtained credit in excess of £250, without disclosing his status to the creditor. He was also alleged to be trading in a trading name when he had been adjudged bankrupt in his own name. An allegation was also made that he had obtained a mortgage loan by deception.

Carrying on a business while an undischarged bankrupt and registering for value added tax are not in themselves illegal, as long as the conditions for bankrupts have been met. The official receiver was shown evidence that Mr. A had used a trading style in a press advertisement, but he had also quoted his own name in that advertisement.

The official receiver went on to make inquiries based on the information received and established that Mr. A had received a credit card in November 1989 from one of the clearing banks. By the date of his discharge from bankruptcy, he had incurred a debt of £511·35 to the credit card company—an amount in excess of £250. The debt was later settled in full. The official receiver also established that in July 1989 Mr. A had entered into a conditional sale agreement with a finance company to purchase a motor vehicle at a total cost of £12,530. In May 1990, the account was settled to the satisfaction of the finance company.There has been no reply to the official receiver's inquiries of the building society from which the mortgage was obtained, or from another finance company.

In March 1991, the official receiver submitted a report on Mr. A's actions to the Insolvency Service. It was discussed with a lawyer from my Department's investigations division. Advice was given that the matter should not be proceeded with in the public interest, having regard to paragraph 8(i) of the code for Crown prosecutors, which my hon. Friend has quoted.

The two instances of obtaining credit discovered by the official receiver occurred within six months of Mr. A's automatic discharge as a bankrupt and both debts have been paid in full. The legal advice was based on those facts, on the absence of creditor complaints and on the lawyer's interpretation of the code for Crown prosecutors.

If my hon. Friend has further information to assist the official receiver at Hull in his inquiries into Mr. A's affairs while he was bankrupt, my Department will be pleased to receive it and investigate further. As for the question of tax that may now be owing to the Inland Revenue, I understand from what my hon. Friend said that that occurred after Mr. A's discharge from bankruptcy. It is for the Revenue to pursue the matter in its usual way.

Nevertheless, I appreciate my hon. Friend's concern about the case, from which it appears that Mr. A violated restrictions imposed on bankrupts. During 1990, there were 255 convictions for post-bankruptcy offences, usually where creditors had complained. That demonstrates the Government's commitment to ensuring that creditors are protected and offenders punished. There is no automatic immunity to prosecution for anyone: it depends on the facts of each case.

My hon. Friend has given figures for prosecution reports submitted by official receivers in 1989 and 1990,

and for the number of cases in which they assisted the police. Between 1 January and 30 June official receivers submitted 312 reports and also assisted the police and other investigatory authorities in their inquiries in 237 cases.

As my hon. Friend pointed out, a large number of directors have been disqualified under the legislation introduced by the present Government. Before that legislation, there were no such provisions.

In 1986, substantial changes were effected to insolvency legislation by the introduction of the Insolvency Act, which streamlined procedures for handling bankruptcies and compulsory liquidations. That has enabled official receivers to concentrate more of their resources on investigating the affairs of individuals and failed companies, and on bringing disqualification proceedings against delinquent company directors.

Since 21 March 1990 the Insolvency Service has been an executive agency within the Department of Trade and Industry. I am pleased to say that streamlined case administration procedures have enabled official receivers to cope with a very substantial increase in the number of compulsory insolvencies, while still being able to devote time to investigating possible wrong-doing and unfit conduct on the part of company directors.

It is important that official receivers, in conjunction with my Department's investigations division, concentrate their investigative resources on those cases which are the more serious, involving fraud and systematic dishonesty.

The evidence of the figures for prosecution reports and disqualifications, already given, is that the authorities are putting more effort than ever into the investigation of fraud and commercial misconduct. To accuse the Insolvency Service of complacency is wrong. The service plays a full part in the Government's efforts to ensure that fraud does not pay and is seen not to pay. I give a pledge to my hon. Friend that I shall carry on the task of making sure that all those involved in fraud are fully investigated and, where necessary, prosecuted.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-five minutes past Nine o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 23 July 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT (PENALTY FARES) BILL

Read the Third time and passed.

PRIVATE BILLS [LORDS] (SUSPENSION)

Ordered,

That so much of the Lords Messages [16th July and 18th July] as relates to the Avon Weir Bill *[Lords]*, the British Waterways Bill *[Lords]*, the City of Bristol (Portishead Docks) Bill *[Lords]*, the Folkestone Harbour Bill *[Lords]*, the Greater Manchester (Light Rapid Transit System) Bill *[Lords]*, the Harris Tweed Bill *[Lords]*, the River Calder (Welbeck Site) Bill *[Lords]*, the Torquay Market Bill *[Lords]* and the Woodgrange Park Cemetery and Crematorium Bill *[Lords]* be now considered.

Ordered,

That this House doth concur with the Lords in their Resolutions.—*[The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Message to the Lords to acquaint them therewith.

HOOK ISLAND (POOLE BAY) BILL

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the Hook Island (Poole Bay) Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up that date be paid;

Ordered,

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

Ordered,

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration, signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

Ordered,

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read) and, having been amended by the Committee in the present Session, shall be ordered to lie upon the Table;

Ordered,

That no further fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

Ordered,

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

To be communicated to the Lords, and their concurrence desired thereto.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (NO. 3) BILL *[LORDS]*

Motion made,

That the Promoters of the British Railways (No. 3) Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office no later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That, if that Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agents for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by them stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

That the Petitions relating to the Bill presented in the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

That, in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words 'under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)' were omitted;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

KING'S CROSS RAILWAYS BILL

Motion made,

That the Promoters of the King's Cross Railways Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read) and, having been amended by the Committee in the present Session, shall be ordered to lie upon the Table;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Nursery Education

1. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list Her Majesty's Government's new measures centrally to fund nursery education.

The Minister of State for Education and Science (Mr. Tim Eggar): We are not planning any such measures. We see no reason to change the present arrangements whereby local education authorities can determine what to spend on nursery education within the total resources available to them.

Mr. Wray: What happened to the promises made in 1972 by the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) when she was Secretary of State for Education and Science? She told the House that by 1982 she would provide 700,000 nursery school places. Twenty years later we are still 200,000 short of that target. How shall we cope with the projected shortage in the labour force if we do not provide the nursery places that are needed? Does the Minister agree that the private sector has let us down very bady indeed in the high cost of nursery school provision, with people having to pay perhaps £75 a week for nursery education for their children?

Mr. Eggar: I will tell the hon. Gentleman what happened. In 1976 there were 440,000 youngsters in nursery education. By 1978 the number had fallen to 415,000. That was the priority that the Labour party gave when in power under the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), with his cuts in public expenditure, and when the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) was Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education.

Dame Jill Knight: Is my hon. Friend aware that while many people feel that there is a strong case for helping women who bring up their children alone and must go out to work to support the family, many people also feel that women who go out to quite highly paid jobs and who want their children cared for while they earn a lot of money should make a contribution and pay for the education of their children at that stage of their children's lives?

Mr. Eggar: I believe that a large number of people agree with my hon. Friend.

Ms. Armstrong: Does the Minister remember the advice given by his right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) that the Government had acted dishonestly by not increasing the number of nursery places? Does he realise the deep anxiety felt by parents up and down the country who do not have access to nursery education for their children? Is not it an entitlement that the Government should be building towards so that there is opportunity and choice for those families?

Mr. Eggar: Yes, and there are 150,000 more under-fives in maintained schools in England than there were in 1979. We have increased the number of places by 150,000 and the Labour party decreased it by 25,000 over two years. That is the relative record of our two parties. What is more, the hon. Lady knows that all that she can promise from the Opposition Front Bench is 50 part-time nursery places per local education authority area.

Education Authorities (Reorganisation)

2. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what consideration he is giving to the structure and size of education authorities concomitant on their proposed reorganisation.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): The Government are currently considering responses to their consultation paper on the structure of local government, and will be drawing up in due course guidelines for the proposed local government commission, which will cover aspects of education.

Mr. Adley: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that answer. Will he tell the House whether he has in mind any minimum size for a local education authority as a result of the changes? Does he agree that, wherever possible, the smaller the authority the better?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend that democratic accountability is improved if services are delivered on the smallest scale practicable consistent with good service. We are proposing a consultation process locally and that will not necessarily lead to a uniform national position. The Government will be issuing guidelines in due course on the impact on the education service of particular structures of local government and we shall be pointing out that a great deal has happened recently since local authorities were last reorganised. In particular, polytechnics have been taken out of local education authority control and sixth-form colleges and further education colleges are about to be taken out of local education authority control. We have moved over to a system of local management of schools so the duties of an education authority are very different from those that existed when the present authorities were set up.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that schools will be at their best if they are self-governing in every respect? It would be better for the schools, the teachers and particularly for the children. If that were to happen, would not the role of local education authorities virtually disappear?

Mr. Clarke: I share with my hon. Friend the expectation and hope that there will be a rapid change beyond the local management of schools to grant-maintained status for most secondary schools and many primary schools. I agree that that has considerable implications for the changed role of local education authorities in the future. They will be moving over to what is known in the jargon as an enabling role because their direct management duties will have been devolved to a much more sensible local level.

Scientific Research

3. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to increase Government funding of scientific research.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Alan Howarth): The size of the science budget for 1992-93 will be considered in the forthcoming public expenditure survey.

Mr. Strang: Does the Minister accept that the level of funding for the science budget this year, including the additional funds that the Government announced last month, is wholly inadequate? For example, even with that money, the Science and Engineering Research Council is still unable to avoid closing the nuclear structure facility at Daresbury. It will have to cut its staff by 300 by 1993. When will Government give British science the money that it needs?

Mr. Howarth: The Government have increased the science budget by no less than 23 per cent. in real terms and that increase has matched the growth of GDP. It is well known that the Government's economic strategy has been to reduce public expenditure as a proportion of GDP, but we have made an exception for basic science because we recognise the Government's inescapable and important responsibility in that regard. We also believe that it is right that judgments on scientific priorities should be taken by scientists and we believe that the arm's-length principle is important. It would not be appropriate for me as a politician or for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State to take a decision as to the priority that should be given to the nuclear structure facility at Daresbury among the range of candidates for funding through the science budget. It is entirely right that the Science and Engineering Research Council is reviewing its priorities and is seeking to improve efficiency. I recognise that these are worrying and difficult times for scientists and others who are working at Daresbury, but these choices and this prioritisation cannot be avoided.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My hon. Friend will understand that the Opposition always choose foreign comparisons. He will also know that my constituency needs a large number of well-qualified young engineers. Do we produce more engineers than, for example, the Germans or the Americans?

Mr. Howarth: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to draw attention to a fact that is too little known and too little appreciated. It is indeed the case that the number of young people in this country who are qualified in engineering and in scientifically based disciplines exceeds the number in France and Germany.

Mr. Douglas: Does the Minister accept that Scotland produces proportionately a larger number of scientists and engineers than the rest of the United Kingdom? Does he also accept that there is a crisis in the funding of science in the universities, and in particular in fundamental physics and mathematics research? What does he intend to do about that?

Mr. Howarth: We have increased the funding available for scientific work in universities. Indeed, the research councils have increased their expenditure within the universities by 78 per cent. in real terms during the Government's period in office. That is a reflection of the first-rate quality of the science that takes place in our universities, and it is enormously important to recognise that. I know that the hon. Gentleman has at heart the interests and well-being of science in the United Kingdom. It is extremely important for scientists and for those who speak on their behalf to present science in this country as the winner that it undoubtedly is.

Teacher Training

4. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has to encourage teacher training to have greater practical content.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Michael Fallon): Our criteria for the approval of teacher training courses aim to ensure that all student teachers are trained in the practical skills they need to be effective in the classroom. But we want to reinforce this by making teacher training more school-based. We are currently looking at ways of securing this.

Mr. Porter: Further to develop the practical content of teacher training, will my hon. Friend consider a scheme whereby most classroom teachers during their careers spend at least one year at a teacher training college so that they can teach trainee teachers to teach? Would not that have a double benefit—for the trainees and for the teachers?

Mr. Fallon: I find that a very attractive suggestion. The reverse is already true—my hon. Friend might be interested to know that as from next year a teacher at a teacher training college will spend at least one term every five years back at school.

Mr. Andrew Smith: Is not it an indictment of the Government's record that after 12 years in office the Minister confesses that the Government have not yet got right something of such fundamental importance as the quality of teacher education and training? Is not it clear that the way to improve the practical content of courses is to put into effect the Labour party's proposals for a core curriculum for teacher education, which focuses on competence, and to overhaul the crucial induction year for newly qualified teachers? The chief inspector's reports repeatedly describe the induction year as the weakest link in the British system of teacher education, so what is the Minister going to do about that?

Mr. Fallon: I have yet to hear any member of the Opposition suggest that there should be less theory in teacher training. We believe that there should be more subject study, more school experience and more professional training in teacher training colleges. That is what our current review aims to secure.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Will we support more classroom-based teacher training? In view of local management of schools, teacher assessment and the need to consider classroom practice, is not there a strong case to consider the qualifications needed by head teachers and to match their training to those qualifications?

Mr. Fallon: Yes, indeed. We are currently considering that as part of the review. It is very important for the professional development of all teachers—heads, deputies and classroom teachers—that they receive more appropriate and practical training.

School Budgets

5. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the steps he is taking to make good deficits facing schools moving towards responsibility for their own budgets.

Mr. Fallon: Schools taking on formal delegation under the Education Reform Act should not inherit a deficit on their school accounts. Local education authorities have ample scope to cushion schools' budgets as formula funding is introduced over four years, with longer available for schools facing particular difficulties because of high inherited staffing costs.

Mr. Hain: Does the Minister accept that many primary schools in particular have had to cut teaching posts and merge classes in order to keep within budgets based on a formula for average rather than actual teaching staff? Will he announce emergency funding to make good that shortfall in time for the next school year?

Mr. Fallon: As I understand it, primary schools in Neath do not yet have their delegated budgets. Local education authorities in England and Wales were able to design their local management of schools schemes to protect not only schools with high inherited staff costs but, specifically, small schools and to allow generous transition arrangements from historic to pupil-led funding.

Mrs. Currie: Is my hon. Friend aware that five of the seven secondary schools in my constituency reported worse GCSE results in 1990 than in the year before, when national average figures were improving, and when the county budget showed that the bulk of the staff employed under the education budget were not teachers? My constituents are no thicker than the Secretary of State's constituents in Nottinghamshire; the problem is that the county council retains a far higher proportion of the budget. Will the Minister explain how matters in Derbyshire can be put to rights?

Mr. Fallon: I would not be surprised any more at anything that happened in Derbyshire. I am becoming increasingly concerned about the way in which Derbyshire allocates its schools budget. For example, it subsidised its school meals service—to the tune of £14 million last year—for every pupil in the county, and it has not increased school meal prices since 1981.

Mr. Beggs: Will the Minister assure the House that the real motivation behind financial delegation to schools is not to obscure underfunding of the education service throughout the United Kingdom, and not to allow any failure or deficiency that may arise later to be attributed to incompetence on the part of principals and local school governors?

Mr. Fallon: The key point to grasp is that local management of schools funds not teachers but pupils. It does not change the total amount of resources available in the schools system, but some adjustments may be necessary and desirable where successful and popular schools were deliberately underfunded by local education authorities in the past.

Grant-maintained Schools

6. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will bring forward proposals to limit the amount of money an individual local education authority can spend in a campaign against a particular school seeking grant-maintained status.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced on 3 July, we intend to legislate to limit the amount of taxpayers' money an education authority can spend on campaigns against applications for grant-maintained status, and to reimburse governing bodies up to the same limit for their own campaign expenses.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I am grateful for that reassurance. Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware of the almost pathological hatred of any movement that takes control away from Nottinghamshire county council and gives it to schools? So great is that hatred that I believe that the chairman of my local education authority would do anything, say anything and spend anything to keep his empire intact. Other hon. Members who represent Nottinghamshire seats are aware of that tyranny—the authority has sought to deny Members access to schools in case they say something wrong to boards of governors.

Mr. Clarke: I am as familiar as my hon. Friend with the extraordinary extent to which Nottinghamshire county council will go in its hostility towards schools that are not under its control. At the moment, it is distributing large amounts of leaflets to parents involved in ballots in respect of grant-maintained status in the north of the county. We believe that there is a case for factual information to be given to parents when such ballots are held and that it should be in the form of a simple leaflet on each side. We are taking steps to ensure that large amounts of charge payers' money are not spent on defending bureaucratic empires, and, I hope, to improve the quality and accuracy of some of the information put out by the local authorities.

Mr. Tony Banks: I am more concerned about the money that the Government have spent on schools that have opted out. For example, the Secretary of State knows very well that Stratford school in my constituency was due to close as part of the reorganisation but that, to serve their ideological purposes, the Government allowed it grant-maintained status. That makes no sense, given that when Walsingham school in Wandsworth wanted to go for grant-maintained status as part of the reorganisation, the right hon. and learned Gentleman refused its application. We now have to pay £6,000 for every student at Stratford and we get only £3,000 for students in the rest of Newham. The Secretary of State should stop playing politics with the kids of Newham.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman displays all the spiteful fury that was shown by his local education authority against the wishes of the parents of Stratford school who voted for grant-maintained status. Not only were large sums spent on pressurising people to reject the application for grant-maintained status; the authority went to huge lengths to try to stop the school opening, including barring all the future governors and anyone else concerned with grant-maintained status from the school until the legitimate date, attempting to take away equipment, and a large number of other steps. I recall that

that was the school at which some of the staff who intended to leave asked children who were intending to stay at the school to stand up. When those children identified themselves, they were made to stand in front of the class to be berated.

Mr. Banks: It is a lie.

Hon. Members: Oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order. Fortunately, I did not hear that.

Mr. Clarke: We are organising ballots to determine the parents' wishes about whether schools should be governed by the local authority or by their own governors. There is a case for common sense and for a sensible level of information on both sides so that parents can reach an objective and non-pressurised view.

Mrs. Peacock: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware just how much many local authorities spend on their campaigns—often outrageously political campaigns, such as that in Kirklees—to persuade parents and school governors that it is not right for schools to apply for grant-maintained status? The campaigns that they run are quite outrageous.

Mr. Clarke: What is called for is a straightforward factual leaflet produced by one side and a straightforward factual leaflet produced by the promoters. The ballots can then be carried out in a sensible atmosphere and parents can make their own choice.

Mr. Fatchett: The Department's own propaganda budget has increased by more than 300 per cent. since the last general election and the Government are spending more than £250,000 of taxpayers' money on Grant-Maintained Schools Ltd.—a Conservative party front organisation. Is not it about time that the Government introduced powers to stop the use of taxpayers' money for party-political purposes? Or are the Secretary of State and the Government so worried about the weak nature of their own policies that they have to use taxpayers' money to get their cheap propaganda arguments across?

Mr. Clarke: It is totally false to claim that the Government are increasing spending on propaganda. The hon. Gentleman describes as propaganda activities that are certainly not party political, such as the advertising campaign to recruit teachers. The hon. Gentleman has merely taken a bit of briefing from the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), who always does these things, and who cites as examples of political propaganda all the Government's health education leaflets, including those in connection with the AIDS campaign.

In respect of ballots for grant-maintained status, we propose that there should be a simple leaflet on one side and a simple leaflet on the other. Labour authorities in particular are spending a fortune on campaigning, and the money is not theirs but the charge payers'. They are also making some extremely misleading claims in what they say about the consequences of opting out.

School Budgets

7. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many secondary schools currently manage their own budgets under the system of local management of schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: Of the 3,853 secondary schools in England, 3,015—or 78 per cent.—have fully delegated budgets now. The remainder must have them by April 1993 or, in the case of schools in inner London, April 1994.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: Were not many people wary of local management of schools when it was first announced, but now see the benefits of it? Does my hon. Friend agree that we should encourage more schools to look after their own affairs locally instead of their being dominated by left-wing, Labour-controlled authorities?

Mr. Fallon: Yes, I have yet to hear of a school that wants to hand its budget back. However, I must tell my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) that his local education authority of Trafford has chosen to delegate less to schools this year than last year and to spend a higher proportion of its school budget on central administration. That means that every school in Trafford this year will lose out because classroom money is being spent on the bureaucracy at Trafford town hall.

Mr. O'Hara: Did the Minister read in the press about the extraordinary events a couple of weeks ago in the royal festival hall when Simon Rattle conducted 2,000 youth musicians and 300 youth choristers to draw attention to the damage being caused to instrumental music teaching in schools by LMS because local authorities can no longer sustain central support for youth orchestras and the instrumental peripatetic music budgets of schools are being cut to the point at which they are not worth having? In the case of school instrumental music LMS means divide and destroy.

Mr. Fallon: There is no evidence for that kind of assertion with regard to school meals.

Mr. Straw: Music!

Mr. Fallon: The plain fact is that local education authorities have plenty of scope to reduce their administration and bureaucracy. For example, Waltham Forest is spending 7 per cent. of the schools budget on central administration while other LEAs are spending between 1 and 2 per cent. If Waltham Forest did not do that, it would have a lot more to spend on music.

Local Management of Schools

8. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average amount of money being held back by local education authorities in England and Wales, per pupil, under the system of local management of schools.

Mr. Fallon: Figures for the current financial year 1991-92 are not yet complete, but I can tell my hon. Friend that the Isle of Wight local education authority is holding back 16·25 per cent. of its potential schools budget, which works out at about £280 per pupil. I shall write to my hon. Friend when the national average is available.

Mr. Field: If local education authorities conformed to the Government's recommended 15 per cent. retention, would not there be an extra £140 million available to schools throughout the country? Have not governors, pupils, school teachers and lecturers become thoroughly fed up with the political posturing of local education authorities like the Liberal Democrats who have retained £200,000 from the college of art and technology on the Isle of Wight, a fact which came to light only when I led a delegation to my hon. Friend's Department, and who have sacked school governors, many of whom had given years of non-political service to their school boards? That was the greatest act of political spite by the Liberal Democrats ever to occur on the Isle of Wight.

Mr. Fallon: I certainly deplore that. The Liberal Democrats on the Isle of Wight are holding back £5 million of the £30 million and that is precisely why by April 1993, hold-back will be limited to 15 per cent. so that schools' money can be spent in classrooms and not in the town halls.

Mr. Madden: Will the Minister confirm that the amount being held by Bradford local education authority is not unreasonable? Will he also confirm that there is widespread concern in schools in Bradford about the wholly insufficient amount of capital allocation from the Minister's Department which means that crucial renovations and repairs which have been hoped for for many years are likely to be deferred yet again this year? That work will include an attack on the enormous number of temporary classrooms and schools that are literally crumbling, a point highlighted by a headmaster who does not have an office and must work in the corridor, in the playground or in his parked car?

Mr. Fallon: Overall we were able to increase schools' capital guidelines this year by 15 per cent. to £470 million. Bradford's allocation was more than £9 million.

Mr. Pawsey: May I congratulate my right hon. and hon. Friends on the success of their LMS policy, which releases substantial extra funds to schools? Will my hon. Friend the Minister carefully note the opposition that comes from Labour Members and their supporters? Does he agree that the success of the LMS policy helps to show the way towards grant-maintained status? I am sure that my hon. Friend will join me in hoping that more schools adopt GMS.

Mr. Fallon: We regard local management of schools —the preparation and management of a budget—as a preliminary and important preparatory step towards full grant-maintained status. Indeed, it is difficult to see how anybody could be against local management of schools, as it ensures that schools' money is actually spent in schools. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) says that he is not, why does he not deplore the practice of councils such as Newham and Waltham Forest spending so much on central administration, or is he happy to see a bureaucrats charter?

Mr. Turner: If the Minister does not have the figures for the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field), how can we assess the success or otherwise of the policy? When we are moving into 1992, why does he not have the figures for 1990-91? I question whether the Department of Education and Science has published the figures for 1989-90. One of our problems is that we have no up-to-date statistics on which to work. If we had, the Minister would give us the figures today.

Mr. Fallon: I published the figures for 1990-91 last December. I gave the figures for the Isle of Wight. Whether the hon. Gentleman likes it or not, I will now give him the current year's figures for Wolverhampton. Wolverhampton holds back the fifth highest amount in England and refuses to delegate that money to its schools.

Seven-year-olds (Assessment)

9. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will meet representative teachers of seven-year-olds to discuss appropriate assessment procedures.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend and I have met a considerable number of teachers of seven-year-olds as part of our evaluation of the recent assessments, and we will continue to do so.

My meetings with teachers have confirmed my belief that externally designed standardised tests are a key tool for assessing pupils. In settling the design of tests for next year, we will take firm steps to keep them within manageable limits.

Mr. Bottomley: May I say that that is welcomed by every teacher of seven-year-olds and also by parents who want the benefits of testing and reports without putting too much extra load on teachers who are doing a better job year by year?

Mr. Eggar: I agree with my hon. Friend. The tests this year were difficult to manage in the classroom. However, a number of those tests were welcomed by both pupils and teachers. There is no doubt that they revealed a considerable amount about pupils which had not been available to teachers using teacher assessment. It is a mixed result, but the big problem has been manageability within the classroom.

Mr. Straw: What responsibility do Ministers take for the fiasco to which testing at seven has been reduced, as a result of constant experimentation and change over the past four years? Does the Minister think that credibility in testing would be enhanced if some serving teachers were put on the School Examinations and Assessment Council, rather than turning the council into a branch of the Conservative party by appointing a right-wing ideologue, Lord Griffiths, as its chairman?

Mr. Eggar: The tests have not been a fiasco.

Mr. Straw: They have.

Mr. Eggar: No, they have not been a fiasco. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman jumps to conclusions about the results of the test without waiting for the full evaluation from Her Majesty's inspectorate and from SEAC. I do not think that that is a responsible attitude for the hon. Gentleman to take. He must be as interested as we are in ensuring that there is a proper testing regime within schools and that that testing regime responds to the need of teachers and is fair to pupils.

The hon. Gentleman's comments about Lord Griffiths are beneath contempt.

Grant-maintained Schools

10. **Mr. Janman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools in Essex have applied for grant-maintained status; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Parents in nine schools in Essex have voted in favour of grant-maintained status. One school is already up and running and another is approved for grant-maintained status in September. I am considering proposals from two schools, and the remaining five schools will publish their proposals in due course.

Mr. Janman: Does my hon. Friend agree that all head teachers, boards of governors and parents of pupils at schools in Essex should be looking seriously at the option of their school becoming grant maintained? Does he also agree that the benefits of becoming a grant-maintained school should be being pushed vigorously by all Conservative county councillors in the county?

Mr. Eggar: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend, and have one additional bit of advice. Those connected with schools that are thinking of becoming grant maintained —and they should be thinking about it—should visit Chalvedon school, which has been extremely successful as a grant-maintained school.

Mr. Leighton: Does the Minister agree that the few schools in Essex that want to take on grant-maintained status should study the experience of Stratford school in Newham? Does he accept that despite the fact that every local head teacher and the chairman of the training and enterprise council warned against that school becoming grant maintained, the Minister allowed that for ideological reasons and the school now has only one third of the pupils that it could take, with the result that education there costs more than £6,000 per pupil, which is twice as much as anywhere else? How can the Minister justify so bizarre a situation?

Mr. Tony Banks: Ideology. Playing politics——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) and his hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) should have words with the director of education for Newham council. They have just written the most disgraceful letter to parents, deliberately trying to frighten and intimidate them into withdrawing their children from Stratford school or attempting to dissuade them from taking up their option to attend Stratford. That is old-fashioned party thuggery of the kind that Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen claim to have given up.

Mr. Tony Banks: Come outside and say that.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) has already had one outburst.

11. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many primary schools have achieved grant-maintained status.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have approved five primary schools for grant-maintained status and I am minded to approve one more. Fifty-four primary schools in all have so far applied for grant-maintained status and a further 11 are currently balloting parents on whether to apply for such status.

Mr. Gill: In determining applications, what weighting does my right hon. and learned Friend give to parental choice, academic achievement and the strength of lay and professional support? In answering that question, will he bear in mind the circumstances at the Down school where 85 per cent. of parents voted in favour of grant-maintained status, where the above-average academic achievement is well documented and where dedicated staff and governors are unanimously in favour of running their own affairs? What assurances can my right hon. and learned Friend give me that the decision that the Government have denied my constituents on this important policy is not a case of "Whitehall knows best"?

Mr. Clarke: We give high regard to the expressed wishes of parents, which is why, having done just that in the case of Stratford school, my hon. Friend the Minister of State and myself are being so vigorously threatened by hon. Members representing Newham. However, we also consider the merits of each application and the likely success of the school as a grant-maintained school. My hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) has told me how strongly he regrets our decision on the Down school, which is housed in an old Victorian building and has only two teachers, including the head teacher. I am afraid that we were driven to the conclusion that it was unlikely to succeed as a grant-maintained school. At least my hon. Friend's indignation answers the allegation that is frequently made against us that we always allow grant-maintained status in the case of closures.

Mr. Flannery: Is it not a fact that the Government's attempt to dragoon schools into becoming grant maintained is a total failure? Is it not a fact that if all schools wanted to become grant maintained, the Government would have to increase the number of bureaucrats in Whitehall tenfold to centralise the education system? Is it not also the case that because the Government have not succeeded in encouraging schools to become grant maintained through a proper vote, they are now offering financial rewards and giving schools that accept grant-maintained status more money than is given to other schools and are not such schools usually about to be closed anyway?

Mr. Clarke: The number of schools that have balloted has doubled in the past six months. The number of schools where that status has been approved has now risen past 100. I believe that today's count is 104. The effect of the change is to reduce bureaucracy, because more of the school's budget is placed in the hands of the governors and parents and is spent directly for the benefit of that school.

The hon. Gentleman's allegation that we allow applications in all cases where the school is proposed for closure is belied by the case raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill). Parents in his constituency wanted a school marked for closure to become grant maintained, but we judged that case, as we judge all cases, on its merits and reluctantly decided that the application could not be allowed to proceed.

Further Education Colleges

12. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what communications he has received from the directors of further education colleges concerning his statement on 21 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My Department has received a substantial number of responses from principals of further education colleges about our proposals to remove colleges from local authority control. Their comments have been overwhelmingly favourable.

Mrs. Hicks: Does it come as a surprise to my right hon. and learned Friend to hear that when I recently met a group of directors of polytechnics, not one of them wanted to go back to local authority control? Would not that be the same for further education colleges once they have freedom from the political Labour local authorities which constrained them and the opportunity to manage their own affairs? In my own area of Wolverhampton can it be right that the chairman was not only a Labour councillor but is now the prospective Labour parliamentary candidate? Is not that political bias of the worst sort?

Mr. Clarke: Like my hon. Friend, I have never met a director of a polytechnic who wanted to return to local authority control; I have never met a head teacher of a grant-maintained school who wanted to return to local authority control; I have never met a head teacher of a school with a fully delegated LMS budget who wanted all the money to be placed in the hands of the local authority. Yet the Labour party in Wolverhampton and elsewhere defends bureaucratic local government control of all education to the last ditch.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 23 July.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Haynes: The Prime Minister will be aware that we came into this place together and that we have been friends ever since. However, when my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition asked him a question yesterday on the Bank of Credit and Commerce International, I wondered where Honest John was. Will he tell me please?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is perfectly correct that we entered the House on the same day. I, too, am proud to have been his friend during that period and I hope that that will continue. I made it clear to his right hon. Friend yesterday that I had no knowledge of the fraud at the BCCI until 28 June. I have set up an inquiry that will have open access to all the information that is available and all the people who are concerned, up to and including Ministers and myself. When that report is concluded, I will publish it.

Mr. Dickens: Will my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister please confirm that it was the Conservative party which first gave parents their rights, gave trade union members their rights and gave council tenants their rights? Is it not now the Conservative party which is giving the ordinary citizens of Britain their rights and is not that to be admired under the leadership of my right hon. Friend?

The Prime Minister: I would not wish to disagree with my hon. Friend.

Mr. Kinnock: Does the Prime Minister recall that he told the House on 18 January 1990 that he was aware of the reports about the banking operations of BCCI, that he said:

"I am satisfied with the supervision responsibilities and powers available to the Bank of England"—[*Official Report*, 18 January 1990; Vol. 165, c. 402.]

and that he said that the Bank had "sufficient staff working" on what he told the House was "a serious matter"? Will he now answer the specific question which he did not answer in any way yesterday? When did he first know about the very serious and prolonged banking irregularities at the BCCI?

The Prime Minister: As I told the right hon. Gentleman, the first time that I knew of serious banking irregularities was on 28 June—last month. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer made that clear to the House on Friday, I made it clear to the House on Monday and the Governor of the Bank of England made it clear in a letter to the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz). I am surprised that the right hon. Gentleman, as a Privy Councillor, is unwilling or unable to accept those assurances.

Mr. Kinnock: If the Prime Minister will refresh his memory, he will discover that he made absolutely no mention whatever either yesterday or on any other occasion of serious banking irregularities. Is it not a fact that in early 1990 the Prime Minister knew about the use of BCCI by drug traffickers, and therefore clearly knew about the other grave irregularities? It is a matter of record in columns 402-3 of *Hansard* of 18 January 1990 that he knew about the other grave irregularities at BCCI, that he told the House that it was a "serious matter" and that he then let the matter drop, with tragic consequences for those who, in complete innocence, continued to use the BCCI. Has not he been utterly negligent? Was not his failure to act on the knowledge that he had a complete dereliction of duty?

The Prime Minister: I regret that the right hon. Gentleman continues to conduct opposition by smear. The reality of what happened all the way through, of who knew about the details of the fraud and other serious matters, will be entirely uncovered by the inquiry that I have set up. The right hon. Gentleman should wait for the results of the inquiry and, meantime, he should not continue as he is doing.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister is rightly exercised about the sovereignty of this House of Parliament. Will he answer questions to permit us to exercise the sovereignty of this House and hold the Government to account? He says that it is a matter of regret that I ask these questions. It truly is a matter of regret that 200,000 people continued to trade with the BCCI, including 60 local authorities and countless companies, in complete innocence when all the

time the then Chancellor of the Exchequer knew about serious irregularities in that bank, but did nothing to warn anyone.

The Prime Minister: Those depositors are in difficulty because of the fraud perpetrated by the BCCI. I have told the right hon. Gentleman that the first knowledge that I had of that fraud was on 28 June. *[Interruption.]* If he is saying that I am a liar, he had better do so bluntly. *[Interruption.]* If he is not, he had better stop insinuating it.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister has already misled the House once today by saying that yesterday he referred to the irregularities, when it is in the recall of this House that he did not say a word about the irregularities yesterday, despite being asked about them. I have said to the Prime Minister that he knew about matters other than fraud before January this year and before June this year. Despite what he knew as Chancellor of the Exchequer, he did nothing to warn innocent people of the trap into which they were moving and of a bank that was near bankruptcy, that was giving unsecured loans and was not fit to trade. He let the bank trade.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman has just revealed to the House why he is unfit to be in government —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. [HON. MEMBERS: "Guilty!"]. Order.

Mr. Skinner: It all started when——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us behave like the House of Commons.

Mr. Whitney: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his excellent citizens charter. Does he agree that the typically churlish and sour reaction of Opposition Members demonstrates once again that, unlike the majority of the political parties in the world, they have still not understood that it is the competition and choice in the private sector which create quality of service? Does he also agree that it is the right of customers in the public sector to receive that same quality of service?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend about that. The measures in the citizens charter, both the large ones and the smaller ones, will be welcomed by people up and down the country. It is often the small matters that cause the greatest degree of frustration to ordinary people, and those small matters require to be dealt with. Many of the provisions of the citizens charter will do precisely that.

Mr. Ashdown: Further to that answer, yesterday the Prime Minister rightly said that where the authorities fail, the citizen should be compensated. Will he confirm to the House that that principle of compensation will apply if the Bingham inquiry shows that the authorities failed in the BCCI affair?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman had better wait for the result of the Bingham inquiry.

Mr. Soames: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, in more than 40 prison establishments in this country today there is a full-blown industrial dispute? Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is a thoroughly unsatisfactory state of affairs? Does he further agree that the Government must do something to sort out that rotten union?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. It is important that we address that matter.

Q2. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 23 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Is the Prime Minister aware that the Health Select Committee recently heard evidence that there has been a huge increase in serious infections during child birth because of the declining standards of hospital cleaning, directly arising from the privatisation process? Will he include as part of his citizens charter a commitment to return to the public sector those unsafe and unsatisfactory privatised services currently operating in the national health service?

The Prime Minister: It is a curious reality of life that all over the world different countries are moving increasingly to privatise services, including the Soviet Union which is looking to move many of its services into the private sector. Only the Labour party in this country is seeking to move back to nationalisation.

Mr. Ward: Does my right hon. Friend agree that we are less likely to have seriously ill patients turned away from hospitals and less likely to have people waiting to be buried if we continue with our privatisation scheme and eliminate the unions from the hospitals?

The Prime Minister: It is the Government's policy to continue to improve the quantity and quality of health care in this country, as we have done in recent years. That is in the interests of patients and it is certainly what is set out in our provisions in the citizens charter. That is the policy we will follow.

Q3. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 23 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. McAllion: Is the Prime Minister aware that the most important right available to citizens is the right to decide for themselves under which kind of Government they live? Since that is the very right that the Government are denying to the people of Scotland, does the right hon. Gentleman understand that his so-called citizens charter will be seen in Scotland for what it is—a fraud and a deceit? It is yet another reason for inflicting deserved electoral defeat on the Government when the Prime Minister finally finds the courage to face the citizens at the ballot box.

The Prime Minister: I sometimes wonder whether the hon. Gentleman lives in the real world.

Army (Restructuring)

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Tom King): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on the restructuring of the Army.

For more than 40 years the British Army has stood in the front line in Europe with our NATO allies. For more than 40 years we have had to maintain, even in peacetime, very substantial force levels on the continent of Europe, against the risk of a massive surprise attack across a wide front by the huge military strength of the Warsaw pact. But suddenly, after all those years of confrontation, the Warsaw pact has collapsed; East Germany is no more; and Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and others all seek closer links with the west. Only last week in London at the G7 summit, President Gorbachev came, not as an adversary, but in search of support for his economic reforms. None the less, tensions and risks remain, and the Soviet Union is still the largest military power in Europe. That underlines the importance of maintaining the NATO alliance.

NATO's strategy for the cold war was built on deterrence and strong defence. NATO's new strategy is to sustain those policies that have served us so well, but to achieve them within lower levels of forces, which will be more flexible and mobile. NATO's decisions in May opened the way for us to make changes to our own force structure. Since the greatest threat previously came in the central region in Europe, it was on Germany that the major part of our Army was focused and it is from this area that the largest part of our reductions now comes.

NATO decided in May that the United Kingdom should join and lead the new multinational Rapid Reaction Corps. This challenging role is welcomed by the Army and well suited to our all-volunteer professional forces. In addition to providing the commander and a significant proportion of the headquarters we shall also be providing some corps troops, a powerful armoured division based in Germany, a more flexible, mechanised division based in the United Kingdom and a strong air mobile brigade based in a separate multinational division.

This NATO decision was the essential component in deciding the future strength of the Army and enabled me to announce on 4 June that by the mid-1990s the strength of the Army would be 116,000. In deciding this, we also took account of our needs for the direct defence of the United Kingdom; for responsibilities overseas in our dependent territories and elsewhere; and to help the Royal Ulster Constabulary to uphold the law in Northern Ireland. It was then possible to start consulting widely within the Army on how the restructuring should be achieved. I should now like to report to the House on the outcome of this consultation.

I shall deal first with the supporting corps, which are often less noticed but which play a vital role in the fighting effectiveness of our Army. We have already announced our plans covering personnel and administration. We will be bringing together in a new Adjutant General's Corps, the Royal Army Pay Corps, the Women's Royal Army Corps, the Corps of Royal Military Police, the Military Provost Staff Corps, the Royal Army Educational Corps and the Army Legal Corps.

We now intend to concentrate the support functions into two new corps. The first, for service support, will comprise much of the existing Royal Corps of Transport, the Royal Army Ordnance Corps, the Royal Pioneer Corps and the Army Catering Corps, and will handle all aspects of keeping combat forces supplied in the field. The second, responsible for equipment support, will be centred upon the existing Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. The effect of these changes will be to reduce the number of support corps from 18 to 10.

There are 10 Army districts in the United Kingdom each commanded by a general. This number will be significantly reduced; as a first step, a new combined Wales and western district will form in September replacing three existing districts. We shall also rationalise the Army's training organisation, concentrating training on a much smaller number of larger and more efficient establishments.

We are anxious to manage this reduction of more than 40,000 in the Army over the next four years in the most considerate and fair manner. Most of the reductions will be achieved by natural turnover, but there will be significant redundancies particularly affecting middle rank officers and senior non-commissioned officers. As far as possible, we shall seek voluntary redundancies but some may need to be compulsory if we are to maintain a proper balance of ages, ranks and skills in the Army for the 1990s. The normal redundancy terms will apply; all those leaving the Army will have access to full resettlement assistance. My right hon. Friend the Minister for the Armed Forces is giving details of redundancies in the other services in a separate written answer today.

I now move on to a subject that concerns both those leaving and those continuing to serve in the Army. Under this Government, there has, over the past decade, been a welcome major extension of home ownership, including new forms of co-ownership and part ownership, made available through new organisations in the voluntary housing sector. These developments have not been matched by new opportunities for service personnel. The proportion of home owners in the Army is on the whole low. We intend to make comparable changes in the housing opportunities open to service men and women, and to bring service housing policy up to date with developments in the community.

The Government have always ensured that service personnel are properly rewarded for the work that they do. We also wish service men and women to have the best possible insurance cover for serious injury as well as death, off duty as well as on; and we are planning new initiatives to bring such arrangements within the reach of all our services.

I now move on to reserves. They make a vital contribution to our defence effort. They need to adapt to changes in the Army as a whole and have regard to how many they can realistically expect to recruit and retain given the unfavourable demographic trends that will face us. While we have taken no final decisions on the Territorial Army, we do not wish to turn away willing volunteers, but we envisage that the long-term future strength will settle at between about 60,000 and 65,000 against 75,000 today. We are studying the best mix of regulars and reserves and we are consulting with the Territorial Army associations—I hope to make further announcements on the way ahead for the TA later this year.

I shall now deal with the changes in front-line forces, I deal first with the particular issue of the Gurkhas. In May

1989, my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) announced the plan to retain some 4,000 Gurkhas, following withdrawal from Hong Kong, but he also made it clear that it might be necessary to reconsider this if circumstances changed, such as the size of the British Army as a whole.

This is now the position, and we have reviewed our plans for the Brigade, along with those for the rest of the Army. The Gurkhas play an important role in Hong Kong and Brunei. We intend to retain the Gurkhas within the British Army after 1997; but we believe, subject again to any major change in circumstances, that a smaller force of around 2,500, based on two infantry battalions and support units, would be more appropriate. As a first step, two Gurkha battalions will amalgamate in 1992.

Reductions in the combat arms will reflect the needs of the new force structure. There will, for example, be no change to the present number of six Army Air Corps regiments, reflecting the increased importance of the armed helicopter on the future battlefield. By the mid-1990s, there will be 11 armoured or armoured reconnaissance regiments, compared with 19 today. The present infantry strength is 50 United Kingdom and five Gurkha infantry battalions. Next year they will be reduced to 46 and four respectively, and progressively thereafter, until by 1997 there will be a total of 38 battalions, of which two will be Gurkha. Together with the three Royal Marine Commandos, we shall then have available a total of 41 infantry roled units.

The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment will remain unchanged, and the Life Guards and The Blues and Royals will form a combined armoured reconnaissance regiment retaining their separate identities. In the Royal Armoured Corps, the Queen's Dragoon Guards, the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards and the 9th/12th Royal Lancers will be unaffected.

The six regiments of Hussars will amalgamate to form three regiments, the two regiments of Lancers will amalgamate and the four Royal Tank Regiments will amalgamate for form two regiments.

The Royal Regiment of Artillery will reduce from 22 regiments to 16, the Corps of Royal Engineers will reduce from 15 regiments to 10 and the Royal Corps of Signals will reduce from 15 regiments to 11.

In the infantry, we plan to make changes over the next four years, as follows. In accordance with precedent, the second battalion of each of the Grenadier, Coldstream and Scots Guards will be placed in suspended animation. The Irish and Welsh Guards are not affected. The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, the Royal Anglian Regiment, the Light Infantry and the Royal Green Jackets will all reduce from three battalions to two. The Queen's Regiment will amalgamate with The Royal Hampshire Regiment and form a regiment of two battalions. The Parachute Regiment is unchanged.

Within the Prince of Wales's division, recruiting from Wales, the midlands and the west Country, the Cheshire Regiment will amalgamate with the Staffordshire Regiment and the Gloucestershire Regiment with the Duke of Edinburgh's Royal Regiment. The following will be unaffected: the Devonshire and Dorset Regiment; the Royal Welch Fusiliers; the Royal Regiment of Wales; the Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Regiment.

In Scotland, the Queen's Own Highlanders and the Gordon Highlanders will amalgamate, as will the Royal Scots and the King's Own Scottish Borderers. The Royal Highland Fusiliers, the Black Watch, and the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders are unchanged.

In the King's Division we are taking the opportunity to bring the Ulster Defence Regiment more fully into the Army by merging it with the Royal Irish Rangers. The new regiment will comprise one battalion for worldwide service and up to seven battalions for service in Northern Ireland only; its recommended title is the Royal Irish Regiment.

In the remainder of the King's Division covering the north of England: the King's Own Royal Border Regiment, the King's Regiment, the Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire, the Green Howards, the Queen's Lancashire Regiment and the Duke of Wellington's Regiment are unchanged.

The restructuring of the Army along the lines that I have described has inevitably required painful choices and difficult decisions. Although there are no actual disbandments in the armoured or infantry regiments, I none the less recognise that there will be sadness at the amalgamations and at the possible loss of some famous names. Everyone who recognises the great benefits that flow from regimental loyalty and tradition understands that—but also understands that, as with amalgamations in the past, that same spirit is carried forward into the re-formed regiments. That has been the strength of the regimental system, which we are determined to maintain.

The Army that emerges in the mid-1990s will meet the challenges for the next century. It will have a new and demanding role. It will be fully manned. It will be properly supported, and it will be well equipped. I am in no doubt that it will continue to offer an attractive career to the high-quality young men and women who have served us so well in the past, and whom we shall continue to need in the future.

I commend my statement to the House.

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan): I thank the Secretary of State for his statement. I imagine that the House will wish to return to this topic after the summer recess, in the debates on the estimates and when we have a chance to see the fine print of some of the financial aspects.

First, may I ask the Secretary of State a question about the strategic context in which he placed his statement? Can he tell us what he now considers to be the warning times that are available, and that allow him to make the cuts to which he has referred? Will he also tell us what proportion of the costs of the Rapid Reaction Corps, in terms of expenditure and personnel, will be borne by other NATO members?

We recognise the logic behind the organisation and composition of the Rapid Reaction Corps; the House will want an assurance, however, that the burden is being shared fairly between ourselves and our allies. We support the establishment of the new Adjutant General's Corps and the other two corps proposed for service and equipment. Surely, however, the Secretary of State will recognise the disappointment that is felt in Wales about the disappearance of the Army district into headquarters in Shrewsbury.

As early as last June, in the debates on the estimates, I said that changes in the regimental structure would be necessary; but, nevertheless, that there was a need to maintain a system of local recruitment, with all the consequent benefits for morale and retention levels. The

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right hon. Gentleman must appreciate that the reduction in the ranks of the General Officer Commanding Scotland, and the disappearance of the Welsh military district, could undermine that dimension of the Army in the nations that make up this United Kingdom.

It is with great reluctance that we accept the need to reduce the size of the Gurkhas. Will the Secretary of State ensure that assistance will continue to be given to Nepal to compensate for the fall in remittances from troops?

Our mailbags have brought a continual stream of letters from members of the Territorial Army. Will the Secretary of State give us an assurance that an early decision will be made on the review of the Territorials and the Reserves? We know that the current consultations are a source of considerable anxiety to all those involved with the Territorial Army.

The whole House hopes that the regimental reorganisation will be achieved with the minimum disruption. Certainly, we recognise that the decision not to disband any of the regiments, but to merge and amalgamate them, will be welcomed across the country, and we pay due tribute to the right hon. Gentleman for his efforts in that regard. In other words, there is no party division on this issue and we are grateful that so many of the regiments that our constituents support are ready to go into the new structure.

The lives of large numbers of men and women will be blighted by the changes. Their service careers will be at an end. Will the right hon. Gentleman guarantee that redundancy and severance payments will reflect the straitened circumstances of the economy at this time? When redundancies of this type were last made, the levels of unemployment were not as high as they are today and job opportunities outside the services were much greater.

Will the Secretary of State ensure that attempts are made to improve housing tenure for those continuing in the services, with generous housing and education resettlement allowances for those affected? Will he also ensure that retraining is in excess of the 28 days currently available? The skills of some of the infantry personnel affected by the cuts may need broadening and deepening, and that may require far more than the 28 days afforded at present.

Will the right hon. Gentleman do his best to see that uncertainty and doubt is removed as soon as possible and that all those concerned are told quickly? Will he provide service personnel and their families with a charter for their rights as citizens which is more comprehensive and convincing than that offered yesterday to civilians?

Mr. King: I have noted the hon. Gentleman's comments. He said that he would want to study my remarks and, as he knows, I have today published a White Paper entitled "Britain's Army for the 90s" which deals with many of the points that he wants addressed. There are no easy decisions in this matter and while I understand the enthusiasm and support expressed by some people as part of their loyalty to regiments, I know that the very people who cheer also feel for those regiments which will merge. That is an inevitable consequence of a change of this kind and we have tried to handle it in the most sensitive way. I noted what the hon. Gentleman said about the way in which we have tried wherever possible to avoid disbandments.

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for noticing what we have said about housing. Service personnel, by virtue of the lives they lead and what is required of them as part of their service life, are particularly disadvantaged in terms of opportunities available to people with more fixed place occupations to get on the home ownership ladder. We are keen to see how that issue can be tackled, and I assure the hon. Gentleman that we shall be pursuing it energetically.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall do my best to call as many hon. Members as possible. We have three other statements to follow, so I shall allow questions on this matter to continue until 4.30, bearing in mind that there will be a two-day debate when the House resumes. I intend to give some precedence today to those who, sadly, were not called in the Army debate on 1 July.

Mr. George Younger (Ayr): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many people will deduce that his statement today represents a difficult job well done? While there is sadness about the amalgamations, hon. Members in all parts of the House are pleased that he has managed to find some extra battalions to reduce the overstretch in the infantry.

Is my right hon. Friend satisfied that the recruiting organisations for the Gurkhas will be able to cope with the much smaller number of troops on board?

While I am pleased that the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards will not be affected, what will be the position of the Scottish-recruited artillery regiments? Can he comment on their future?

Mr. King: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for those comments. I was aware of his concerns about the problem of overstretch and commitments and I am grateful for his support for what I have been able to announce.

Discussions about my announcement are now taking place on the Gurkhas with the Governments concerned —Nepal and Brunei. We are anxious to see that in the rundown, which will be gradual over the next four years, we meet the point that my right hon. Friend raised.

My right hon. Friend also raised a fair point on the artillery aspect because people focus on infantry and armour. I confirm that the contribution of Scotland in the Royal Artillery is significant in terms of the two Scottish regiments, neither of which is affected.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): Does the Secretary of State agree that the continued existence of the regimental system, important though its contribution may be, is necessarily subordinate to the need for a coherent defence policy for the United Kingdom in the future? If that is the case, why are we considering these proposals for the Army without a full-scale defence review involving all three services? Is it not necessary now to identify our commitments, both actual and potential? Without such a review, is it not the case that these proposals, however well intentioned, are bound to be seen as patchwork and piecemeal?

Mr. King: I thought that the hon. and learned Gentleman had attended our earlier gatherings. We have carried out a complete assessment of our defence requirements against the background of the changes in the Warsaw pact. It was an across-the-board strategic

assessment, which was included in the White Paper "Britain's Defence for the 90s" which we published recently and, if the hon. and learned Gentleman reads the command paper that I have published today, he will see in the opening paragraph a digest of the assessment on which the changes are based.

It is not just we who have conducted an assessment: the crucial assessment is in the NATO alliance and in its response to the changed situation. There has been the most intensive work in NATO, out of which arise the conclusions on lower force levels, greater flexibility and more mobility and the agreement by the NATO Defence Ministers for the United Kingdom to take on the role in the Rapid Reaction Corps.

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East:) Is my right hon. Friend aware that, although this is inevitably a sad day for some old and distinguished regiments, most people have accepted that in the changed circumstances in which we live, much of this was inevitable and they will be grateful to my right hon. Friend for the sensitive way in which he has introduced the changes. For the avoidance of doubt, will he tell us that he has had the advice of the chiefs of staff, the Chief of the General Staff and the Army Board, that they are content with these changes and that their military advice is that we can undertake the commitments that we have and are likely to have with an Army of the proposed size over the next decade?

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he said. I can confirm that I am closely advised by the Chief of the Defence Staff and the defence staffs who have responsibility across all the services. I should like to pay tribute to the Army Board for the way in which it has dealt with these difficult restructuring issues. I think that the House will accept that, although the publicity may have been about the difficult, sensitive and emotional issues of regiments and battalions, this represents a wide restructuring approaching all the facets of the Army's activities and its civilian support, which is very important. Significant parts of the Army could not work without civilian support. Such support is not simply in those sitting in the Ministry of Defence, but in those involved in many of the activities on which the Army depends.

Sir Patrick Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Is the Secretary of State aware that in Yorkshire there will be much relief and appreciation that its three fine regiments —the Green Howards, the Duke of Wellington's and the Prince of Wales's Own—remain unchanged by his statement. However, is he aware that even those who understand his overall objective and the difficulties in the way of its attainment remain concerned that the savings in teeth arms are not proportionate to those in the rear echelon and that the result may be overstretch in peace time, as his right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) undoubtedly feared, and a dangerous shortage in times of tension?

Mr. King: We have learnt lessons from the Gulf about the difference between the front-line numbers and the rear support. For example, one multiple-launch rocket system unit manned by three men can fire the same volume of ammunition as an artillery regiment firing conventional guns manned by 450 men. The key requirement in pure military terms is what is the support structure needed to ensure that that one unit is kept supplied. Therefore, the conventional ratio of numbers in the front line and numbers in support may be rather different.

I did an interesting historical check. At El Alamein, we had 882 conventional guns. In the Gulf we had 72 similar artillery guns together with units of MLRS. The fire capability revealed that one tenth the number of people can fire four times the weight of ammunition.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Will my right hon. Friend reconsider the proposed amalgamation of the Cheshire Regiment and the Staffordshire Regiment? I remind him that the Staffordshire Regiment is already an amalgamation of the North and South Staffordshire Regiments in 1958, that it has shown splendid service in Northern Ireland and, more recently, in the Gulf, and that its recruiting figures are very good. The suspicion will remain that there has been political pressure resulting in the dropping of the proposal to amalgamate the Cheshire Regiment with the Royal Welch Fusiliers, and there will be much regret in Staffordshire and the west midlands at these proposals.

Mr. King: Everything that my hon. Friend says about the quality of the Staffordshire Regiment is very fair, and I understand his point entirely. This is a very sad statement to have to make because it means that in amalgamations some very good regiments will have to face such a prospect. When my hon. Friend has a chance to read the command paper he will see that the Army Board in its consultations and in its decisions studied very carefully a range of factors. A number of hon. Members in an earlier debate stressed the importance of the ability to recruit as one of the criteria—clearly the ability to maintain the numbers required by a regiment is very important—but other factors must also be considered. This is the decision reached by the Army Board and—tough as it is—it cannot be changed.

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): My party shares the concern of a number of senior and distinguished military officers about the drastic cut in the strength of the Army. I mention immediately the amalgamation of the Royal Irish Rangers and the Ulster Defence Regiment. The Secretary of State will know that any change of such a nature is viewed almost traditionally with suspicion in Northern Ireland. That was the initial reaction of many people when we heard of the amalgamation. None the less, it will be with pride that members of the Ulster Defence Regiment take their place in a royal regiment. I believe that that is something that the brave men and women who stand between the terrorist and the law-abiding community fully deserve and have earned by their service during the past 21 years.

Will the Secretary of State confirm that career structures within what is presently the Ulster Defence Regiment will be equal to those in any other regiment? Most important, can he reassure me—as his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has already done—that there will be no tampering with the part-time element which is presently a part of the Ulster Defence Regiment and that it will be used for as long as it is required to support the Royal Ulster Constabulary in its fight against terrorism?

Mr. King: I am very grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I understand entirely his opening remark—everything of

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this nature is viewed with suspicion in Northern Ireland when it is announced. I genuinely believe—and I am entitled to say that I have an opportunity to observe the proposed merger from both sides—that it is an imaginative and constructive approach. It is in the interests of both regiments and very much in the interests of career development for many in the UDR who will now have a chance perhaps also to become involved in the worldwide regiment.

The UDR will also be able to draw on some of the senior officer capabilities within what at the moment is two, but which will become one battalion of the Royal Irish Regiment, which is the recommended name. So I am grateful for what the hon. Gentleman said. He will know that there has been a move towards more full-time and rather less part-time service, and that trend may continue, but we certainly wish to maintain a significant part-time element. There is no question of undermining that.

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): Does my right hon. Friend accept that, in mounting the recent expeditionary force to the Gulf with only one division, all the ancillary services in the Army were stretched to the limit? Does he recognise, therefore, that some of us do not believe in the basic calculations on which he propounded his statement?

Will my right hon. Friend ponder in the next ten weeks, before we have a chance to debate the matter fully, that he will get his White Paper not because his hon. Friends approve of it but because the Opposition, with their new-found interest in defence, will vote for cuts?

Mr. King: I know of my hon. Friend's close interest in such matters. We learned a lot of lessons out in the Gulf; there was a lot of stretch involved in providing for our forces, and it flowed from undermanned units and from equipment not always of the quality and reliability that we would have wished to ensure for our forces.

What will flow from the reforms is that we shall have what I described in my statement as a powerful armoured division—the most powerful that this country has ever had. There will be three square brigades, two armoured regiments, two armoured infantry regiments in each brigade, with Challenger 2, and the upgraded Challenger 1—on which there will be substantial expenditure in the years immediately ahead. Every armoured infantry regiment will be equipped with Warrior, backed up by the AS90 howitzer, MLRS—the multiple-launch rocket system—and the high-velocity missile Starstreak. All that will give us a capacity significantly greater than we were able to send to the Gulf.

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon): Will the Secretary of State accept that his decision to maintain the Royal Welch Fusiliers and to cut the throat of the suggestion that they be amalgamated with the Cheshire Regiment will be very much welcomed in Wales? Can he tell us how many jobs will be lost in Wales as a result of the closure of district headquarters, and what prospects a redundant soldier will have of being rehoused by a local authority?

Mr. King: I am grateful for, although not surprised by, the right hon. and learned Gentleman's opening remark. I have a feeling that about 35 jobs will be lost, but I shall check that figure for him.

Mr. Robert Boscawen (Somerton and Frome): Will my right hon. Friend accept that we feel that he and his colleagues have had an exceedingly difficult time in reducing the size of the forces? Of course, there will be many disappointments, but my right hon. Friend is to be congratulated on retaining some of the famous regiments. Will he confirm that all the soldiers concerned, over as wide a range as possible, are satisfied that an army of 116,000 men is sufficient to meet all possible unforeseen eventualities?

Will my right hon. Friend answer a question about the future of the Foot Guards? A reduction by three battalions represents more than 25 per cent. of the existing Foot Guards. Will they be able to continue to carry out their present public duties as well as their valuable service as full-time soldiers? What does my right hon. Friend mean by "suspended animation"? Will that mean, as it has meant in the past, elimination?

Mr. King: The phrase "suspended animation" was used at the specific request of the Guards Regiments concerned. At their request, they remain on the Army List.

My hon. Friend also asked about our commitments. I could not have presented the White Paper and the command paper to the House unless I had satisfied myself absolutely on that question. The implications of what has happened in Europe, and of the collapse of the Warsaw pact, are profound. They affect the structure of warning time—to which the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) referred—the alert state of our forces, the requirement for forces to be in particular states of readiness, and their availability to discharge other roles, too. My hon. Friend will know that, in the past, it has always been practice to draw forces from Germany to serve in Northern Ireland. We now have much greater flexibility than we had before and that is one of the key factors.

My hon. Friend asked about Foot Guards public duties. We shall be examining that point but, in any case, while they are losing the second battalions and coming down to five regiments, they will receive an additional increment in terms of extra strength to help them with their public duties.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): The Secretary of State will understand that there will be dismay and anger in Scotland at the fact that four of the seven Scottish regiments will be affected by amalgamation and cuts. The changes thus place what seems to be a disproportionately heavy burden on Scotland. Why did the right hon. Gentleman choose to tackle the more popular, better recruited regiments, rather than concentrate cuts on the poorer, less well recruited regiments? What will the time scale be and what numbers will be involved in the amalgamated regiments? Will the right hon. Gentleman accept that the cuts will not be acceptable in Scotland, and will he think again?

Mr. King: I understand the hon. Gentleman's disappointment, but he should look at the figures, which were drawn to our attention by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Sir G. Younger). Four Scottish regiments are to amalgamate to form two and three will remain, so that there will be a total of five instead of seven. On the cavalry side, the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards are

one of only three cavalry regiments that will be unaffected by the change. Similarly, the two Scottish regiments of the Royal Artillery are unaffected.

The hon. Gentleman may be interested to know that, following the changes, Scotland, with 9 per cent. of the United Kingdom's population will have 16·6 per cent., as opposed to 18 per cent., of the infantry. Its percentage of the cavalry will increase from 10 per cent. to 13·5 per cent. and its share of the artillery will increase from 13·5 per cent. to 18·8 per cent. Although there is obviously disappointment about famous regiments, no honest, objective observer could say that the changes are unfair to Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I am glad that my right hon. Friend has included additional battalions in his decision, but there will be profound disappointment in Scotland at the fact that we are to lose two battalions rather than one, as we originally expected. Why has my right hon. Friend decided to amalgamate the King's Own Scottish Borderers with the Royal Scots, which will make an enormous recruiting area in the south, and the Queen's Own Highlanders—already an amalgamated regiment—with the Gordons, which makes an enormous recruiting area in the north? Other permutations would seem to have been much more acceptable.

Mr. King: I well understand my hon. Friend's obvious personal disappointment, and I know of his great interest in these matters. May I say that I did not "decide"? The matter has been the subject of the most extensive consultation and consideration, and it is the collective judgment of the Army Board that these are the most appropriate amalgamations to make. The decision was based on a whole range of criteria which the Army Board considered; it was not made on the basis of some whim. I pay tribute to the Army Board and to those who work for it for the effort that they put in to this extremely difficult, and, I think, in all the circumstances, extremely well conducted review.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I remain concerned about the implications of the cuts, and I suspect that the nation and the Secretary of State may live to regret tampering with the highly successful Scottish regiments to which the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) referred.

May I invite the right hon. Gentleman to say a little more about housing? Home ownership is not the whole story, and the fact of tens of thousands of people leaving the armed forces as a consequence of the changes will present serious housing difficulties in the rented sector. Will the right hon. Gentleman reflect on the problems of a constituent of mine who came to see me on Saturday. The wife and young child of a Royal Scot who is just leaving the forces after serving in the Gulf now find themselves homeless and in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. Surely there ought to be a safer, more secure and more dignified future for people leaving the armed forces.

Mr. King: That is precisely what I said. We are concerned about those who may be leaving the forces and those who remain in the services, but want to secure their own housing when they retire from the forces. I understand the problem, and I want to see how we can improve the help that we give to service men. What the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) has described is not an unknown problem.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): While my right hon. Friend's comments about home ownership are welcome, he is aware that there have been several attempts to improve home ownership in the Army, but they have—alas—failed. Is my right hon. Friend aware that two features will determine whether the scheme works: first, whether it is based on where a soldier is rather than on some attempted absentee landlordism in a property elsewhere and secondly, on whether the Army can recover the quarter at the end of each posting? I leave my right hon. Friend with this thought: if he wants the scheme to work—as I am certain he does—it will probably require legislation.

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He has performed a great service to our service men through his absolutely relentless interest and pressure on that subject. I am very serious about that. I hope that we can carry forward some of the ideas that he has been active in canvassing—perhaps with amendment. The difficulty lies with service life and how we can help people in the services to keep their feet on the ladder of home ownership. That is what we want to do and we are determined to find a way to do it.

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): Will the Secretary of State put the House out of its misery and, with regard to redundancies, tell us how many are involved in "considerable" and how much that will cost? In relation to the Secretary of State's reply to the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger), is he satisfied that there will be commitments to prevent a recurrence of what happened to the Gurkhas when people who were within months of completing terms of duty lost all their pension entitlements which caused poverty in the hills? Will he ensure that that does not happen this time? Will he answer the questions from my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) about the availability of local authority housing because my constituents who are serving in the Coldstream Guards will have difficulty in being housed and I imagine that people will face similar difficulties in other constituencies that are affected by the cuts?

Mr. King: To deal with the hon. Gentleman's latter point first, he will see in the command paper some comments on several different approaches that we will adopt to help solve those problems, including ways in which we might be able to employ parts of the present Army and defence estate—if that is surplus—which might be helpful in certain areas.

I note the hon. Gentleman's serious point about the Gurkhas. The redundancy figure in the command paper is a possible 10,000 spread over four years. I cannot give the hon. Gentleman the cost, because that will obviously depend on the timing, ranks and on the length of service of the people concerned.

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): Why are the three best infantry regiments in the British Army—the Grenadier Guards, the Coldstream Guards and the Scots Guards—being asked to take 50 per cent. cuts?

Mr. King: That is not quite accurate. Although they are losing their second battalions, they will receive an increment to help with their public duties.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): The Secretary of State will know that I represent this House on the independent board of visitors of the military corrective training centre in Colchester—

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): Among others.

Mr. Cook: Yes, and the hon. and learned Member for Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck) serves on that body as well. I will confine my question to that specific area of responsibility, despite my interest in other aspects of the statement.

When the Secretary of State consulted about this issue, did he consult with Brigadier Bell, the inspector of military establishments? I understand that the brigadier agrees with me that it would be undesirable to absorb the Military Provost Staff Corps into the Adjutant-General's Corps. As the pocket philosopher Kilroy, whose comments are carved on walls, would state, "You has your catchers and you has your keepers and you know not never to mix them, no matter what." There will be dismay about today's announcement of the surrender of the neutrality of the MPSC. Lieutenant-Colonel Nick Emson of the Coldstream Guards has said:

"to absorb the MPSC into the Adjutant-General's Corps . . . would do much to nullify the rehabilitation work"

that is being undertaken at Colchester. Will the Secretary of State reconsider, even at this late stage?

Mr. King: I have not had the discussion and consultation to which the hon. Gentleman refers. I was talking to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland about this matter as the hon. Gentleman was raising the point. I should like to look into the matter, and I am grateful to him for drawing it to my attention.

Mr. Cook: I thank the Secretary of State.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): How is the Ulster Defence Regiment to be more fully merged into the British Army by joining up with the Royal Irish Rangers? The Act that set up that regiment makes it clear that members of the force shall be members of the armed forces of the Crown. Does the right hon. Gentleman really think that that sort of argument will wear in Northern Ireland? Is he aware of the deep outrage, concern and anger among UDR members and their families, especially when 240 members have been killed by the IRA in the action taken against them? Could he tell us whether, after the vicious campaign that was launched against the Ulster Defence Regiment by Dublin, Dublin was consulted on the decision? Was it raised at the Anglo-Irish Conference? Is this part of the overall Anglo-Irish Agreement?

Mr. King: The answer to the latter point is no. This is an Army decision. Those concerned who have a legitimate interest in such matters would have been informed at the proper time were it not for an advanced leak of this matter. It was not a matter of outside consultation, other than with those within the Army and the colonels of the regiments concerned, in precisely the same way as other regiments in the British Army have addressed the problem.

The hon. Gentleman's influence is obviously substantial and a significant element in the Province. I ask him to look objectively at this matter. He knows of my interest in and support for the Province. He can take it from me that I genuinely believe that this is not some underhand, seditious move. I have bowed to none in my admiration for the courage and bravery of the UDR. I also know by heart the number of part-time and regular members of the UDR who have lost their lives—some of the bravest of the brave, as I have said on many occasions.

I genuinely believe that this proposal is in the interests of those who served in the UDR, as it is in the interests of the Royal Irish Rangers, who will merge to form the regiment. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will take it from me that it is not a hidden agenda. It came to me through the Army advisers and Army staff. It is a very imaginative and constructive approach indeed, in the interests of those who serve in both regiments.

Mr. Seamus Mallon: (Newry and Armagh): Many people in Ireland who would wish to give the Secretary of State's announcement a fair wind will be aware of the paradox that, on the day when he dispenses with the services of 40,000 professional soldiers, he reinforces the part-time element within the new regiment to be called the Royal Irish Regiment. Is it not outdated, cumbersome and perhaps dangerous to have a part-time militia within a full-time regiment? Is the Secretary of State aware that the history of Ireland clearly shows that each part-time militia that was formed, for whatever worthy motives, ended up as a rather embarrassing failure?

Mr. King: I note the hon. Gentleman's comments. I do not want to misrepresent him, but I take it that he also recognises that there could be merits viewed dispassionately in the proposal. I take encouragement from that, because, as I said, I genuinely think that it is an imaginative proposal. I thought hard about it. It was not one that I originated; it came to me from the Army staff. It is a very good idea indeed, and I am very grateful for and encouraged by the welcome it has received on both sides of the House.

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme): Will my right hon. Friend explain how the cuts announced today will represent a 35 per cent. cut in the teeth arms of the British Army, yet only a 15 per cent. cut in the strength of MOD civil servants and civilians who, after the implementation of the cuts, will be stronger in numbers than the entire British Army? Is he aware that many people in this country and in the House would like to see those proportions reversed?

Mr. King: I have read my hon. Friend's letter in the newspaper. He may be doing a great disservice to those who are called "civilians" in the Ministry of Defence. I am sure that he would not include in his comments the merchant seamen who manned our Royal Fleet Auxiliary throughout the Gulf war, who are "MOD civilians". I am sure that my hon. Friend would not want to see their numbers slashed. I am not sure whether he includes in his statement those in civilian clothes who stand shoulder to shoulder with service men in uniform to repair Tornado engines and Challenger tanks in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers and in the workshops at RAF bases where civilians and service men work side by side.

I am determined to ensure that the core establishment of officials at the Ministry of Defence is as lean and effective as I can get it. My hon. Friend might be interested to know that the total number of those classed as civilians in the Ministry of Defence has been halved since 1980. I

would accept this criticism—it is something of a self-inflicted wound. I know that my hon. Friend believes in the importance of the nuclear deterrent, but all those who work at our atomic weapons establishments are also classed as civil servants and I do not think that my hon. Friend would like to see that group disbanded. We should look closely at the question of categorisation and take a clearer view of what we really mean by civilians, who are my hon. Friend's real target, rather than muddling the issue in a broader-based attack.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Secretary of State aware that there is nowt so funny as politics? In 1983, the Tory Government said, "Vote Labour—and they will cut defence". In 1987, they repeated that message, "Vote Labour and you will have no defence." But today the Secretary of State has taken a scythe to the battalions—so he must not lecture us any more about Labour conference resolutions. It is time the Secretary of State understood that he is the one who has used the big knife.

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman's contribution, as he desperately tries to fan some spirit back into Labour's defence policy, does not fool any of my hon. Friends. We are making some reductions—overall, about 20 per cent. —in our manpower defences as a prudent and sensible response, but we are not making anything like that reduction in our expenditure on equipment, because we are determined to ensure that our forces of the future are well equipped, well supported and able to discharge any role that we look to them to carry out. It would be extremely helpful if the hon. Gentleman could at some stage enlighten the House about whether his party now has any defence policy.

Sir Marcus Fox (Shipley): As someone who served in two of the three Yorkshire regiments, in the Duke of Wellington's and in the Green Howards, may I advise my right hon. Friend that there will be great relief and joy in the county tonight not least because we have a Secretary of State who is prepared to listen and to respond to the representations that are made to him? Does he agree that anyone who sees those regiments in training is bound to be impressed by their dedication, skill and loyalty?

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and impressed by the fact that he served in two of Yorkshire's regiments. I shall not ask the reason why, but I understand that his loyalty, although shared, is unalloyed.

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): Although there is clearly a strong case for reducing the number of artillery regiments, does the Secretary of State accept that there will be great sadness in my constituency if it means that the Royal Artillery will have to leave its historic birthplace at Woolwich because many of my constituents regard Woolwich without the Gunners as being rather like Blackpool without the tower? Can the right hon. Gentleman offer any encouragement on that point?

Mr. King: As the hon. Gentleman knows, we are looking. We have to look and, if we are to ensure that we keep the most effective front line, it is our duty to those in the front line to examine all our support and base arrangements in that way. I cannot, at this stage, give the hon. Gentleman any encouragement on that point.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): Bearing in mind the fact that the crucial NATO meeting took place only in May, I commend my right hon. Friend for presenting his statement to the House before we rise for the summer recess and, on the face of it, for coming up with a sensible and well thought out package of changes. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the success of "Options for Change" and his leadership of it will depend on ending up with a higher capital investment in front-line service men than we have at present?

Mr. King: We met on 29 May, so the statement has been prepared even more quickly than my hon. Friend suggests. It was not easy. I was somewhat encouraged to read what Lord Wolseley said on 25 April 1887 when addressing the annual dinner of the Press Club:

> "From my experience I advise any of you who contemplate changing your profession to have nothing to do with organising the British Army, for of all the difficult offices, of all the thankless duties which can devolve upon a human being, that of being an Army organiser and reformer is the worst."

Therefore, I am encouraged by the support that I have had from my hon. Friend and others in what Lord Wolseley described as this thankless task.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): As a Welsh Member, may I thank the Secretary of State for preserving the Royal Welch Fusiliers? It is greatly appreciated. But cannot he gauge the sense of anger and frustration in Brecon in my constituency, where headquarters, Wales is to be closed? What would happen if HQ Scotland was to be closed? Wrath would descend on the Secretary of State's head. Does he agree that recruitment in Wales has been extremely good probably better than in any other part of Britain, because we have had our own HQ? Will he recognise that and give me good reasons why HQ Wales has been closed, with a great loss of jobs? Is there any truth in the rumours that the school of infantry is to move to my constituency from Salisbury plain?

Mr. King: On a day when, as a result of the determination of the Army Board, Wales has not been hit hard, the hon. Gentleman opened by thanking me for the survival of the Royal Welch Fusiliers and then berated me for the fact that perhaps 25 to 30 jobs may be lost. There will still be an office in Brecon. We have sought to deal with the matter as sensitively as possible. I should say politely that the hon. Gentleman's remark about recruitment was unwise. I should not have thought that the ability of regiments to recruit was based on the presence of a headquarters office. To say so demeans what I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would wish to praise—the calibre and reputation of the regiments themselves.

Mr. Paul Channon (Southend, West): Can my right hon. Friend clarify the apparently confused position of the Household Cavalry? It is not to amalgamate but to "combine". Does my right hon. Friend accept that at least at first sight it seems that it will be extremely difficult to retain a proper career structure? Is it expected that people will spend half of their careers in the mounted regiment? Surely that would be a disastrous course to suggest to people who wish to recruit. Can my right hon. Friend further explain why the Blues and Royals, which was one of the three regiments to amalgamate on the last occasion, should be asked to do something similar this time?

Mr. King: I understand my right hon. Friend's loyalty and anxiety. The outcome, which is a difficult one, was

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based on the absolute determination of the Army Board to maintain the mounted regiment. While the regiments of the Life Guards and the Blues and Royals are to combine, the size of each part is to be enhanced. So, instead of three squadrons in each and one headquarters squadron, there will be two squadrons of the Life Guards, two squadrons of the Blues and Royals and one headquarters squadron plus the three squadrons of the mounted regiment. Instead of the present 11 squadrons there will be eight. It is the clear view of my advisers and those closely involved with the regiments that with good will and support from other cavalry regiments, the change will ensure that the regiments can continue.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry that it has not been possible to call all those who wished to put a question to the Secretary of State. I shall certainly bear them in mind when we debate the matter again after the recess.

Local Government Finance (England)

4.34 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Michael Heseltine): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the Government's proposals for the local authority finance settlement for England for 1992-93, and about our proposals for local government in the years ahead.

Two years ago, local authorities in England spent £32·3 billion. This year they have budgeted to spend £39·9 billion. That is an increase of 23·5 per cent. in just two years. In anyone's terms it is a very substantial increase.

Over the same period, the external support distributed by Government to local authorities has increased by even more: this year alone, it has increased by a third. We are paying an extra grant to enable councils to cut their community charges by £140. We are also providing more than £2·5 billion of support this year to individual charge payers through the community charge reduction and community charge benefit schemes. Overall, the net contribution from local people to local expenditure now stands at just 15 per cent.

We have made it possible for councils to provide decent levels of service at lower community charges. The councils have to play their part, too. Local government is not immune from the pressures and restraints faced by everyone else. Central Government, businesses and individuals must all plan to spend only what they can afford. Local government must do the same.

Against that background, the Government believe that local authorities in England together ought to spend no more in 1992-93 than £41·8 billion. That would be 7·2 per cent. more than the corresponding figure for total standard spending this year. With inflation falling even before next year to 4 per cent., that is a realistic increase: it takes account of the pressures on local authority budgets, and of the opportunities which they have to improve the efficiency and value for money of the services which they provide.

I propose to set the level of external support distributed by the Government to councils next year at £33·1 billion. That also is 7·2 per cent. more than this year, including the extra amount which we paid to cut the community charge by £140. That should ensure that next year, overall, local people will again not have to contribute more than 15 per cent. of council spending through the community charge. As in previous years, I shall announce our proposals for distribution of the Government grant in the autumn.

There are still too many authorities that budget each year to increase their spending regardless of the consequences for charge payers. We have protected many community charge payers by capping, and many councils were persuaded this year to moderate their increases to avoid being capped. Next year, if authorities budget excessively or for an excessive increase in their budget, I intend, as this year, to use my capping powers to ensure that the extra grants from Government are translated into lower community charges and not frittered away in extravagant spending.

As I did last year, I intend to announce provisional capping criteria for 1992-93 in the autumn, so that local authorities can take them into account in their budgets. My intention is that those criteria should be expressed in the same sort of format as those adopted for 1991-92.

Authorities will thus know what to expect well in advance. We hope that all authorities will choose to budget sensibly, but if they do not we shall not hesitate to cap them.

The settlement that I have proposed is fair and realistic. The community charge for standard spending next year will be about £256. The actual charges set by authorities will depend on the budgets which they make and their determination to collect the charge. Millions of people will, of course, pay substantially less than £256 because of rebates and the community charge reduction scheme.

I now turn to our proposals for years after 1992-93. In April the Government published a consultation paper, "A New Tax for Local Government". We have received over 800 responses. The great majority have welcomed our proposals to replace the community charge with a new council tax. The consultation process has, of course, produced a great number of useful comments, which we are still considering and will take into account in framing the new legislation. There is one matter which I must, however, deal with now.

I am glad to confirm to the House that the Government intend to proceed with legislation along the lines proposed, with a view to bringing the council tax into operation by 1 April 1993—the earliest feasible date. Subject to enactment of the Local Government Finance and Valuation Bill, the task of putting properties into bands will start in the autumn. We will introduce legislation next Session to set up the new council tax regime.

Many responses have queried whether the seven council tax bands we proposed in April extend far enough up the range of house prices. We have considered this carefully and have concluded that there should be one additional band, taking in properties worth more than £320,000 in England. Houses in this new band H will be subject to a council tax of twice the amount for a dwelling in band D.

The response to the consultation paper, "The Structure of Local Government in England", has been very positive. Nearly 1,900 individuals and organisations have written in with their views, overwhelmingly in support of our proposals. There have been some useful suggestions for minor improvements. We intend therefore to introduce legislation in the autumn to set up a new Local Government Commission to review the structure of local government in England area by area.

I shall publish a consultation paper on the internal management of local authorities next week. It will invite comments by the end of November.

I believe that my proposals represent the right way forward for local government in 1992-93 and in the years ahead.

Mr. Brian Gould (Dagenham): It has taken just 24 hours for the illusions created by the citizens charter yesterday to be punctured by the harsh reality of the Secretary of State's statement today. Yesterday, the Prime Minister talked of helping the citizen and raising the level of public services. Today the Secretary of State revealed the true face of the Government—the face of a Government who cut public services, undermine local government and harm the citizen. The Government's priorities are clear: saving their political skins takes precedence, at whatever cost to local government services and those who depend on them.

As the Secretary of State accepts that what local authorities will actually spend this year is £39·9 billion, why will he not also accept that his proposed increase in spending is worth only 4·8 per cent.? How can he justify the denial to local government of £2 billion which they need simply to maintain services even at their present level? What account has he taken of the new commitments imposed on local government by measures such as the Education Reform Act 1988 and the Environmental Protection Act 1990, the demographic changes which push up the cost of education and social services, and preparations for new measures such as community care?

Does the Secretary of State dispute the local authority associations calculations that those new service pressures will cost an additional £1·7 billion? Does he dispute their assertion that an inflation rate allowance of 4·5 per cent. will be far too low to cover pay increases for teachers, police and fire staff, which will mean that the true inflation rate for local authorities will be 7·3 per cent.?

How are those factors to be taken into account without making cuts in already hard-pressed services elsewhere? The Secretary of State said in his statement that he had taken account of the pressures on local authorities' budgets, but they assess the pressures as meaning a total spending of £44 billion, not £41·8 billion. What pressures has he chosen to ignore, and in what other way does he suggest that they are to be met?

What account has been taken of the ever-increasing costs of collecting the poll tax, which have been conservatively estimated by the Audit Commission at £800 million per year? How can we rely on the right hon. Gentleman's average poll tax prediction, which presumably assumes a 100 per cent. collection rate? Why did he not ease the collection problem by abolishing the 20 per cent. contribution rule? Is not his figure for next year just as likely to be a fairy-tale figure as those produced for the past two years, particularly when the gearing effect of any shortfall in demand will be no less than 5:1? Has the Secretary of State learnt nothing from the experience of his predecessors? Does he not recognise that wishful thinking about the level of local government spending, the inflation rate and the collection level of the poll tax is a recipe for disaster, for local authorities, the Government and poll tax payers?

Does not the announcement of another band of council tax, while welcome in itself, provide further evidence of the battle that still rages in a divided and dithering Cabinet? Were we not assured in April that the one issue on which the Government were not to be moved was the number and range of bands? In April we were told that the number and range of bands was set in concrete, so does not this late change reveal a reluctant and late admission that the original seven-band proposal was fatally flawed, and also an equally damaging failure to do anything effective about it?

Is it not the case that the fundamental unfairness of the poll tax survives and persists with the council tax? Those living in top-band properties will pay just three times more tax than those in the bottom band, while enjoying properties of at least eight times greater value. Is this not a classic case of a leopard which cannot change its spots?

It is perhaps too much to expect that a Government who have shown an unremitting hostility to local government and committed themselves consistently to loading an unfair burden on those least able to pay, should experience a change of heart at this late stage. The only consolation for the majority of us is that this is the last such statement that the right hon. Gentleman will make.

Mr. Heseltine: This House and an expectant world will note with interest that the Labour party has managed to

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summon up 14 Back Benchers to listen to the synthetic hysteria of its spokesman. It is a pity that there are so few Labour Members here today because they have heard yet one more pledge of an extra 1p on income tax from their spokesman. So naive and far removed from power is the Labour party that all that local government has to do is say, "We'd like some more," and the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) is on his feet promising that, without any understanding of the fact that, if there is one thing that is certain, it is that, the higher the level of expenditure in local authorities, the worse the service delivery.

The essential difference between the Conservative party and the Labour party is that the Prime Minister stood at the Dispatch Box yesterday and promised value for money for our citizens, while the Labour party is here today offering money to the trade union-dominated services of local authorities. The Labour party has learnt nothing, and so long as it learns nothing its Members will continue to sit in opposition—indeed, it seems that they do not even have the energy left to come and sit there.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): I offer my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State my warm congratulations on a tight settlement, which is none the less almost double the rate of next year's projected inflation level. Is not the mealy-mouthed and mean-minded response of Her Majesty's Opposition due to the fact that they cannot come up with anything which offers public sector organisations the ability both to control their own budgets and to raise new money from outside sources which do not pull down the organisations' core funding?

Mr. Heseltine: I thank my hon. Friend and I agree with everything that she said. It is, however, a slight exaggeration to say that the Labour party has come up with nothing at all. It has come up with two different systems for local government finance in two years, and four different means of valuing the properties within that system, which will simply add yet further to the extravagance of its proposals.

Mr. David Bellotti (Eastbourne): The Secretary of State must be aware that local government will be bitterly disappointed at the announcement of today's financial settlement. It must face an 8·5 per cent. increase in police pay this September and teachers' pay will increase by a similar sum next year. It is clear that the Government's settlement will not help local authorities to meet those pay increases. The legislation that the Government have passed in recent years will add a further burden on local government spending. Local authorities have assessed that, in the coming year, that burden will add a further 4·3 per cent. to their costs. Is the Secretary of State aware of that figure and does he agree with it? In the light of yesterday's announcement by the Prime Minister of a major citizens charter, how can we be faced with such a major cut today?

Mr. Heseltine: It is obvious that the Liberal party is even less enthusiastic for its spokesman than the Labour party, as it has only one member here. Let me help the hon. Member with the basic arithmetic. I have just announced an increase in cash of 7·2 per cent. By any standard that is a generous settlement. All that is required of local authorities is to face up to the fact that they must accept the same pressures to which everyone else is subject, including the hon. Gentleman's constituents.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the hard-pressed community charge payers will greatly welcome what he has announced, especially in places such as the London borough of Camden, which is closing a branch library to save £38,000? Through my right hon. Friend's efforts, that borough is being forced to put out to tender for the second time the refuse collection service, which will now be a better one at a cheaper price.

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. If only local government took competitive tendering seriously, the economies that they would achieve would cover a substantial part of the extra costs of next year.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): Those of us who remember the Secretary of State's record in previous Governments will not be taken in by his conversion to helping local government now. With his Government's record on the poll tax, he should be ashamed to come here and attack any other political party. If the promises made in the citizens charter are to be kept, will not compensation have to be sought from local councils, which can only mean more pressure on the already hard-pressed local poll tax payers?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman has obviously not grasped the essence of the citizens charter. People should deliver a better service for the money they are already spending and better value for money for those services. Although I take leave to disagree with the hon. Gentleman, I have not been the strongest supporter of the community charge in the past. However, compared with the Labour party proposals, the community charge is a model of financial rectitude in local government.

Mr. John Lee (Pendle): My right hon. Friend is aware that I take a certain interest in the replacement of the community charge by the council tax. I believe that the new higher band is morally right. Will my right hon. Friend also consider whether a new lower starting band would be more realistic for low-value areas of the country such as Pendle and north-east Lancashire, a subject on which I have written to my hon. Friend?

Mr. Heseltine: I know that my hon. Friend has taken a deep interest in the issue of low-value property areas. I must report to my hon. Friend that we have considered this matter. We must make progress with the valuations and we have decided that the new arrangements, including the H band that I have announced today, are, according to the Government's judgment, the way in which we should proceed.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Is the Secretary of State proud of the fact that, alone among European Community Environment Ministers he has told democratically-elected local authorities that if they decide to raise funds to implement fully section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970—I also have the citizens charter in mind—he will cap them if he feels like it? Is he proud to be the nearest to a gauleiter of any of the EC Environment Ministers?

Mr. Heseltine: I probably spend as much time as the hon. Gentleman walking around the deprived areas of our urban communities. The standards of service delivery that I see for the money spent are a scandal. I have not the slightest doubt that what the Government are doing to raise the hopes and the opportunities of those citizens who live in such squalour, largely under Labour authorities, is one of the best initiatives that the Government have taken.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): My right hon. Friend predicted that the community charge will be £256 next year, but said that that would depend on the budget set by councils and on the efforts made by them to collect the tax. Will my right hon. Friend also confirm that that target will be severely affected by the number of people who refuse to pay their community charge? Does he therefore agree that the example set by Labour Members who refuse to pay is a disgraceful one? It means that other people have to pay for the services that those Members enjoy. Does my right hon. Friend agree that, despite the Labour Members who have bothered to turn up today, if there are such members in that party, they are not fit to run the country?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend is absolutely right that the failure to collect produces a league table of shame on which the worst 15 have one thing in common—they are all run by the Labour party. Before anyone starts arguing that that is a feature of the community charge, they should start looking at the failure of those authorities to collect rents in the same circumstances.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Will the Secretary of State look at the letters that I have sent to him asking him to meet Barnsley, Sheffield and the other five local authorities to discuss their standard spending assessments and other matters affecting local government? Their SSAs have led to the desecration at their education services, social services and all their other local services.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. McKay: I have not finished yet.

Although I accept that the right hon. Gentleman has replied that I should meet the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities, the authorities want to meet the Secretary of State, as is their right. They will meet him any day of the week in seven, at any time of the day and anywhere he chooses. Will he now stop hiding and meet those authorities?

Mr. Heseltine: The news that I have for the hon. Gentleman is excellent, even better than if I were to offer to meet those authorities myself—my hon. Friend the Minister of State has already written to say that he will meet them.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): My right hon. Friend will receive the gratitude and the congratulations of the people of London on his announcement today of the extra band in the collection of the council tax. That shows that this is a listening Government. My hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) spoke about those who have not paid the community charge. Will my right hon. Friend give the people his pledge that those non-payers will be pursued relentlessly?

Mr. Heseltine: I appreciate my hon. Friend's kind remarks. We listened carefully to what my hon. Friend and many others said to us about the need for another band. I can confirm that we have no intention other than of insisting that the community charge is collected.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Does the Secretary of State accept that, to some extent, he ignored the question posed by my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) about the fact that the Government continued to pile additional duties and obligations on local authorities? Reference has already been made to some of those additional obligations, which include those contained in the Children Act 1989 and the obligation and need to enhance the environment, where the role of the local authorities is absolutely essential. Those additional obligations are not necessarily covered by the total package that the right hon. Gentleman announced today.

Does the right hon. Gentleman also accept that it is not just a question of the totality of the package but a matter of how that money will be distributed? As my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) has said, the industrial areas of the north of England have come out badly from the apportionment of the total grant in the past two years. May we have an assurance that the work that the right hon. Gentleman does in the next few months will ensure that that corruption is not repeated?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman has raised two important points. The assessment of SSAs is the key to the distribution process and we take carefully into account the representations we receive, particularly those from local authority associations. We shall do so again on this occasion, although I am aware that there is a significant demand for stability without change. The moment one brings about change there are losers as well as winners and most hon. Members on both sides of the House believe that the one authority that loses under the system is their own. We shall take all representations carefully into account.

The hon. Gentleman's first point, which is important, was about the duties that have been placed on local authorities and the demographic changes that have taken place since the last settlement. The figure that I have announced today, which is the Government's view of what is a realistic expenditure target, takes account not just of the levels of pay increases but of all other aspects of demographic change and statutory duties. That is an important statement, as I must make clear. My right hon. and hon. Friends and I have considered these matters carefully and it is now up to local authorities to take into account the totality of their spending plans, but to have regard to the overriding priority of meeting the Government's expenditure targets.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): I stress my thanks and those of the majority of my constituents to the Secretary of State and his ministerial colleagues for the genuine consultation exercise in which, as the statement has shown, he heeded the representations made to him. From the many hundreds of letters that I have had from my constituents, I know how welcome the extra band of £320,000 will be. I believe that that will underpin the equity and justice of the proposals and be welcomed throughout the country.

Mr. Heseltine: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I can only apologise—I know that he will understand—for the

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fact that when he made his urgent representations on this matter to me last night I was only able to give him such a non-committal response.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Given what the Secretary of State has just said to my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy), is it not true that the new responsibilities to be placed on local authorities will be funded by cuts in existing services? Will not the same be true of the citizens charter?

Mr. Heseltine: I have dealt with that question several times. The Labour party is incapable of understanding that we are spending many millions of pounds but not giving an adequate quality of service to the customers who depend upon those services. One has only to visit a large number of urban authorities to realise that the quality of service to the customer seems to be the last consideration on the agenda of those distributing the money. It is critical that local authorities when reaching their judgments about their budgets, take account of the availability of balances, of economies and of the additional 7 per cent. cash, and then budget to remain within the levels that the Government have set out as appropriate for next year.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): Is my right hon. Friend aware that some Conservative Members are somewhat concerned at the fact that, under the arrangements for the community charge, only 15 per cent. of local government expenditure will come as a net contribution from locally determined tax? If that situation becomes worse under the new council tax, will my hon. Friend consider, before it is too late, the argument for introducing some flexibility into the so-called uniform business rate, so that there is at least a possibility of injecting greater accountability into future arrangements after 1993?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend raises an important point, which a number of people have put to us. We have no present intention to change the existing arrangements. When my right hon. Friend the Chancellor announced significant improvements in Government support for local authorities this year, he made it clear that we had it in mind to preserve the new balance of, approximately, 15 per cent. locally determined and raised finance in future arrangements.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Why do we have to wait until autumn for what are only provisional capping criteria? A host of new authorities are liable to face capping—all those with budgets of under £15 million. In those circumstances, the provisional criteria should have been produced at a much earlier stage. My authority of North-East Derbyshire is one of the worst funded per poll tax payer, next only to North Dorset. If we have to wait until autumn before the figures are available, could we at least have a meeting with the appropriate Minister? We would settle for the Minister of State.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman would get a good bargain there. We are not in a position to determine the composites of the standard spending assessments in this public expenditure round. There is a normal pattern in the way in which these things are done. The House will appreciate that the public expenditure round does not unfold to a point at which we can make these judgments until later in the autumn. At that point, we can reach judgments about the service composition within the SSAs, and it will be possible to give the clear sign then that I have promised the House.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): My right hon. Friend is to be congratulated, particularly by the north of England, which has much appreciated the work that he has done. As ever, we are tempted, but we do not always receive. I draw to his attention Cleveland county council, which recently put out a contract for a private cleaner, under competitive tendering, which led to a reduction of £1·3 million in spending. However, it has now decided to spend every penny of that on job creation by retraining a large number of the cleaners as social workers. Can we not do something to stop this? Cleveland county council is about to abandon its so-called supertram system, on which it has so far spent £1 million, yet it is still not rate-capped. The criteria must be looked at again or this sort of squandering will go on and on.

Mr. Heseltine: I heard clearly what my hon. Friend said. The House will be appalled to hear that, when there was an opportunity to secure genuine value for money with a service delivered at lower cost, the consequences were frittered away. That is one of the considerations that we shall have in mind when reaching judgments on capping.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): The only point that will be even more unwelcome in the north than the meanness of today's announcement is the unpleasant rhetoric about charge capping that accompanied it. When the Secretary of State considers capping, will he allow local authorities in the north and elsewhere exceptional disregards where they have got into trouble as a result of such events as the collapse of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International, local authority swaps and late commercial rating reviews? The latter is a problem specific to Newcastle. All these issues are outside the control of local authorities when they deal with their budgets on an annual basis.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman will realise that at this stage we do not have sufficient information to know what the effects will be on the revenue budget and community charge payers. We do not even know whether revenue deposits have been put with BCCI. A whole range of facts are not available and I would not want to give the impression that we have any intention to take action that would make it more likely that local authorities will indulge in the sort of practices to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch) The settlement of more than a 7 per cent. cash increase will not strike most people as savage when set against a likely inflation rate of less than 4 per cent. I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his announcement on the council tax, which makes a good tax better. Will he publish exemplifications replacing the ones previously circulated, so that many people in my constituency and elsewhere in London can see how much they are saving against the new higher band of tax?

Mr. Heseltine: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's support. However, it would not be valuable to produce another range of exemplifications. The amount of extra

money raised by the additional band that I announced today is not of great substance and, spread among the 20 million homes that are within the broad remit of our plans, the effect on any one person or household would be small. It is a psychological matter, with which we are seeking to make the tax appear more fair, rather than a determination greatly to increase the amount of revenue.

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): The Secretary of State must review area by area. When he comes to look at the finances of Staffordshire, will he take particular account of the problems identified in the pindown report, and make allowances for the additional resources that need to be found to bring social services up to standard and which are not truly reflected in the SSA for Staffordshire?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Lady will know that this is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health. However, I must make it clear that this, and all other similar matters, were taken into account in the settlement.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his radical approach to the issue is widely appreciated on this side of the House? If, however, the £256 is to be held, as it must be, will it not require widespread capping and also further progress to be made on the transfer of services to the Exchequer, such as sixth form colleges and colleges of further education, as the Government have already promised?

Mr. Heseltine: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend. All Government policy that has been put into effect has been taken into account in the settlement that we have announced today. To clarify what my hon. Friend said about the £256, I should make the point that that is an arithmetical calculation. The community charge level that is set will depend both on the budgets of individual local authorities and on the level of collection. I imagine that they will vary widely.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The Secretary of State has a cheek to come here and talk about an empty House of Commons when, after he left the Cabinet for the first time, his voting record and attendance in this place were among the worst that there have ever been.

Mr. Speaker: Order. These seem to be party political points. Does the hon. Gentleman have a question on the statement?

Mr. Skinner: He started this ball rolling. He was the man who was running round the constituencies——

Mr. Speaker: Let us stop the ball rolling. Ask a question please.

Mr. Skinner: Ain't it strange that he can get away with——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has already had two questions today. Ask a question, please.

Mr. Skinner: Why does not the Secretary of State for the Environment treat this matter in the same way as the Government treated the water authorities? They allowed those authorities a 5 per cent. increase over and above inflation. He now tells the local authorities that they have to take a cut when the realistic increase ought to be more than 10 per cent. Treat them both the same.

Mr. Heseltine: We have established that the Labour party wants to spend £44 billion and that that will add another 1p to income tax, which means that my party's forecast that a vote for the Labour party will raise tax by 15p has now been overtaken by a new commitment to raise tax by 16p. If the hon. Gentleman wants to understand my view about taking this matter seriously, this side of the House obviously takes it seriously because my hon. Friends come here. That side of the House does not take it seriously, because Labour Members of Parliament do not come here.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: If hon. Members who are rising will ask brief questions, I shall endeavour to call all of them.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): My right hon. Friend will be aware that many of my constituents in West Lancashire, and in other authorities, will find it difficult to understand, when inflation is going to be well below 4 per cent., why the Labour party complains that 7·2 per cent. is not a realistic increase in local government expenditure. We fully appreciate what my hon. Friend is doing. Will my right hon. Friend make clear in all his statements what the cost of Labour local government and national Government would be in these circumstances?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend is extremely careful and very helpful, but the difficulty of keeping to a figure for how much Labour local authorities or a Labour Government would cost is that the figure is constantly changing. It is always going up.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): My right hon. Friend is aware that a number of local councils have made disastrous investments in BCCI, including my own in Bury, to the tune of £6·5 million. When my right hon. Friend looks at individual councils, will he try his best to relieve the burden on innocent poll tax payers who have been put in this position, either by allowing the councils to spread the making good over a number of years, rather than over a single year, or alternatively by ensuring that those repayments do not infringe the capping regulations?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend, whose concern I fully understand, will appreciate that this is not the appropriate moment for me to say anything other than that which I have already said in answer to this question.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): My right hon. Friend will be aware that unanimity on the Isle of Wight is about as rare as bicycles on the Solent. However, there seems to be a consensus among all parties and all factions on the island that we should have a unitary authority. I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement that he will introduce legislation in the autumn. Can he recognise the great amount of effort that the Member of Parliament for the Isle of Wight has put into this effort and tell the House today that he intends to reward my Conservative colleagues on the island with the announcement that we shall be the first unitary authority, as the Boundary Commission has already recommended?

Mr. Heseltine: I admire my hon. Friend's enthusiasm for this cause. I have heard him advocate it in the House and I have heard it advocated on the Isle of Wight. I cannot tell him whether I can be influenced by it, but I have certainly heard it.

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that his proposed higher tax band will be welcomed in the City of Westminster and regarded as fair and equitable? Can he confirm that the local government tax in support of the police is now only 10 per cent., and that what matters is value for money?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend makes an absolutely essential point. The particular element of local government support that affects police authorities is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, but in all services the question of value for money is critical.

Mr. Robert Hayward (Kingswood): May I ask my right hon. Friend to take little note of the bleeding hearts on the Opposition Benches in the light of the pay settlement that was agreed last week between the local authorities and the manual workers, which was 6 per cent., in terms of pay, and an extra two hours off the working week over the next three years, which represents another 6 per cent? The local authority negotiators said that they could find the efficiencies to pay for the deal out of the inefficiencies that remain. That is the key to controlling local government finance.

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend is right. He can take heart from the announcement that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made yesterday, that we intend to introduce yet further compulsory competitive tendering, not just for manual workers but for white collar workers as well.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): When my right hon. Friend considers the capping criteria, may I ask him to bear in mind the position of some local authorities, such as Chelmsford borough council? When the Conservatives drove out the Liberals at the last election, they inherited a record of massive, profligate overspending in the previous three years. They are doing everything that they can to reduce their spending next year, but because of the scale of the overspend they may be faced with problems, vis-a-vis the removal of the £15 million threshold. Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind those boroughs that have been caught and should not be punished because of the activities of a previous administration?

Mr. Heseltine: I fully understand my hon. Friend's point. He will be aware that we have to set general rules, but before the rules finally apply there is an exhaustive consultative process, during which individual authorities are met and their cases considered by Department of the Environment Ministers.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): My right hon. Friend has received a considerable number of representations from all the Warwickshire Members about the level of revenue support grant during the last two years. There is a widely held view that the standard spending assessments are not fair to Warwickshire. Is my right hon. Friend able to hold out any hope in the statement that he has made for a fairer shape for the county of Warwick?

Mr. Heseltine: No one more than my hon. Friend has made that point to me and my colleagues. I hope that he will bear with me if I repeat what I have already said about the standard spending assessments—that they will be unable to be firmed up until we have been through the public expenditure round later this year, when we shall make our announmcements within the same sort of time scale as we did last year. I cannot undertake to make transfers, but I shall certainly consider very carefully the case that my hon. Friend has put to us.

Mr. Paul Channon (Southend, West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that with an increase in expenditure of more than 30 per cent. in three years, what he has announced today is a very real increase in local authority expenditure, which is much to be welcomed by Conservative Members? When he is considering the drafting of his local government Bill in the autumn, will my right hon. Friend take steps within it to allow the Local Government Commission, for areas where there is virtually no controversy and virtual unanimity on the need to have a unitary authority, to report back as quickly as possible so that unitary authorities can be put into effect as quickly as possible? Then we shall be able to follow my hon. Friend the Member for the Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) and be the second unitary authority.

Mr. Heseltine: I am most grateful to my right hon. Friend. I wholly agree with him that a 7·2 per cent. increase in cash is a settlement that makes it possible to continue to deliver the real services that matter and also to recognise the Government's counter-inflationary policies. When we look at the work programme for the Local Government Commission we shall take into account the likely response in the areas and the likely complexity of the issues that will have to be addressed.

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): Does the Secretary of State accept that the difference between £39·9 billion and £41·8 billion is 4·8 per cent.? Even those who have difficulty with arithmetic understand that. Some disgraceful remarks have been made about local government.

Will the Secretary of State confirm that he lost his battle with the Treasury to abolish the 20 per cent. contribution, which would have aided collection enormously and helped local government to cope with the remaining lifetime of the poll tax? Will he also confirm that, having been told that there would be first 14, then seven, then nine and now eight bands, we are currently being told that this is a psychological move to make the system, as the right hon. Gentleman put it "appear fairer"? Is this not a chameleon tax, introduced by a chameleon party whose colour depends entirely on the colour of the stone from underneath which it creeps?

Mr. Heseltine: If the hon. Gentleman studies his party's document, "Fair Rates", he will find that it is full of phrases that refer to a system that is seen to be fair. However, it then goes into a range of alternative means of valuing properties, which are likely to be not only unfair and expensive but extremely complex.

The reason why neither Opposition spokesmen appears to understand the significance of my announcement is their failure to take account of the fact that part of next year's expenditure increases will come from local authority balances. *[Laughter.]* In most years, local authorities spend £500 million from balances. It is extraordinary how, whenever that is mentioned in the House, Labour Members laugh as though it had never happened. That is just another indication of how far removed they are from the real world.

Similarly, in most years, local authorities achieve economies of between £200 million and £300 million. That, of course, helps to fund their spending levels. Both those elements can be added to the extra cash that I have announced.

Local Government Finance (Wales)

5.21 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. David Hunt): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about my proposals for local government finance in Wales for 1992-93.

First, however, I would like to refer to the council tax. I am pleased to be able to tell the House that after consultation I have decided to create an additional band at the top end of the property banding scale in Wales. The additional band, band H, will cover houses in Wales worth more than £240,000. Houses in Wales in band H will be subject to a council tax of three times the amount for a dwelling in band A. I believe that that strikes the right balance, and will be seen as fair by the majority of council tax payers. I shall also publish a consultation paper on the internal management of local authorities next week. It will invite comments by the end of November.

To put my proposals for local government finance into context, let me refer to the excellent package that I provided for the current year, 1991-92. Total standard spending was increased by 8 per cent. compared with budgets, and aggregate external finance by 11·2 per cent. In short, the settlement more than adequately provided for inflationary and other pressures on spending. On 21 March, I announced an additional £300 million to fund the £140 general reduction in the community charge announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget statement.

Against that background, it is very disappointing that many Welsh local authorities failed to set reasonable budgets for the current year. They chose instead to impose what I consider unnecessary burdens on their charge payers. Overall, they set budgets that exceeded my plans by £76 million, or 3·1 per cent. Charges were therefore set at £33 above what was appropriate. That overspending reversed the trend of recent years, when Welsh councils set budgets closer to the Government's plans than their counterparts in England. It is important to bear that in mind in considering my proposals for this year's settlement. It is also important to recognise that the Government's success in bringing down the rate of inflation is easing the pressures on local government spending considerably, and that there is also scope for councils to increase their efforts to identify and implement efficiency savings.

Taking those and all other relevant considerations into account, I propose a level of total standard spending for 1992-93 of £2,639 million. That is an increase of £206 million on the level for 1991-92, and represents an increase of 8·5 per cent. over the equivalent figure for this year.

I propose to set the level of aggregate external finance for 1992-93 at £2,383 million. That is 6·7 per cent. higher than this year's level. The community charge for standard spending in Wales will therefore be £118—£3 lower than the actual average charge this year. That figure for total standard spending means that local authority spending in Wales will be £1,207 per charge payer, to which, on average, the charge payer will contribute £118. In the autumn, I will announce my decisions on the apportionment of AEF between revenue support grant, the distributable amount of national non-domestic rates and certain specific and supplementary grants towards current expenditure.

[Mr. David Hunt]

Hon. Members will already be aware of the significant increases in local government spending in recent years. With the settlement that I am announcing today, spending will have risen by over 30 per cent. in only three years. That must be a solid foundation, but we are all determined to being inflation down, and it is important for local government to play its part in this by constraining its spending to the level that I have proposed.

The settlement figures for 1992-93 will be adjusted in due course to reflect the transfer out of local authority control of the six major higher education institutions in Wales, including the Polytechnic of Wales as from 1 April 1992. Provisional estimates indicate that TSS and AEF will be reduced by about £34·6 million on this acount, leaving the community charge for standard spending unchanged. I have already discussed that with the local authority associations, and I will of course take their views into account in reaching my decision on the amounts to be deducted.

As the House will know, the Local Government Finance and Valuation Bill—which is currently being considered in another place—considerably increases my charge-capping powers, and thus my ability to protect all charge payers in Wales from any irresponsible and excessive budgeting for 1992-93 and beyond. Although some Welsh councils have increased their spending by more than I thought necessary, I have not so far exercised my existing capping powers. I very much hope that it will not be necessary to use my enhanced powers in the future.

Local authorities, however, should be in no doubt—especially against the background of this settlement—of my determination for the resources that I provide for local government to be used for the benefit of charge payers, and not to fuel unnecessary spending. If it is necessary to cap councils to achieve that, they should know that I shall not hesitate to do so.

I believe that the settlement is fair and realistic. With inflation falling, it gives local authorities a further opportunity to demonstrate that they have the best interests of charge payers in mind in setting budgets in line with these plans, keeping community charges low and avoiding capping.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): Does the Secretary of State understand that last year's settlement was not an excellent package? His criticism of local authorities is unfair: he did not fund them adequately for this year. Does he accept that Welsh local authorities have made efficiency savings, and that the proportion of such savings is better than that of their English counterparts?

The right hon. Gentleman has threatened councils—possibly all the councils in Wales—with charge capping. I challenge him to name an irresponsible local authority in Wales. We look forward to his response.

Does the right hon. Gentleman appreciate that his statement leaves a serious gap between what councils need and the cash that he has made available? That will lead to the prospect of a decline in local services, with councils finding it difficult to meet their obligations under legislation.

I welcome the fact that the right hon. Gentleman has backed down on banding. Even if he is just tinkering at the edges, and despite other defects, an additional band is welcome. He may agree that the rich must pay their share, and it is clear that the Government have yielded to our pressure. Even so, how many homes worth £240,000 or more are there in Wales? There are not many in the valleys, and I do not want the right hon. Gentleman to assume that he has the balance right on banding.

Against a background of serious and rising unemployment, for which the right hon. Gentleman has some responsibility, councils in north and south Wales will find it harder to plan to rebuild their economies. Local authorities are making tremendous efforts to restore the economy of Wales. Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that the settlement lets down our go-ahead local authorities, many of which are Labour? Why do the Government never give sufficient grant to cover the proper level of pay awards and the cost of Government-inspired legislation which local councils must implement? I have in mind many new and major responsibilities, such as the development of community care, the Environmental Protection Act 1990, the food safety legislation and the national curriculum.

The Prime Minister's charter relates directly to the local government services involved in today's statement. Where is the new money in Wales for the Prime Minister's charter? We have had no information about new money. We have concluded that this is a pre-general election gimmick designed only to save Conservative seats, or what is left of them, in Wales.

Neither the local government settlement nor the Prime Minister's charter will solve the severe problems faced by the 70,000 people on housing waiting lists, the large number of crumbling schools in Wales and the numerous local roads and bridges that are in need of repair.

Why is the Secretary of State still refusing to listen to all those in local government who are telling him that the cost of administering the collection of the poll tax from those who pay only 20 per cent. far outweighs the cash received? The 20 per cent. rule harms the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, particularly the disabled, the young, the elderly and those who are studying.

Will the right hon. Gentleman take this opportunity to disown the remark made by his Parliamentary Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett), who alluded to homeless people with mental health problems as the modern equivalent of village idiots? That Minister should apologise for making that insensitive remark.

The people are tired of the Government's handling of local government finance in Wales. They have been appalled by the poll tax fiasco and are offended by the so-called council tax. They yearn for a general election so that they can usher in a Labour Government with just and practical policies.

Mr. David Hunt: The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) made 13 points—unlucky for him, fortunate for me, because I can answer all of them.

He said, first, that the level of spending was unfair. Is an increase of 30 per cent. in three years unfair? The hon. Gentleman is living in cloud cuckoo land.

He dealt, secondly, with efficiency savings. I pay tribute to local authorities in Wales for their willingness to consider the efficiency initiative launched by my predecessor, but I am disappointed that, in the report from my expenditure sub-group, only £7 million out of all that spending is offered in savings. That is hard to reconcile

with the latest findings of the Audit Commission, which said that Welsh authorities have the potential for a further £32 million of savings.

Mr. Barry Jones: That is not realistic.

Mr. Hunt: The Audit Commission has not lost touch with reality, and the hon. Gentleman should reconsider that remark. The commission does a fine job, and people should heed its recommendations.

The answer to the hon. Gentleman's third point, about capping, is that I may be announcing my criteria for capping in due course. I do not, and I did not, have to exercise my powers this year, and I very much hope that I shall not have to do so next year.

The hon. Gentleman's next question was whether I thought there was a serious gap between the announcement and the level of funding. I repeat that I am allowing for spending per charge payer in Wales of £1,207, towards which, on average, the charge payer is asked to contribute £118, against a charge this year of £121. If there is a serious gap, it is in the hon. Gentleman's thinking. *[Interruption.]*

I have responded to consultations with the local authorities. I am still waiting for the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside to consult on the future of local taxation. Is he yet prepared to withdraw his ridiculous proposal to bring back the unjust inequitable rating system, which the Leader of the Opposition condemned, and to introduce revaluation? Rates plus revaluation is a prescription that the Welsh people will reject.

The hon. Gentleman asked, sixthly, how many were in band H. I think it is about 1 per cent. of properties in Wales. He next asked what was the proper level of pay awards. What does he believe the proper level to be? I have allowed in the AEF increase 6·7 per cent. extra; in the TSS, 8·5 per cent.; and on budgets, 5·1 per cent. Towards the end of this year inflation will fall below 4 per cent. At that low level of inflation we shall see spending needs start, as at 1 April next year, and I have allowed for that.

Next, the hon. Gentleman asked whether I had allowed for sufficient new money. I have taken everything into account in announcing the settlement. I believe that the preliminary reaction of local authorities will be that they must now consult. This is a proposal for consultation, but it is a settlement better than expected.

The hon. Gentleman asked, ninthly, about collection costs, and suggested that it was a poll tax fiasco. I have been told by local authorities in Wales that, unlike the rest of the United Kingdom, they expect to collect 100 per cent. of what they budgeted to collect.

Mr. Barry Jones *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman shakes his head in disagreement, but local authorities have told me that they expect to collect 100 per cent. of what they budgeted to collect—*[Interruption.]*—and instead of shouting at me, Labour Members should pay tribute to the hard work of local authorities, the staff of which are to be congratulated on what they have achieved.

The hon. Gentleman went on to say that the 20 per cent. harmed vulnerable people in Wales. He will be aware, in respect of the calculations, that those on benefit in Wales receive more than 20 per cent. of the community charge that they must pay.

In making his next point, the hon. Gentleman misquoted my Parliamentary Under-Secretary who, it transpires, was announcing an extra £100,000 for the homeless.

The hon. Gentleman went on to say that it was a pre-general election gimmick. I suppose that that sums up his attitude to the settlement, because it is better than expected, because it is a good deal for Welsh charge payers and because we shall get the reward for that at the next general election.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I draw the House's attention to the fact that there are 36 amendments to the Ports Bill and eight consolidation measures. Will hon. Members ask brief questions, because we are getting rather bogged down?

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend share my sense of relief that there are so few English Members present in the Chamber? It would be most unfortunate if news were to leak out of the exceptionally favourable statement that my right hon. Friend has been able to secure for Wales and the extraordinary clout that he has exercised in the Cabinet over this settlement and the preservation of the Royal Welch Fusiliers. Is he aware that his efforts are very much appreciated and have resulted in an excellent by-election win in Clwyd and another one to come in Rhuddlan?

Mr. Hunt: It has been a good day for Wales, and I congratulate all hon. Members who participated in the campaign to recognise the independence, integrity, tradition and history of the Royal Welch Fusiliers and the Royal Regiment of Wales. It must be athwart logic for the Opposition to suggest that the community charge settlement is a bad settlement when, under this spending, the community charge will be £118 whereas at present it is £121 in Wales.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): I take an alternative view about the closure of Army headquarters, Wales. That is not such good news.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is for another occasion.

Mr. Livsey: Does the Secretary of State agree that an 8·5 per cent. increase sounds reasonable in general terms but, when one looks at the requirements of new legislation such as the Children Act 1989, the Environmental Protection Act 1990, the national curriculum and many other such measures, one sees that it is inadequate to cover them. Given that there will be a reduction in services for the reasons that I have stated, surely the Welsh Office should apply the Prime Minister's citizens charter and censure itself in this matter.

Mr. Hunt: Not at all. I believe that the hon. Gentleman has misunderstood the settlement. Last year, I announced a settlement of £2,433 million, and this year I have announced a settlement of £2,639 million. That is an increase of £206 million. As I have already said, that is £1,207 for every charge payer in Wales, towards which the charge payer will contribute £118. That is a good deal by any marker.

Mr. Ian Grist (Cardiff, Central): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his statement. A 30 per cent. rise in expenditure over three years is a matter for concern as for congratulation when one is thinking in inflationary terms.

[Mr. Ian Grist]

To get on top of inflation, should we be considering putting out even more services to private tender so that we obtain value for money and better performances?

Mr. Hunt: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right. We must target this enormous sum—£1,207 per charge payer—more effectively in order to get value for money. We should apply the citizens charter so that the public have the service that they have a right to receive.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Will the Minister confirm that, based on his own figures, the incurease in resources available this year will be not £200 million but £130 million? That is an increase not of 8·5 per cent. but of 4·9 per cent., which is less than the rate of inflation and substantially lower than the rising costs facing councils. Will he confirm that, out of that low and inadequate settlement, councils are expected to meet extra statutory duties? Let the right hon. Gentleman look at his own figures, and he will see that my analysis is correct.

Mr. Hunt: I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will look at the figures a little more carefully. He will then see that the increase in revenue spending is 8·5 per cent. over the settlement that I announced last year, and 5·1 per cent. over the budget of local authorities this year. With inflation falling below 4 per cent. by the end of the year and with low inflation predicted for next year, the right hon. Gentleman will recognise that it is a good settlement for Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend's effective leadership of a unique all-party campaign to preserve that fine regiment, the Royal Welch Fusiliers. I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement. He provides for spending of more than double the rate of inflation, which should be more than adequate. Accordingly, will the community charge reduction of £140 be revalued? In line with the principles of the citizens charter, will he spell out as soon as possible the parameters for capping councils so that citizens may see the protection working?

Mr. Hunt: I appreciate my hon. Friend's comments and I pay tribute to the part that he and other colleagues and other hon. Members have played.

It is wise to recollect that, this time last year, we were talking about a community charge of £232. I predicted a settlement of £228. Since then, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in his Budget—and I was able to announce it—an extra £300 million. I can confirm that that money is in the settlement. The £140 reduction remains and, instead of a community charge of £232, the reduction should mean a community charge of £118.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): May I return to the fifth question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones)? Will the Secretary of State answer that question, and not with the answer that he gave previously? My hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside asked how many houses in Wales have a value of over £240,000. Will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House what will be the yield from that tax as a percentage of total revenue of local authorities, net of the collection charge for band H?

Mr. Hunt: I said that about 1 per cent. of properties in Wales are affected by band H, so I answered the question. When arguing for this, some local authorities said that it would make the council tax more equitable, and that is what it has done.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): The Secretary of State will be aware that one of the reasons why many councils in Wales increased their poll tax last year was that local authorities did not regard his settlement as being as generous as he announced to the House, much because of the points made by the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams). The cash increase given to local authorities will be substantially lower than he has announced today. For example, in order to produce a standstill budget and to account for the increases in spending through legislative changes, Gwynedd county council had to increase its poll tax, not giving any benefits to Welsh poll tax payers. Bearing that in mind, does the right hon. Gentleman regard his extra capping powers as totally unnecessary?

Mr. Hunt: No. Parliament believes, and I agree with it, although it is being considered in the other place, that it is right to extend my powers to cap. I hope that it will not be necessary for me to use those powers. On the hon. Gentleman's first point, I wonder how many people in Wales realise that the settlement that I have announced today will mean that their local authorities will be spending £2,639 million—£1,207 for every charge payer in Wales. That is a marvellous settlement. We have to ensure that there is value for money and that that money is properly targeted.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): Since he is an expert on the poll tax, will the Secretary of State give us an estimate of how much the poll tax fiasco has cost Wales? We know that estimates in Britain are about £14 billion. Also, the preliminary reports on the census show that about 1 million people in Britain are missing from the registers. How many are missing in Wales thanks to the poll tax? How will the Minister make those estimates?

Mr. Hunt: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman was present when I explained that I have been told by local authorities that they expect to collect 100 per cent. of what they have budgeted to collect. That is a remarkably good result, and far better than in England and Scotland. It is a great tribute to all those in Wales involved in local government.

I have now calculated that, with the community charge reduction scheme and with benefits, the average community charge payment in Wales this year is £78. I should not have said that loudly, in case there are any English Members present.

Mr. Huw Edwards (Monmouth): Does the Secretary of State accept that his statement will give no reassurance to local authorities in Wales which are facing a massive housing crisis, that, even in the Conservative-controlled borough of Monmouth, homelessness is set to double this year and that local authorities such as that in Monmouth are embarrassed at their incapacity to respond effectively to that growing problem?

Mr. Hunt: I deplore the language used by the hon. Gentleman. I hope that he will recognise that Tai Cymru now expects to build a record number of homes—3,300

this year, which is a remarkable result—and that everyone involved in Housing for Wales should be congratulated on that. If the hon. Gentleman studied the subject, he would realise that the individual standard spending assessments are not being published today—they are a matter for my statement in the autumn.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you tell the Secretary of State that "homelessness" is not an unparliamentary word?

Mr. Speaker: I do not think that that matter arises from the statement.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): Can the Secretary of State tell us how much of the money announced today is to be set aside for disabled people? I am receiving details of more and more cases related to education. Because of the large amount of money—sometimes in excess of £50,000—which enables a student to take a course at a college of further education, the authorities are having problems finding the money. As that money gives the opportunity of a lifetime to such students, the Welsh Office should make special extra provisions because the needs of those students go way beyond those covered by any settlement based on inflation.

Mr. Hunt: I recognise the needs of disabled people in Wales and, as the hon. Gentleman will know, we have introduced a number of initiatives. I believe that the level of spending—£2,639 million—is appropriate, bearing in mind all those pressures.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Will the Secretary of State promise us that he will not this year again impose on Welsh charge payers the deranged system that he used last year for calculating individual bills, which resulted in families receiving bills that were sometimes 50 per cent. higher than those of their neighbours for no reason other than they were based on the old rating system? Can we have a system this year which is fair and rational?

Mr. Hunt: I remind the hon. Gentleman that the system that I introduced last year was not a new one, but followed closely the principles for the previous year which had been agreed with the local authorities. The difference was that I provided substantial extra money for the community charge reduction scheme, which was targeted especially on those who historically had a low level of rates. Clearly, I am now considering how best to progress with the community charge reduction scheme, which will, of course, continue. I shall be announcing details in the autumn.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): The Secretary of State will be aware that, even after issuing 300,000 court summonses in the past financial year and thus criminalising so many of the Welsh population, Welsh local authorities have so far been able to collect only 94 per cent. of the sums due for the poll tax in the financial year 1990-91. To what extent has that shortfall in the collection of the poll tax—6 per cent. for the year 1990-91—been taken into account in the current settlement?

Mr. Hunt: I have already mentioned that the 94 per cent. was the figure that local authorities budgeted to collect, and they have recovered 100 per cent. of what they budgeted for. At the start of the year, local authorities said that they would recover 94 per cent. of the community charges in their area on average, and they have recovered 100 per cent. of that figure. That is a cause for commendation rather than for the language used by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Does the Secretary of State agree that his statement has already been outdated by the Prime Minister's announcement yesterday about the citizens charter? How will a citizen be able to sue a local authority to get a refund for a failure to provide a service within a reasonable time or to provide a service of a reasonable quality, such as the provision of speech therapists for children with learning handicaps or the provision of a classroom without a leaking roof? Does that not also imply a right for the local authority to sue the Welsh Office for a refund to provide the additional capital expenditure for the roof to be repaired?

My own local authority in South Glamorgan has an estimated backlog of £30 million for school maintenance. The Audit Commission has commented on that as a major problem, so how does the Secretary of State square the statement today with the additional rights being conferred on the citizen to demand and obtain a refund and a guarantee that a sufficient amount of capital expenditure will be provided to ensure watertight schools and an adequate supply of speech therapists, and to fulfil other requirements?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman criticises the Audit Commission, but he and the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) should talk to each other; otherwise, they will both be defeated at the next general election and Cardiff will return to all-Conservative representation. I must say that of course we have taken into account all the appropriate spending demands in reaching the settlement. A total of £1,207 for every charge payer in Wales is a good spending level, towards which the chargepayer will on average contribute £118. The bad news for Wales is that the Labour party is the party of high spending and high taxes, and the people of Wales have every right to be reminded of that at the next election.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): In the Secretary of State's statement and answers today, there has been no word of apology for the immense burden that his inefficient and costly poll tax has placed on local authorities in every part of Wales. My hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) rightly took him to task for the cost of collection of that tax. That burden still rests on their shoulders, and does not the Secretary of State think that an apology is due?

The Secretary of State made no apology for the theft of our colleges, but gave us the news that he will take away the cash as well as the functions. Has he no word of regret? Apparently, he has no word of apology for the homeless whose lives have been ruined by the Government. Does not he accept that the poll tax can go down only if the grant goes up faster than the standard spending assessment? He said in his statement that the percentage increase in the SSA is greater than the aggregate external finance. Therefore, he must know that he is pushing up the poll tax. Does he accept that his statement fails to recognise the fact that last year's local authority budgets were realistic and modest, at about 2 per cent. above SSA? He must know that, this year, keeping to his target figures for spending and for poll tax levels means a cut in real terms and in real services.

[Mr Alun Michael]

The right hon. Gentleman gave no answer when we asked where was the cash to meet the additional burdens loaded by the Government on to Welsh local authorities or to meet the introduction of the council tax. Does he not also accept that the recession and unemployment have placed an extra burden on local authorities in Wales? He gives them no scope to expand their role in economic development or to take new initiatives. Will he reconsider, and give them the extra cash for that purpose?

I ask the Secretary of State for two specific assurances. First, will he fund the full cost of new obligations in community care in addition to the funds he announced today? Secondly, will he fully fund in revenue and in capital any fresh obligations placed on local authorities to provide secure accommodation for young people on remand? We have been told that, in both those cases, the cash will be allowed for in the formula. There is no cash for either in today's settlement, any more than for all the other obligations that the Government have placed on local authorities. In summary, will the Secretary of State please take away this inadequate statement and think again?

Mr. Hunt: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his six pages. First, we shall make a statement shortly about secure accommodation——

Mr. Michael: And the expenditure?

Mr. Hunt: And the expenditure. Secondly, on community care, of course I have taken into account in deciding the settlement the increased pressures caused by the need to prepare for the new community care regime.

The hon. Gentleman takes me to task on a number of percentages. Let me repeat them again. We are talking about TSS—total standard spending—of £2,639 million, an 8·5 per cent. increase on the settlement and a 5·1 per cent. increase on budgets. I am talking about aggregate external finance of £2,383 million—a 6·7 per cent. increase on the settlement.

I ask the hon. Gentleman to study the figures again. He will find that the settlement is pretty fair. The only message coming from the Opposition is, "Spend, spend, spend." We need not only a realistic view of spending, which the Government provide, but a commitment to the citizens charter, which will give the public the right to the service that they deserve. All that the hon. Gentleman offers is high spending and high taxes. I reject those. The only apology that I make is to my hon. Friends who represent English constituencies, for having produced a settlement by which the community charge on standard spending in Wales is only £118.

Local Government Finance (Scotland)

6 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about my proposed local authority settlement for Scotland for 1992-93. However, before giving details of the settlement, I want to refer to one aspect of the consultation process on the council tax which has recently been completed.

As my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for the Environment told the House earlier today, the Government intend to proceed with legislation along the lines proposed, with a view to bringing the council tax into operation, both north and south of the border, by 1 April 1993. Subject to the enactment of the Local Government Finance and Valuation Bill, the task of valuing properties for the purpose of the tax will be carried out in Scotland by local assessors working under the direction of the Commissioners of the Inland Revenue.

On the basis of the responses to the consultation paper, I have decided, in conjunction with my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Wales, to create an additional—eighth—band. This new band will cover properties in Scotland worth more than £212,000. Houses in this new band H will be subject to a council tax of twice the amount in band D.

Before coming to my proposals for 1992-93 Local Government Finance, I remind the House of the excellent settlement that my predecessor announced for the current year, 1991-92. Aggregate external finance was increased by 10·4 per cent. The settlement represented an excellent package, a substantial real increase which more than adequately provided for inflation and other pressures on spending.

I turn now to my proposals for the Scottish aggregate external finance settlement for 1992-93. In considering the level of the settlement I have as usual taken into account a number of factors. First, I have had regard to the views which the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has expressed in the expenditure committee of the joint convention and Scottish Office working party on Local Government Finance and at the meeting which the Convention had on 8 July with the Minister responsible for Industry and Local Government, my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart).

Secondly, I have taken fully into account the additional spending pressures facing local authorities next year arising both from new burdens, such as preparation for the council tax and the second phase of care in the community, and from transfers of responsibilities from central to local government.

Thirdly, I have taken into account the scope which exists for Scottish local authorities to make efficiency savings. I think that much more needs to be done on this front. In that context, I welcome the establishment of a joint COSLA and Accounts Commission working party to examine value for money issues.

Fourthly, I have had regard to the general economic background and in particular to the Government's success in bringing down inflation. This will obviously reduce considerably the pressures on local government spending.

Fifthly, I have taken into account the fact that spending by Scottish local authorities is over 30 per cent. higher on comparable services than that by authorities in both

England and Wales. I see no reason why central taxpayers should continue to support excessive expenditure on that scale.

Having regard to all those factors, I propose that basic aggregate external finance for 1992-93 should be set at £5,122·5 million. That is an increase of £296·5 million—6·1 per cent.—over the comparable figure for the current year. In order to produce that level of settlement I have had to top up the formula consequentials of the English settlement by £50 million. That means that the resources that I have available next year for other Scottish Office programmes will be correspondingly reduced.

An additional sum of £7·5 million will be provided by the Exchequer to fund the final year of the safety net. So overall, the settlement amounts to a total increase of £304 million. Proposals for the distribution of AEF to individual authorities will be announced in the usual way in the autumn.

In reaching the settlement, I have assumed that local authorities will contribute £11·5 million to the third year of the policy of harmonisation of non-domestic rate poundages north and south of the Border.

This represents a realistic settlement, especially in the light of the fall in inflation. If local authorities budget responsibly there should be no reason why community charge levels need increase significantly next year. But if authorities do not budget responsibly, I shall not hesitate to use the new strengthened capping powers which, subject to the enactment of the Local Government Finance and Valuation Bill, I shall have available. I intend to announce provisional capping criteria for next year in the early autumn, so that local authorities can take them into account in their budget setting.

I commend the settlement to the House.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I start by welcoming the additional banding for the new rating system, although, as I am sure the Secretary of State will understand, we shall want to look carefully at the figures. Band G looks remarkably wide.

I am sure that the Secretary of State will accept that, having been forced to admit that the Labour party was right about the poll tax and the property tax, he is once again in full retreat. On the day on which the new system was announced in the House, the right hon. Gentleman told me:

"it is right to have a system where the range will vary no more than two and a half times between the top band and the bottom band".—[*Official Report*, 23 April 1991; Vol. 189, c.930.]

During Scottish questions on 15 May the Under-Secretary of State said:

"owners in the top band will pay about two and a half times the amount that owners of properties in the smallest band will pay, and that is perfectly fair."—[*Official Report*, 15 May 1991; Vol. 191, c. 270.]

Will the Secretary of State tell us what the equivalent figure is now that the additional band is in place? If the system as it stood was perfectly fair why has he been forced to make an announcement today? I regret to say that the Under-Secretary of State gloried in the inequality of the proposal. He point blank refused to concede the case for change. The announcement is a step forward, but why did it take so long for Ministers to accept that on this issue the Labour party got it right?

I cannot share the Minister's optimism on the aggregate external finance figures. I understand that last year's figure was £4,353 million, and for a fair comparison we must add to that the cost of this year's £140 headline poll tax reduction scheme. That produces a figure of £4,841 million for 1991-92 as a starting point for the comparison. The increase for 1992-93 is thus only £281 million in cash terms, and if we apply an inflation figure of 6·5 per cent. —that is realistic, given current pay settlements and the growing responsibilities of local government—we see that, in real terms, there will be a cut.

The Secretary of State speaks of an increase of 6·1 per cent., but however he may dress the figures up, the increase for England was 7·2 per cent., as was announced earlier this afternoon. It is impossible to draw conclusions on local taxation levels until the grant-aided expenditure assessment is known, but what matters to the poll tax payer is the gap between aggregate external finance and the sum that has to be raised by the local authority.

Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that, in setting grant-aided expenditure for next year, he must take into account the adjustment of 1·5 per cent. for under-provision this year because of pay and price increases, the real cost of local government inflation, the cost of running in the new taxation system and the disastrous shortfall in poll tax revenue? Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that in order to maintain services it looks as though the increase in budgets set by local authorities will have to be an aggregate of about £500 million. Does the right hon. Gentleman not realise that the best way of helping to cope with the poll tax chaos would be to abolish the 20 per cent. rule now?

I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman has studied the citizens charter carefully. Does he recall that it promises increased powers for the Audit Commission? Would it not therefore be sensible to listen to the Audit Commission's clear statement that the cost of collecting the 20 per cent. payments is two and a half times greater than the net yield to the Exchequer? The 20 per cent. rule should go now. If we are to take the citizens charter seriously, surely there is an unbreakable case for abolishing the 20 per cent. rule. Would it not be sensible for the Government to pay the money spent on the £140 poll tax reduction scheme across the board, and not to default on the grounds that individuals have reneged, or have been unable to meet their responsibilities?

Does the Secretary of State remember that, last week, the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities gave an assurance that, in finalising grant payments, consideration would be given to basing the community charge grant on an authority's original payment assumption rather than on its actual collection rate payments? Is that still on the agenda?

Yesterday, we had a tidal wave of rhetoric about better public services and the citizens charter. Does the Secretary of State accept that, however good the intentions, if the resources are not provided, there will be nothing of substance? In the light of today's announcement, the citizens charter looks ever more like an exercise in window dressing.

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for welcoming my announcement of the change in the banding arrangements, although I do not know why he thinks it so remarkable that, following consultation—which was the basis of the publication of our proposals—we listened to the representations that we received and reached the view that it was sensible to add another band to the existing

[Mr. Lang]

bands for valuation purposes. The effect will be to change the difference between the tax bills at the top band and the bottom band from 2·5 times to three times. The effect will be that the cost in respect of a property in the top band will be roughly twice that for an average-value property and about three times that for a property in the lowest band. The hon. Gentleman asked about the consultation process, and I should have thought that that was exactly what consultation was all about.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about the community charge reduction scheme. That, too, will be able to continue forward into next year. The purpose of the scheme is to reduce the burden placed on individuals as a result of high spending by local authorities. It is therefore relevant that the payments in respect of that should relate to the payments made by those local authorities.

Using his own arithmetic, the hon. Gentleman tried to convert an increase in real terms into a cut in real terms. He should look at the figures that I have given him. An increase of 6·1 per cent. is a real increase, over and above the rate of inflation. The hon. Gentleman also compared the figures in Scotland with the figures in England. I must point out to him that, on 1990-91 figures, the local expenditure level per head in Scotland is £1,309, compared with £988 in England. In other words, spending in Scotland is no less than 30 per cent. higher than in England and Wales. The local authorities should reflect upon that. If they could get their spending down to that of comparable authorities in other parts of the country, the burden placed on the community charge payer as a result of local government spending would be substantially reduced.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I thank my right hon. Friend for his announcement but, in allocating resources, will he bear in mind the fact that running services and building houses in rural areas is very expensive and try to weight payments to local authorities in that position? My right hon. Friend said that he would transfer £50 million to local authorities from his own budget, and that gives me some concern. Can he assure me that the momentum on constructing the M74 and on improving the A7 will not be lost as a result?

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments. When it comes to the allocation of grant to each individual local authority, I shall certainly bear in mind what he said about rural areas. It is certainly true that regions and districts in rural areas have been more successful in collecting community charge than many in urban areas. I also note what my hon. Friend said about the high priority that he attaches to the roads expenditure programme and, in particular, to the M74. However, I am sure that he would not wish me to anticipate decisions that must be taken later in the year.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Does the Secretary of State accept that the fact that he has had to review the banding arrangements for the council tax before it has even been implemented emphasises, first, what an inflexible tax it is, secondly, that it lacks natural indexation and, thirdly, that he should have adopted a local income tax in the first place? The right hon. Gentleman is not satisfying the House with his explanation of why Scotland should get 6·1 per cent., England 7·2 per cent. and Wales 8·5 per cent. Given the extra burdens that are being placed on local authorities, will not the proposals inevitably put a squeeze on local services and lead to cuts because the Government propose to poll tax cap those that try to find the money elsewhere? When will the right hon. Gentleman explain to us what cuts will take place elsewhere in the Scottish Office to fund the £50 million that he has had to transfer? Are not we being cut both ways?

Mr. Lang: I suppose that, if one is a Liberal Democrat, one may manage to reach that conclusion, but it bears no relation to the truth. The whole point of the consultation process is to hear views and then to react to them and, so far from showing inflexibility, we are demonstrating flexibility by adopting the change in the banding system.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the £50 million transfer from the block to the aggregate external finance settlement. It is true that that diminishes the extra resources that we shall have available for increased spending in the next public expenditure round, but it does not in itself constitute a cut.

The hon. Gentleman made the comparison between Scotland and England. It is true that the settlement in Scotland is smaller, as a percentage, than in England and Wales, and that is because spending in Scotland is 30 per cent. higher than in England and Wales. I repeat that spending per head in Scotland was £1,309 in the year 1990-91, compared with £988 in England. If spending per head in Scotland were closer to the levels in England, the settlement in Scotland as a percentage could be considerably higher.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): In presenting this excellent increase in our benefits in Scotland, will my right hon. Friend remind all those on the Opposition Benches—hon. Members representing all parties—that all that that they have to offer the people of Scotland are increased and multiplied taxes and reduced benefits, as that that cannot be said too often?

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend. I am sure that he will agree with me that it is remarkable that, in the current year, AEF per adult is 22 per cent. higher in Scotland than in Wales and no less than 47 per cent. higher than in England, and that aggregate grants to local authorities have increased by 6·4 per cent. in the past five years. No one can accuse the Government of not funding local government spending in Scotland adequately.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): When will the Secretary of State recognise that he is not engaged in an arid mathematical exercise but is dealing with the real needs and real lives of people in Scotland? He says that £50 million will be transferred. Can he guarantee that that transfer will in no way damage housing, especially in Aberdeen and the north-west of Scotland, where there is a great deal of pressure?

When the right hon. Gentleman eventually announces the distribution, will he take into account the strong representations from Grampian regional council to the effect that it is not getting a proper share of roads expenditure? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, in the Grampian region, where the headline poll tax is less than it was last year, people on rebates, at the lower end of the scale, are paying more in cash terms this year than

last because the Government have not properly addressed the support system for them? Will the right hon. Gentleman consider those points urgently?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman asked about the £50 million transfer. I can confirm that the existing housing programme will not be affected because the resources will come from the increased resources that would otherwise have been available to increase spending in Scotland next year.

We do not apportion spending on roads on a regional or district basis; we assess the needs of the roads programme across the whole of Scotland. If the hon. Gentleman studies the arithmetic, he will see that there has been a dramatic increase in real terms in roads expenditure under this Government, compared with a 30 per cent. cut under the previous Government.

The hon. Gentleman asked about rebates for Grampian residents. I can only say that their rebates would be worth more to them, and that the net cost of their poll tax would be less, if Grampian had not increased its poll tax to such a large extent.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I shall endeavour to call those hon. Members who are rising but I again remind the House that we have 36 amendments to the Ports Bill and eight consolidation measures to consider. I therefore ask for single questions because that will help us to get on.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Bearing in mind the fact that members of local authorities who incur irresponsible or reckless expenditure can be surcharged and banned from public office, can we now expect the entire Cabinet, including the Secretary of State for Scotland, to be surcharged and banned because of their collective responsibility for the most blatantly foolish and expensive blunder ever perpetrated in the history of local government—the poll tax? Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that the poll tax has already cost more than £1,000 million to administer and collect and that the Government should abolish it now rather than waiting until 1993—especially in Scotland, where we had to suffer it a year earlier than England and Wales?

Mr. Lang: As the hon. Gentleman knows, we got rid of the domestic rating system a year earlier in Scotland than in England and Wales. Moreover, the cost of administering the community charge would have been considerably reduced, and the efficiency of the community charge considerably increased, if hon. Members such as the hon. Gentleman and Scottish National party Members had not been so grossly irresponsible as not to pay their own poll tax and to discourage others from doing so.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): The Secretary of State referred to a meeting that the Under-Secretary of State had with the convention of Scottish Local Authorities. The Secretary of State will be aware that Strathclyde has a shortfall of £70 million in spite of the fact that it has done everything to gather in the poll tax. Will responsible authorities like Strathclyde be further penalised? The Secretary of State knows full well that, because of high unemployment, people in my constituency and in many others look to the local authorities to employ labour. There is even more pressure on those authorities than there was 10 or 12 years ago.

Mr. Lang: I acknowledge that Strathclyde has made some efforts to contain its expenditure. Nevertheless, it forms part of the overall problem that we face in Scotland of very substantial local authority increases. Over the past five years, local authority current expenditure has increased by 8 per cent. in real terms. That kind of real-terms increase creates massive problems. However, we will consider the apportionment of resources later in the year and will take account of the client group approach developed in committee, in which COSLA is represented.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Why does the Secretary of State for Scotland always fare worse than the Secretaries of State for Wales and for the Environment in negotiations on behalf of the spending powers of local authorities? Did I hear the Secretary of State correctly? Is it really his ambition as Secretary of State for Scotland to reduce the spending by Scottish local authorities to the level of English and Welsh local authorities? If that is his purpose in Cabinet, the quicker he tells the Scottish local authorities and the people of Scotland, the better. The effect that that will have on services in Scotland will be absolutely disastrous.

Mr. Lang: Having served as a Minister, the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) must be aware that what matters is the quality of services provided. I believe that it is possible to provide services in Scotland that are comparable with those in England and Wales at far less cost than is being charged at the moment. I do not believe that services in Scotland are 30 per cent. better than services in England and Wales. That is why spending per head in 1990-91 in Scotland was £1,309 compared with £988 in England. That is not a defensible difference, and it cannot be accounted for simply because of the difference in the quality of services.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): The Secretary of State has today announced a cut in real terms. I remind him that I wrote to him three weeks ago about cuts in the infrastructure in my constituency and referred to the Stonehouse by-pass. Will the Secretary of State's announcement today make that bypass more or less likely?

Mr. Lang: The Stonehouse bypass will be covered by capital expenditure, which will be announced later in the year, and not by this settlement.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): The Secretary of State said that adjustments would have to be made in other aspects of the Scottish Office budget to meet the settlement. Precisely what will those adjustments involve? Can he assure us that they will not affect community care or safety in the streets? The Secretary of State paid tribute to Strathclyde, which has tried to balance its budget in the face of overwhelming odds. Will he therefore encourage the Scottish Tory party to withdraw the appalling leaflets that it published and included in free newpapers distributed by people on poverty wages, which blame Strathclyde for the lack of policemen, something which is entirely the Government's responsibility?

Mr. Lang: The shortfall in police numbers in Strathclyde is entirely at the discretion of Strathclyde regional council. We have increased the proportion of central Government funding and have made resources available for the council to increase its resources in that respect. With regard to adjustments to the rest of my

[Mr. Lang]

spending programme as a result of the £50 million that I have added to the local government settlement, that will reduce the capacity to increase spending in some other areas. However, I can assure the hon. Gentleman that, with regard to community care, the additional costs falling on local government next year as a result of phase 2 of community care have been taken into account in the settlement.

Mr. Gordon McMaster (Paisley, South): Is the Secretary of State aware that the poll tax is suffering a slow, lingering, painful death, and that his statement today only adds to that pain? How does he justify the fact that senior citizens who do not receive income support are being asked to pay more poll tax this year than they paid last year? How can he explain to that group of people, whose only crime has been to contribute to a wee works pension, that they had been made worse off under the community charge reduction scheme while he has been made better off and they must fork out the extra VAT to pay for that?

Mr. Lang: The increased settlement was 10·4 per cent. last year, and that was substantially above the rate of inflation. The situation has arisen because local authorities have chosen to increase their spending above the rate of inflation and thus to increase the burden on their residents. The solution for the residents is to elect a council that will control its expenditure and reduce the burden on the residents.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Many poor people in my constituency would benefit financially if the 20 per cent. poll tax contribution were abolished forthwith. Thousands of people in my constituency receive social welfare incomes. Will the Secretary of State consider most sympathetically the needs of Inverclyde district council in respect of his comments about allocation allocations to councils? We face many problems in Inverclyde, and I believe that Inverclyde district council is worthy of sympathetic consideration in view of the massive problems with which it is seeking to deal at the moment.

Mr. Lang: That point will have to be considered together with other local authorities later in the year. With regard to the point raised by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) about the 20 per cent. rule—a point that was also raised by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), but which I am sorry that I did not respond to earlier—we have given that careful consideration.

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow will recognise that the community charge operated as a package scheme. It had a funding arrangement, a rebate, transitional and community charge reduction schemes, and income support was increased to take account of the 20 per cent. balance required from those on maximum rebate. We have developed a new and different scheme in the context of the council tax. Resources have been made available to people on maximum rebates and irresponsible non-payment campaigns and, in some cases, less than enthusiastic pursuit of non-payers by local authorities, have led those people into difficulties.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Are the Scottish assessors happy to work under the direction of the Inland Revenue commissioners? What percentage of the new council tax will be derived from the new band that the Secretary of State has introduced? Will he give us some idea of the gearing effect on the poll tax in Scotland? What percentage of total local authority finance is likely to come from the poll tax? In view of the letter that the Minister sent me about the collection of the tax and cost-effectiveness, will the Secretary of State consider the cost-effective collection of the tax and abolish attempts by local authorities to collect the tax from people on income support and those in full-time education? That cannot be cost-effective by any standards.

Mr. Lang: The answers to the hon. Gentleman's four questions are: yes, Sir; 1 per cent.; 11·3 per cent.; and no, Sir.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): Will the Secretary of State explain how the new banding will work in a city like Edinburgh unless he agrees to single dwelling evaluation? In the Royal Mile in Edinburgh which has a palace at one end, a castle at the other and quite low-value houses in the middle, would those houses be in band H, band A or somewhere in between?

Mr. Lang: The scheme will work just as well in Edinburgh and in exactly the same way as it will in the rest of Scotland. The assessors will decide in which band the relevant property should be placed, and it will be open to the householder to appeal against that. The cost to be borne by residents in Edinburgh will depend on the policies of Edinburgh district council. When I reflect on the fact that that council's expenditure has risen by 70 per cent. since 1984—twice the rate of inflation—and that its staffing has increased by 40 per cent. over that period, I cannot help feeling a great deal of sympathy for the residents of Edinburgh under a Labour administration.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): Does not the Secretary of State realise that this £5·1 billion settlement means that next year, for the ninth year running, the Government's support for Lothian and Edinburgh will be bottom of the Scottish league table of support for regional councils, and that next year it is likely that spending in Edinburgh will continue to be below the Scottish average for the eighth year running? The Secretary of State is making sure that people in his constituency receive free bus passes, so why is he so much against free bus passes for senior citizens and disabled people in my constituency?

Mr. Lang: That is absolute nonsense. Lothian region had an increase in its revenue support grant of 13 per cent. last year, which is more than double the present rate of inflation. Of course, Lothian residents are quite happy to contend with the fact that the number of staff employed by Lothian region has risen by no fewer than 520 in the past three years, including 62 social workers and 31 non-teaching staff. However, this year 50 teachers have been sacked against that background. The residents of Lothian region should reconsider who should be running the regional council.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Why is the Secretary of State so determined to keep his party's discredited and demented poll tax system in operation until 1993? He managed to impose it a year early in

Scotland. Would it be beyond the wit of the Scottish Office team to get rid of it a wee bit earlier in our part of the country? Will he please address the situation in Lothian regional council and the grotesque distortion of the way in which revenue support grant and other Government support has been directed to that region and the districts within that region? Has not that unfair distribution of grant led to hardship, difficulties and cuts in Lothian this year? Will he please address that point?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman asked me to bring in the council tax a wee bit earlier in Scotland. Obviously, it cannot be brought in a wee bit earlier; it can be brought in either a year earlier or a year later. It must be brought in on an annual basis as compared with the rest of the country. In fact, 1993 is the earliest realistic date on which any change in the community charge could be contemplated. Anybody who suggests that such changes of any form could be introduced earlier is talking absolute nonsense.

I have already outlined the increase in staffing numbers in Lothian. Lothian reduced its charge by £37 million quite quickly and voluntarily after I had announced my undertaking to cap it. The consequence of that was to reduce its budget by £18·5 million, which was actually less than 3 per cent. of its planned expenditure. Any efficiently run local authority would be able to take account of such a reduction without adversely affecting important services.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): The Secretary of State referred in his statement to money being put into the settlement for care in the community. Will he say how much that was? Otherwise, there is unlikely to be a trusting atmosphere about that programme. Is care in the community being properly funded, and to what extent? I cannot see why it is not possible to tell us how much in the settlement is being transferred to care in the community. Similarly, there is reference in the statement to extra funding for local authorities because of the transfer of responsibilities to local authorities. What are those responsibilities, and how have they been costed?

Can we be quite clear about the Secretary of State's attitude to higher expenditure in Scotland? On education, for example, it is true that there is higher expenditure due to local authorities resisting the Government's wishes in respect of education in Scotland, and that yields good results. The Government were saying just last week that higher numbers stay on in Scotland. Is it the Government's intention that local authorities should go down to English levels of staying on and English levels of expenditure on education in Scotland?

The Secretary of State has not dealt with the central idiocy of the 20 per cent. rule. It costs local authorities more money to collect the 20 per cent. than the income that they gain. Is not that a very stupid way of conducting local government? Is it not about time that the Government realised that and abolished the 20 per cent. rule?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman's last point is a matter for local authorities and their auditors and legal advisers. As for staying on at school, the hon. Gentleman will know that we have an excellent record of increasing the numbers staying on at school, and we intend firmly to build on that record. We are keen also to expand further and higher education, and are already doing so with dramatic success, having increased the figures very remarkably from those that we inherited in 1979.

On the additional burdens falling on local government, the cost of the next phase of care in the community has been estimated at £11 million, the cost of introducing the council tax at £24 million, and the cost of other general increases at about £24 million, giving a total of about £59 million.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I place on record the undying admiration of the House of your endurance, occupying the Chair for four hours and 10 minutes without a break, against the background of yesterday's statements about faulty waterworks somewhere else in England? It is reassuring to know that at least one waterworks is in perfect working order.

Mr. Speaker: I was going to suggest to the hon. Member that he should not raise a point of order, but I am very grateful for what he said.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it equally helpful?

Mr. Madden: I am sorry to prolong your occupancy of the Chair. I genuinely apologise for having to raise this point of order, but it is about an important matter.

In the past, you have deprecated the practice of parliamentary reports being released to the media before Members of Parliament received them. The Select Committee on Health——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that I can anticipate the hon. Member on this matter. He is aware that he cannot refer in the House to a report that has not yet been made. It is a Select Committee report. It will be possible for him to do that tomorrow when the report is published, but not today, please.

Mr. Madden: It is about the availability of the report. I wonder whether you would give the necessary instructions so that the report is available to hon. Members simultaneously with the press at 11 am tomorrow. It is particularly important, as allegations are being made that the report in draft—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I know about the allegations. As to the availability of the report, the hon. Member knows that it is a matter for the Committee, and not for me in the Chair. We should move on.

WAYS AND MEANS

PORTS BILL [WAYS AND MEANS] (NO. 2)

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Ports Bill, it is expedient to authorise a levy in respect of gains accruing to any company to which the undertaking of a harbour authority is transferred under the Act on disposals of——

(a) land which belongs both immediately before and immediately after the transfer to a transferred 51 per cent. subsidiary;

(b) interests in land which belong both immediately before and immediately after the transfer to a transferred 51 per cent. subsidiary;

(c) interests in land within paragraph (a) above or in land in which an interest within paragraph (b) above subsists at the time of the transfer.—*[Mr. McLoughlin.]*

Orders of the Day

Ports Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 2

TRANSFER OF UNDERTAKINGS

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 2, line 23, leave out "statutory provision of local application" and insert "local statutory provision".

6.36 pm

The Minister for Shipping (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 21, 22, 29 and 34.

Mr. McLoughlin: These amendments are largely technical. They arise from the existing provision in schedule 1 for transfer schemes to provide for

"repealing or amending any statutory provision of local application".

By appearing to limit the provisions which could be repealed or amended to ones which were applicable only locally—that is, within a limited territorial area—it is possible that that expression might be taken to exclude, for example, a port authority's borrowing powers, leaving the new successor company encumbered with the old authority's more limited borrowing powers. It is precisely such statutory limits that the Bill would remove.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I am extremely grateful to the Minister for showing his characteristic courtesy to me. Has he or his officials received any intimation whatsoever from the Clyde port authority concerning its private Bill which would privatise that authority? Has it decided to pull up stumps and go home?

Mr. McLoughlin: As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State made perfectly clear on Second Reading, that is a matter for the Clyde port authority. Obviously, I hope that it will have the benefit of the Bill being on the statute book in a short time. It will be for it to decide which course to follow. It is likely to follow the course of the Bill that we are discussing.

Having briefly explained that the amendments are technical, I commend them to the House.

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): The intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) demonstrates the great concern about there being a public Bill and a private Bill. It was only as the private Bill went through the House that it was realised that the Treasury had to become involved to start getting money out of local trusts. The amendment went through the other place virtually without discussion, which means that we cannot oppose it at this stage. However, I wish to record once again our concern that this legislation is not doing its best for local communities. In effect, the interests of the port are being divorced from

those of the local community. As we have just heard, until now, ports have tended to act in the interests of their local community.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 3

INITIAL ISSUE OF SECURITIES OF THE SUCCESSOR COMPANY

Lords amendment: No. 2, in page 3, line 7, leave out "In consideration of" and insert "Following".

Mr. McLoughlin: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I must inform the House that the amendment involves privilege.

With this it will be convenient also to consider amendments Nos. 26, 27, 28 and 33.

Mr. McLoughlin: The aim of this group of amendments is to ensure that the Bill's provisions regarding the issue of securities by the successor company are compatible with a technical provision of an EC directive on company law, while at the same time maintaining the tax treatment of those securities.

Ms. Walley: Again, we have further proof that this legislation is not about improving transport or about establishing an integrated transport structure. Amendment No. 2 shows the need for the face of the Bill to be changed because of the Bill's fundamental incompatibility with company law and with an EC directive on company law. The provisions were not voted on in the other place and, at this stage, we do not wish to oppose the amendment.

Question put and agreed to. [Special Entry.]

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 5

CONTROL BY APPROPRIATE MINISTER OVER EXERCISE OF AUTHORITY'S FUNCTIONS UNDER SECTIONS 3 AND 4

Lords amendment: No. 3, in page 4, line 13, leave out from "disposal" to end of line 14 and insert—

"of the whole or a substantial part of the equity share capital of the successor company to—

(a) managers or other persons employed by the company; or

(b) another company the whole or a substantial part of whose equity share capital is owned by managers or other persons so employed."

Mr. McLoughlin: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 23 and 30.

Mr. McLoughlin: The amendments aim to rectify a possible shortcoming in the Bill's provisions enabling support to be given to a management and employee team engaged in bidding for a port.

Where such a situation exists, it is normally the case that the managers and individuals involved, rather than acting as a group of individuals, will form a company to act as a vehicle for making the bid. It was possible that, on a strict interpretation of the Bill's provisions, such a company would not have qualified for support because the wording used—

"managers and other persons employed"—

could have been held to refer only to individuals. This group of amendments is intended to preclude that possibility.

6.45 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): Opposition Members believe that these amendments go to the heart of the Bill as it stands, because they deal with the subject of management buy-outs. We are grateful for the fact that, when the amendments were discussed in the other place, as a result of probing by the Opposition, we were given the Secretary of State's guidance notes relating to the procedure for the sale of trust ports. The notes form a most helpful document.

I asked the Leader of the House to consider incorporating the guidelines into the Bill, so important are they, but there was not sufficient time. As the right hon. Gentleman said on the Floor of the House at the time, I accept that it might have been on the late side, but, as I have said, we discovered that the guidelines existed only as a result of the prodding of Opposition Peers. Not only did that reveal the existence of the guidance notes, but it led to their being placed in the Library. I am grateful to the Secretary of State for Transport for making his final guidelines available.

I am sure that the Minister can confirm that the guidelines that have been produced by the Secretary of State will cover all trust ports, including the Tees and Hartlepool. Although we have consistently opposed the movement of the Tees and Hartlepool port into the private sector, as the will of Parliament is reflected in the Bill and in the amendments that have been tabled in the other place, it is of the utmost importance to put on record our view that a satisfactory employee buy-out would be the best option available to the Tees and Hartlepool—provided, of course, that it was a valid buy-out, on behalf of the employees, and not a glorified management buy-out, which some of us suspect to have been the present management's long-term objective when they embarked on their own privatisation scheme through the private Bill route.

We must place the amendments in the context of paragraph 15 of the Secretary of State's guidance notes relating to the procedure for the sale of trust ports, which state:

"that the trust port will be required to appoint appropriate advisers to provide it with an independent benchmark valuation of the undertaking and an independent assessment of the bids received.

This assessment should include advice as to whether the bids properly reflect the value of the port undertaking . . . that the trust port will need to make this benchmark valuation and assssement available to the Secretary of State in putting forward its own proposals regarding the sale of the port to the Secretary of State for his agreement.

That these proposals will need to take into account the extent to which the bids meet the objectives of sale and will not therefore necessarily recommend that the highest bid should be accepted."

That last point is of the utmost importance in the context of these amendments to clause 5.

The guidance notes also state:

"a trust port may wish to recommend that a price preference should be applied to a bid from a management and employee buy out team.

[Mr. Stuart Bell]

The Secretary of State will be prepared to consider a limited preference of this kind in individual cases and will have regard to the particular circumstances of each case."

As can be seen from the amendments, the Government are in a dilemma of their own making. On the one hand, as we saw in Committee, thanks to the work of hon. Members of all parties, they concluded that management buy-outs should be encouraged. On the other hand, however, they are enamoured of the principle of competitive tendering—in fact, they are so enamoured that that phrase appeared yesterday in the so-called citizen's charter which was announced by the Prime Minister.

What is to happen to the Tees and Hartlepool and the other trust ports that are covered by the Bill? Will the management buy-out be given preferential treatment, or will that management buy-out have only a limited prospect of success, being faced with a more gigantic bid from an outside firm that might even be a foreign firm? We are not, of course, allergic to foreigners on Teesside, and especially not to European foreigners.

In racing terms, I am reminded of the apprenticeship races in which, having had 10 winners, the apprentice loses his apprenticeship status. I am glad to see that the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) is, as usual, in his place for such a debate. Far be it from me to say that an apprentice, who has a big race coming up and who does not want to lose his apprenticeship status, will hang back, but that was always the case in the stories that I read of old.

It would not be surprising at this stage if, like the apprentice with nine wins to his credit, the Tees and Hartlepool decided not to push itself to be first past the post. In other words, the Tees and Hartlepool might not benefit from the amendments and might not want to be the first in line for privatisation, because it knows that it might be swallowed up by a competitor or foreign company and that its management buy-out would then be left high and dry.

Dr. Godman: Is my hon. Friend satisfied that, following a buy-out or the privatisation of a trust port, the new authority would not be able to evade the responsibilities that the Port authority currently carries out? The important dredging operation on the upper reaches of the Clyde is now carried out by the Clyde port authority. That essential task must be carried out, or the river will silt up.

Mr. Bell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his intervention, but I am not the Minister of the Crown who can or should answer that question. My understanding of the Bill is that the dredging would fall within the statutory authority of the port and would be a statutory requirement for whoever takes over the port. A port would be disadvantaged, because investment in it might suffer if the proposed buy-out came from a firm that decided to invest elsewhere. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing that point to my attention and to that of the House.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): My hon. Friend cannot be completely familiar with the upper reaches of the Clyde. I wish to put it on the record that the Clyde port authority has a power which allows it to dredge the Clyde but that it has no duty to do so. That will be the case in the future. We are fearful that an entirely commercially oriented body would be interested only in property development and not in the welfare of the river. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for letting me put that point.

Mr. Bell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point. Undoubtedly, the Minister will respond to it. It is on the record, and it is an important point. It is one of the reasons why the Opposition consistently opposed the privatisation of the ports, as embodied in the Bill.

To return to the amendments, trust ports might also like to take the opportunity of a management buy-out. My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) mentioned the Clyde Port Authority Bill. It is becalmed in the other place and will be extinct when the Bill is given Royal Assent. A private Bill is extinguished when it is confronted with a statutory measure such as this.

Other trust ports may take the view that they should wait to see what happens with the Tees and Hartlepool port authority proposals before going ahead with their own management buy-out proposals. They might conclude that they should wait for two years in accordance with the terms of the Bill and then have the Secretary of State demand their plans for privatisation.

The board of the Tees and Hartlepool port authority might be well advised to leave its privatisation bid until two years have elapsed after the Bill is enacted rather than seek privatisation and lose out, like the apprentice who wins his 10th race and loses his apprenticeship status. Indeed, my advice to the Tees and Hartlepool port authority is that, unless it can obtain a categorical assurance from the Secretary of State that the management buy-out is acceptable under the terms of the guidelines, it is ill advised to be the first port to seek privatisation and face the prospect of the port falling into foreign hands.

A great debate took place in the other place on these amendments. I shall not refer to that debate today. The Secretary of State's guidelines were referred to. While the Opposition pressed hard in the other place to ensure that the guidelines gave first priority to a management buy-out rather than competitive tendering, we were given no assurance in the other place that the amendments would give preference to a management buy-out. My specific question to the Minister is whether there will be a preference for a management buy-out or whether it will be only a limited preference, which will amount to no preference at all.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I apologise to my hon. Friend the Minister for stepping in at this stage. If it is in any consolation, I assure him that I do not intend to speak many times. I appreciate that the Bill has been carefully considered by the Committee, but I wish to make one minor point.

As hon. Members will be aware from the Register of Members' interests, I have been an adviser to the Port of London Police Federation for many years. In that connection, I wish to raise a minor issue on amendment No. 21, which refers to the transfer of local regulations. The Port of London authority has the power to have a police force. As my hon. Friend the Minister will be aware, we are transferring that power to the port of Tilbury. One of the advantages of such a transfer is that, as we are all aware, Tilbury has a splendid Member of Parliament to look after its interests. However, my hon. Friend the

Minister will be aware that, in the transfer from the port of London to the port of Tilbury, the persons involved will lose considerably, even though they will do the same job, in the same place and in the same way.

The port of Tilbury is certainly as aware as the port of London of the immense benefit of having a statutory police force. But the Minister will be aware of the losses that people will face. First, the tradition has been that PLA police salaries were in line with Metropolitan police salaries. That will not necessarily be guaranteed after the transfer. The rent allowance was linked to the Metropolitan police but in future will be related to the Essex police.

I know that my hon. Friend the Minister is a kindly person who, throughout his activities on the Bill, has shown consideration for all the people involved. But we must remember that, in such a transfer, we transfer not only cranes but people. I hope that the Minister can assure us that, although there is adequate provision to protect individuals' pension rights, there will also be some basis on which individuals can seek arbitration, understanding or some assurance that they will not lose if they do the same job in the same way in the same place.

I hope that the Minister will bear it in mind that, if the port of Tilbury is transferred to a trust and a company is established to run it, we shall have no guarantee about what will happen in five or 10 years. There is a real danger that assurances given by the port of Tilbury may not be inherited by a successor company.

Therefore, I hope that the Minister will give some thought to the matter and that he appreciates that it is necessary to safeguard the position and give some assurances to the port of London police who have served the port well, who will continue to do the same job extremely well and who are rather worried about their future.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): I wish to take up the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell), which was given great emphasis in Committee, about our worries about those who take responsibility for our ports. As I have said on previous occasions, the ports will remain an important part of Britain's economy and transport structure, but in view of what has already happened in the ports and of the Lords amendments, it appears that the Government have neglected to deal with the future of the port transport industry in Britain. Our anxiety remains.

Those who have an interest in the ports industry are those who work in it and operate the ports. The evidence is that, almost without exception, the ports have been run successfully over many years by the people who managed and worked in them. Therefore, the possibility of a management takeover is very important. I re-emphasise the points made on that matter. Whatever powers the Government have in the Bill, they must ensure that the bodies that inherit our ports will be responsible by statute for upholding all the necessary practices in the port transport industry.

We have all expressed anxiety about dredging, conservancy and other matters. I hope that, even at this late stage, the Government will undertake to monitor what happens in our ports and ensure that any movement away from the port's interest is arrested and that our ports retain a future and are not surrendered to the rest of Europe.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): After the bizarre intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor), I am not sure what we are supposed to be debating. I thought that we were debating the amendments to which the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) addressed himself. I should like to get back to those amendments by assuring you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the hon. Gentleman and the House that you need not worry about the Tees and Hartlepool port authority. It is in good hands—apart from anyone else's, mine. That means that the hon. Gentleman need not worry whether the port will be slow off the mark in seeking privatisation by the management team.

If the hon. Member for Middlesbrough, the backwoodsmen on Teeside and those who live in the past instead of the future had allowed my private Bill to go through, the port would already be privatised, we would have the new business, and jobs would be available. The Labour party, as ever, went further and further backwards.

7 pm

I am not too displeased about that, because it is beginning to show the people in the north-east of England that, over the centuries and the decades, it has been socialism that has held back the region. We in the north-east are now doing away with socialism, and we are seeing the benefits. Jobs are flowing in the area. Despite the recession, the north-east is the one area in the country where the jobs position has improved in the past few months, and it continues to do so. Much results from the work of the development corporations. Much could have been the result of the development of the Tees and Hartlepool port authority, if the legislation had not been brought to a halt in another place.

One hears and talks about democracy, yet three wayward peers in another place can stop the will of this House. I was interested to hear the hon. Gentleman speak of the "will of the House". That will was usurped in another place. It did not matter, because, as ever, the Government came to the rescue with their Bill, which is probably improved as a result of the pioneer work that I did on the private Bill.

When the Minister replies, he will undoubtedly make it clear that the Tees and Hartlepool port authority is not like the apprentice waiting for ever to ride a 10th winner. All apprentices must ride that 10th winner as quickly as possible because afterwards they can ride a Derby winner and win the real prizes. That is what the Tees and Hartlepool authority will do.

Dr. Godman: I would not dream of engaging in the debate on the state of socialism in the north-east of England, because you, Mr. Speaker, would rule me out of order. As a Member of Parliament in another country from that of the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt), I can tell him that it is the Conservative party that is slipping away in Scotland, but I shall not go further down that road, either.

The amendments may improve matters slightly for the Clyde port authority. The Clyde Port Authority Bill seems to have foundered in the other place, or perhaps it has just come to some sort of anchorage—I say foundered, and the Minister talks about anchorage. A management-employee buy-out of the Clyde port authority may be vastly superior

[Dr. Godman]

in all sorts of ways to the management buy-out envisaged in the private Bill that has either come to grief or is tied up somewhere.

Recently, there was a management-employee buy-out in Dundee and the operation is heading towards success. I am referring to a major bus company. The Transport and General Workers Union and the employers, with financial advice from, I think, the Clydesdale bank, although it may be the Royal bank of Scotland, bought the company. They are not turning it into a co-operative. They have set up a company which meets the entirely legitimate demands and requirements of the work force. The same should be done on the Clyde.

Port authorities must meet obligations, so that ports and estuaries can survive. In that respect, I wish to raise with the Minister the important question of dredging the Clyde. A management buy-out may be less of a prospect if no financial assistance is provided for the form of dredging that is so important on the Clyde. I simply remind the Minister of that. The cost of buying another dredging vessel, for example, may deter a management buy-out. Therefore, it is an important consideration. When these authorities are privatised, they must honour their obligations to local communities and local work forces.

Ms. Walley: The debate about employee-management buy-outs was developed extensively in Committee. We were disappointed that there was nothing in the Bill at the outset about how they could be achieved. The amendments and their further clarification is some proof that we made some progress on the idea.

As my hon. Friends have already admirably pointed out, there is a gap between what we would like to see and how the Bill is finally shaping up. Although we have got some concessions from the Government on this, the legislation is inadequate. Given the discussions in another place, at this late stage it is difficult to see how we can assure the trust ports that employee-management buy-outs will be favoured.

Mr. Bell: Can my hon. Friend refute the argument of the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) who, with his usual grace, entirely misunderstood my remarks? If the Tees and Hartlepool authority were to be the first in line for privatisation, as it does not have the clear-cut assurance from the Government that a management buy-out will be preferred to a competitive tendering bid, there is every likelihood that it will lose its management buy-out and end up in the hands of a foreign firm with no particular interest in Teesside. Is not that the point of not hurrying towards privatisation under amendments, but of waiting for two years to pass so that we can see exactly what foreign interest there is in our ports?

Ms. Walley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising the issue, in relation to Tees and Hartlepool in particular. Two private Bills proceeded through Parliament—one for the Clyde port authority and the other for the Tees and Hartlepool port authority—and it is clear to everybody that the proof of the pudding will be in how the Bill relates to and compares with the private business that came to such an abrupt end when it was previously considered in this House.

My hon. Friend is right: we want absolute priority for an employee-management buy-out proposal. He spelled out the position accurately. I should like to see whether the Tees and Hartlepool port authority decides to proceed with an employee-management buy-out. We should like that to happen and for the procedure to change only if the port does not wish so to proceed. We should give the port that opportunity. As my hon. Friend so clearly pointed out, the Bill gives no clearer commitment to an employee-management buy-out than the first draft of the legislation.

We do not want trust ports to be privatised. They should make a commitment to the local community. If the legislation is enacted on Thursday, we want it to include an absolute priority for employee-management buy-outs, should that be the wish of the port concerned.

As my hon. Friends have said, the legislation applies not only to Tees and Hartlepool, but to the London port of Tilbury. Many employees throughout the country may see the proposal as the best option in the circumstances, but they may feel worried that, in the market economy that prevails, it will not advantage those who wish to undertake an employee-management buy-out. I am going on at some length, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because this is an important issue which is fundamental to the Bill. We have wrung some concessions from the Government—*[Interruption.]* If the Home Office Minister wishes to make a contribution rather than interrupt from a sedentary position, he is most welcome to do so. We are pleased that it will be easier to have employee-management buy-outs.

Mr. Bell: The hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) said, in relation to the amendments, that there could be management buy-outs at Tees and Hartlepool. Is it not a fact that, had it not been for our opposition in Committee, helped by some Conservative Members—we are always glad to see the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman) in his place and look forward to his presence when we discuss the clawback—even the limited preference buy-out scheme that we now have would not exist? That is entirely due to our opposition in Committee in which we were aided by a few Conservative Members. The great golden dream of the hon. Member for Langbaurgh of a management buy-out on Teesside, for which he and his colleagues wish to take credit, would not have come about but for the opposition of Labour Members.

Ms. Walley: I am always glad to give credit where credit is due. My hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) is right to speak of the way in which the Opposition pressed for a policy that was not even included on the face of the Bill—albeit with some assistance from Conservative Members, who realised that ports could well be bought out by foreign interests and closed down because those foreign interests might have no regard for port activities. We take the credit for obtaining a firmer commitment to employee-management buy-outs. However, that commitment does not go far enough; we would like the Bill to have given complete priority to the concept of employee-management buy-outs, but that is not contained in the legislation.

Not long after we debated the issue in Committee, word came through that foreign firms, particularly Japanese, were interested in the London port of Tilbury. We expressed concern on behalf of the work force who, even if they had wanted to press for a management buy-out,

could not do so unless the Government could give a firm commitment, which the Government were perhaps unable to do. For those reasons, we are concerned that the amendment does not give the firm commitment to employee-management buy-outs for which we have constantly pressed. Many trust ports throughout the country share our views.

Dr. Godman: I was not a member of the Committee. I note my hon. Friend's misgivings about the amendments emanating from the other place. If the amendments are accepted, it would enable employees of the Clyde Port Authority to take a much more active part in the acquisition of the CPA than would have been the case under the terms of the Clyde Port Authority Bill, which came to grief in the other place. That is an important distinction, and it is why I gave the example of the Dundee bus company, where the employees and their representatives were part of the negotiating team discussing financial considerations. If the amendments are passed, CPA employees would at least have a more active involvement in their future than would have been the case under the terms of the dreadful CPA Bill.

Ms. Walley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and I am sure that his constituents in the Clyde district are aware of the point that he makes. We are concerned to make absolutely certain that employees who have given their life's work to the ports are as involved as possible in the port's future. We have to do so bearing in mind the fact that the employees have to contend with legislation that forces the ports to become privatised.

Dr. Godman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. I had not intended to take part in the debate, principally because I am not feeling very well.

Is my hon. Friend satisfied that European Community legislation cannot prevent the Government of the day from expressing sympathy for a management-employee buy-out as against the would-be acquisition of a port by some foreign multinational company?

7.15 pm

Ms. Walley: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. I can well foresee circumstances in which local employees may wish, at all costs, to proceed with an employee-management buy-out to avoid the horrendous implications of a foreign company buying out the trust port. If that could not be made possible because the provisions did not exist in the Bill, those employees would wish to use every option open to them to ensure the employee-management buy-out. We would insist on exploring our need to operate in harmony with European directives to ensure that employees do not lose the option of an employee-management buy-out.

Mr. Bell: I hesitate to intervene in the speech of my hon. Friend, but no doubt she has read—as I have—the debate on the amendments in the other place and will have noted the great anxiety felt there, as it was in Committee, about the possible privatisation of the port of Poole. We are glad to see the hon. Member for Poole (Mr. Ward) in his place tonight. In Committee, he expressed concern that the port of Poole might be privatised.

Is not the port of Poole a classic example of where, even though employees may not wish the port to be privatised, it may be privatised against their will? The amendments will facilitate that task. It might be opportune if we could hear the views of the hon. Member for Poole on the amendments. Does my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) agree that, although a port such as Tees and Hartlepool is even now reluctant to be privatised, other ports such as Poole are totally opposed to the idea?

Ms. Walley: I shall be guided by you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as to whether it would be in order for me to respond to the comments by my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough, which may have been slightly outside our remit.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Lady. I am getting worried that the discussion is almost turning into a Second Reading debate. I hope that most of the arguments will be used on this group of amendments and that after that we may proceed more rapidly.

Ms. Walley: I am grateful for your advice on that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would also understand if the hon. Member for Poole (Mr. Ward) wanted to intervene now, rather than later, but I have no doubt that he will make a contribution if he wants to.

There is anxiety throughout all the trust ports about the implications of the legislation. There is a fundamental objection to the amendments involving compulsion. However, if it is accepted that that argument has been lost and nothing more can be done, the amendments relating to employee-management buy-outs give the trust ports some let-out and provide the only opportunity for the ports to continue under the direction of local people who are concerned about them.

We should have liked the legislation to give complete priority to the concept of management-employee buy-outs —a concept that could have been modified and further clarified during the Bill's progress. At this late stage, there is still confusion because the Government have not said whether, if that concept is the preferred option, they will go along with it. That is a matter of great concern and regret to the Opposition.

We still do not know whether the Government will let employee-management buy-outs go ahead if other bids worth far more money are made. The trust ports share our concern. The principle of management-employee buy-outs had cross-party support in Committee. However, at the end of our deliberations we have been left with the same assurances that we had at the beginning. We have been told that the Government will consider what they can do. They will only consider, they will not give the firm commitment that my hon. Friends and I want.

We are forced to conclude that the Government are not keen on anything except window dressing. We have learnt from other debates this week that what the Govenment might say is different from what they do. We should not have such a window dressing when it comes to employee-management buy-outs; we need a firm commitment that those buy-outs will go ahead.

The clawback property tax was designed to deter land predators from asset stripping ports. Although the ideology is right, in practice the tax has no effect other than to reduce correspondingly the tender offer to meet that possible liability. That reduction means that a management-led buy-out is not financially viable, but the aim

[Ms. Walley]

of such buy-outs is to promote and develop a port and to use the land for the purpose for which it was acquired—port development.

The Government have not granted any concession on the basic 50 per cent. levy for management-led schemes. However, it is worth noting that the Finance Act 1990 offered a 3 per cent. concession. The Government now seem loth to offer a meaningful discount, which is necessary to achieve a successful bid.

My hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough said that we had pressed for the guidelines in Committee. We were then assured by the Minister that those guidelines would be available. We were content to take advice from the Government about how they would proceed to firm up the proposals for employee-management buy-outs. The Government should have followed the proper procedures and made the guidelines available to those in another place who were discussing them. However, I gather that the guidelines were first made available to the Association of British Ports. The Government's handling of the guidance notes is another example of the way in which they have been remiss in their entire handling of employee-management buy-outs.

Mr. Bell: The guidelines appeared in draft form in the other place. On insisting that they be placed in the Library, my hon. Friends and I discovered that they were sent to the managing director of the British Ports Federation, Mr. J. Sharples, by a Mr. M. W. Jackson—apparently he is a civil servant. It was only because of the unofficial title of those notes—"The Secretary of State's guidance notes on the procedure for sale of trust ports"—that we ascertained that they were the guidelines for which we were looking. Does my hon. Friend agree that it is remarkable that we have to suss out those guidelines from the Library as a consequence of a debate in the other place? Does my hon. Friend agree that it is remarkable that those guidance notes were not sent by the Minister to members of the Committee for the use in the House today?

Ms. Walley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing the details of the issue to the attention of the House.

We pressed for the guidance notes to be made available and we had every confidence that they would be sent to the other place in due course. No one was more astonished than me when I read *Hansard* of the other place and discovered that the debate was adjourned for half an hour before those guidance notes could be discussed. Far be it from me to suggest that this place does exactly the same.

In an earlier point of order concern was expressed that Ministers may be making announcements other than in the House, which denies hon. Members the opportunity to question Ministers. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough that the guidance notes should have been available at the appropriate time so that those discussing this important Bill could have had the opportunity to peruse them and so discover their implications for management-employee buy-outs.

We eventually got those guidance notes, but we understand from reading them that there is still confusion about the Government's exact commitment. The purpose of this debate is to try to discover whether there is a firm commitment from the Government to allow an employee-management buy-out. Other types of sale should go ahead only when employee-management buy-outs are not an option.

Mr. Bell: Does my hon. Friend agree that, in essence, it is clear from the guidelines that there is no firm Government commitment to the management buy-out option? We are committed to that option. Does my hon. Friend agree that, unless we have a firm assurance from the Minister that the Government will show a preference for such buy-outs, we may yet divide the House on this amendment?

Ms. Walley: My hon. Friend has said it far better than I could. This issue is of great concern to us.

If the Government are so in favour of employee-management buy-outs why was that commitment not included in the Bill in the first place? As time has gone on, we have attempted to clarify the position. We still do not believe that the clauses are perfect. However, I know that time is pressing and that it is important for the House to have an opportunity to discuss other important amendments.

Although we welcome the improvements that have been made, we do not believe that they go far enough. However, I do not believe that it will be necessary to divide the House as my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough has suggested, but I shall look to my hon. Friend for guidance on that.

Mr. McLoughlin: This has been an interesting debate. I wonder what the Opposition's attitude would have been if the Government had given an absolute commitment to management-employee buy-outs which therefore substantially reduced the price of the ports? Let us then suppose that, at a later stage, the ports were sold. I am sure that the Opposition would have been the first to complain that we had not attracted sufficient revenue to the Exchequer. They would have been the first to complain about the taxpayer being ripped off.

I cannot understand why the Opposition argue that we should give an outright commitment to management-employee buy-outs without testing the market. The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) said that he was impressed by some of the buy-outs relating to Scottish buses, but I doubt whether they met with the universal support of the Labour party at the time when they were announced.

Mr. Tim Janman (Thurrock): Does my hon. Friend agree that it is hypocritical and richly ironic for the Labour party to argue so hard for management-employee buy-outs? If we had a Labour Government today, we would not have this Bill, and not one set of managers or employees would have the right to buy anything in our ports.

Mr. McLoughlin: My hon. Friend makes the very point that I was about to make.

In the main, I want management-employee buy-outs to be successful. Paragraph 5 of the guidance notes states: "a *statement of objectives* . . . need to be agreed on a port-by-port basis with the Secretary of State. In framing their draft objectives ports should have regard to the desirability of encouraging the disposal of the whole or a substantial part of the successor company's equity share capital to managers or other employees of the port. A limited price preference for a management and employee buy-out may be appropriate, as described in paragraph 15 below."

Paragraph 15 says:

"In particular a trust port may wish to recommend that a price preference should be applied to a bid from a management-employee buy-out team. The Secretary of State will be prepared to consider a limited price preference of this kind in individual cases and will have regard to the particular circumstances of each case."

We believe that the right way forward is to consider the ports case by case, and I think that the Opposition agree. The trust ports are not all the same, and we must take into consideration the conditions in each one.

7.30 pm

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) spoke of the Port of London authority police. We can deal with that point when we debate Lords amendment No. 35, which relates to the PLA. I recognise my hon. Friend's interest in this matter and I congratulate him on the way in which he has, on a number of occasions, vigorously raised with me both this issue and that of pensions, which has also been raised by a number of other hon. Friends, including my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman).

Parity of the PLA police with the Metropolitan police was never guaranteed. The PLA endeavours to match the Metropolitan police within its means. The conditions and contracts of employment will transfer with the transfer of the scheme. However, the new owners will be able to make changes, but only through the negotiated process, as would need to be the case with any employees. It would be a dangerous precedent to set out what should happen in five or 10 years. I take the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East. We shall be watching the situation and shall take the point on board when the PLA comes to us about the sale of Tilbury.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock made the point well. We are keen to see management-employee buy-outs. If the Opposition had their way, these would not be an option, because the Bill would not be before the House.

Mr. Bell: I am sorry to take up more of the Minister's time, but we said earlier that, if we were not satisfied with his explanation, we would divide the House. If he gave me an assurance that, although the guidelines talk of "limited preference" being appropriate, he will knock out "limited" and simply leave it as a "preference", we might be able to avoid a Division.

Mr. McLoughlin: We are not discussing the guidelines. The wording enables the Government to have discretion between port and port. I should have thought that that would be welcome. I would not want to declare in advance what the position would be for each and every port, because decisions will be made in due course. It would not be practicable to say that, come what may, management-employee buy-outs will be successful. I hope that, in the vast majority of cases, such buy-outs are successful.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I am sorry to interrupt my hon. Friend, but this is terribly important. Has he the approval of the EEC Commission for his important statement that preference will be given to a management buy-out, even at a lower cost? My understanding is that what he said is contrary to European Community law and that he will get hammered by the European Commission if he tries to insist on it.

Mr. McLoughlin: One always takes seriously my hon. Friend's cautions about our position within the Community and about what the Community law says. This is in line with what we did when we privatised the Scottish Bus Company. The same words were used in that case, so I am content that we are not breaking any treaty obligations in the way my hon. Friend fears.

Dr. Godman: I hope that what the Minister has said is borne out by the events. He was the Minister who had to change the Merchant Shipping Act 1988. That change was inflicted on the Government by the president of the European Court of Justice. Is he completely confident that a similar change will not be imposed on him as a result of these amendments?

Mr. McLoughlin: That is going rather wide of the amendments. I remember the incident because it was my first appearance at the Dispatch Box. However, I have no doubt that what the Bill sets out is acceptable to the Commission.

Mr. Bell: On competition, the situation under these amendments would not be dissimilar to the television franchises. As the Minister has been so frank and forthright on this issue, and given the assurances that he has made about management buy-outs, it does not appear necessary for us to divide the House.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. If anybody wishes to give me any similar assurances when we debate other amendments, I shall be only too pleased to give way. I can hear my Whip telling me not to be too generous. I commend the amendments to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 10

SCHEMES INITIATED BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Lords amendment: No. 4, in page 7, line 1, after "authority" insert

"who have not formed a company in pursuance of section 1 above and"

Mr. McLoughlin: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 5 and 6.

Mr. McLoughlin: These amendments should be called the Ward amendments because they are the result of the well-constructed case made by my hon. Friend the Member for Poole (Mr. Ward). They mean that, once the Government have looked at a port after the two-year period and have decided not to privatise at that stage, they will not look at that port again for another five years. My hon. Friend argued his case well on Report and I gave him the commitment that we would make this amendment in the other place, and we have done so.

Mr. John Ward (Poole): It would be churlish not to thank my hon. Friend the Minister for the amendments. He knows that we do not wish the port of Poole to be privatised. The five-year moratorium gives it the opportunity to carry on its business in a sensible businesslike way which will prove, in five or seven years' time, that there is still no need to privatise. My hon. Friend the Minister listened with courtesy to the representations made to him rather noisily in my constituency, and I thank

[Mr. John Ward]

him for that. We obviously did not entirely convince him, but half a cake is better than none and I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what we have.

Ms. Walley: We are glad of some further clarifications on the Secretary of State's powers of compulsion. We are totally against any compulsion. If there is to be privatisation, it must be done voluntarily and on the merits of the argument. We are concerned about the position of Poole trust port, but other ports are in a similar position and do not want these powers compulsorily attached to them. We are therefore glad of that clarification.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 5 and 6 agreed to.

Clause 17

LEVY ON DISPOSALS OF LAND, ETC.

Lords Amendment: No. 7, in page 13, line 2, leave out "land or any interest in land belonging to a relevant port authority is"

and insert

"property, rights, liabilities and functions of a relevant port authority are".

Mr. McLoughlin: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The amendment involves privilege.

With this it will be convenient to consider Lords amendments Nos. 8, 10, 16 and 36.

Mr. McLoughlin: Amendments Nos. 7, 8 and 16, and the amendment to the Bill's title are all in one way or another paving or consequential amendments of amendment No. 10, which is designed to close a serious potential loophole in the arrangements for a clawback levy contained in clauses 17 and 18 of the Bill. In its present form, that levy applies only to land which is transferred directly from a port authority to its successor company. But some of the larger trust ports own subsidiary companies and, even if they do not, may well have the power to establish them. These companies perform a variety of functions, including, in some cases, the owning of land. It is therefore clearly necessary that the Bill should provide for the levy on onward land disposals to apply not just to land owned by the successor company itself but to land owned by the port authority's subsidiaries, which after the transfer will become subsidiaries of the successor company.

The amendments tighten up a possible loophole. I commend them to the House.

Ms. Walley: Suffice it to say that this is just one more example of how in reality we are dealing with a finance Bill rather than a transport Bill. The fact that the Treasury did not understand the difference between the successor companies and the subsidiary companies at the outset of the proceedings of the Bill means that at this late stage this has had to be done to achieve consistency. Nevertheless, we agree that the amendments tighten up the loopholes.

Question put and agreed to. [Special Entry.]

Subsequent Lords amendment agreed to. [Special Entry.]

Lords amendment: No. 9, in page 13, line 13, at end insert "("the levy period")."

Mr. McLoughlin: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The amendment involves privilege.

With this, it will be convenient to consider Lords amendments Nos. 11, 12, 13, and 15.

Mr. McLoughlin: The principal amendment in this group of five amendments is amendment No. 12, which is intended to close a technical but not insignificant gap in the provisions of the Bill relating to the clawbreak levy. The amendment refers to the meaning of the word "disposal" in the context of clause 17, and it is made necessary because of a discrepancy between the time factor in clause 17 of the Bill—specifically, the levy period of 10 years—and a time factor which is sometimes relevant for determining whether there has been a disposal for the purposes of the Capital Gains Tax Act 1979. This latter time factor may be referred to as the six-year time limit.

The Government have accepted that "disposal" should have the same meaning for clawback purposes as it has for the purposes of the 1979 Act—that is, the Capital Gains Tax Act—and this is expressed in subsection (4) of clause 17. One of the cases where there is a disposal for the purposes of the 1979 Act could, however, have anomalous effects if applied without modifications for the purpose of clause 17. The case in question would be where land or an interest in land was transferred by a successor company to another company within the same group—or, indeed, by a relevant port authority to a subsidiary company at some time before the property of the authority is transferred to a successor company under clause 2 of the Bill—and then, during the levy period, the company owning the land or interest in land leaves the group.

Question put and agreed to. [Special Entry.]

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to. [Special Entry.]

Lords amendment: No. 14, in page 14, line 13, after "order" insert—

"( ) imposing penalties (including continuing penalties) in respect of contraventions of provisions of any order under this section;".

Mr. McLoughlin: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The amendment involves privilege.

With this, it will be convenient to consider Lords amendments Nos. 17 and 18.

Mr. McLoughlin: This amendment makes it possible for penalties to be imposed where the provisions concerning the clawback levy on subsequent disposals of land are not complied with. I am sure that it will be welcomed by the House.

Ms. Walley: I place on record the fact that this will be subject to affirmative orders in both Houses. We pressed for that in Committee and we very much welcome the amendment.

Question put and agreed to. [Special Entry.]

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to. [Special Entry.]

Clause 19

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR PROPOSALS TO MAXIMISE EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION IN EQUITY OF SUCCESSOR COMPANIES

Lords amendment: No. 19, in page 16, line 4, leave out from second "to" to end of line 5 and insert

"have a reasonable prospect of securing that the objective of the proposal is achieved."

7.45 pm

Mr. McLoughlin: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to consider Lords amendments Nos. 20, 24 and 25.

Mr. McLoughlin: These amendments are intended to clarify the drafting of one aspect of the provision that the Bill makes enabling port authorities to repay the costs incurred by their management and employees in attempting to buy out the authority's successor company.

It may perhaps be the case that more than one group of a port's management and employees attempt to buy the company and, if that were so, it would clearly be unsatisfactory if the authority ended up providing financial support for several competing bids, one or more of which would, inevitably, be unsuccessful.

Ms. Walley: I do not wish to detain the House any longer on this issue. However, it is important for me to point out that the Opposition would have preferred the option of some involvement of independent advisers. Nevertheless, the amendments represent a tightening up of the measure. We therefore do not intend to oppose the amendments.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to. [Some with Special Entry.]

Clause 40

GENERAL INTERPRETATION

Lords amendment: No. 31, in page 29, line 44, at end insert—

("(3) For the purposes of any provision of this Act to which this subsection applies a person employed by a company which is a wholly-owned subsidiary of any company or other body mentioned in that provision shall be regarded as employed by the company or other body so mentioned.

(4) Subsection (3) above applies to the following provisions of this Act—

section 2(3)(c);
section 5(3);
section 13(3)(b);
section 19(3)(b) and (5);
section 26(5);
section 28(2)(b) and (4); and
subsection (2)(a) above;

(all of which are concerned with participation by employees of a company in ownership of its equity share capital or related matters).")

Mr. McLoughlin: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The Bill already provides that management and employee buy-outs should be encouraged and that a port authority may bear the costs incurred in mounting such buy-outs. In some cases, however, ports own subsidiary companies which have their own directly employed work force. These will, after the transfer of the port's undertaking, become wholly owned subsidiaries of the successor company. It seems only right that employees of these wholly owned subsidiaries should be in a position to benefit from the same encouragement that the Bill provides to management and employee buy-outs.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to. [Some with Special Entry.]

Schedule 2

GENERAL SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS WITH RESPECT TO TRANSFER UNDER SECTION 22

Lords amendment: No. 35, in page 37, line 50, at end insert—

("Transfer of rights and liabilities relating to employment

9A.—(1) For the purposes of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 section 22(8) above shall be regarded as effecting a transfer to which those regulations apply of a part of the Port Authority's undertaking comprising all activities of the Port Authority, which by virtue of the transfer cease to be carried on by the Port Authority, including any such activities which themselves form a part of the Port Authority's undertaking which is not in the nature of a commercial venture.

(2) According in those regulations, as they apply in relation to the transfer, references to the part of the undertaking transferred apply to all such activities of the Port Authority (of whatever description).")

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mr. McLoughlin.]*

Sir Teddy Taylor: Earlier, the Minister was kind enough, to say that I ought to have raised the issue that I raised then on Lords amendment No. 35. He was very helpful in providing information, but I want to ask him whether I was correct in my assessment. He said that police employed by the Port of London authority would have certain safeguards. They are possibly to be transferred to another employer, for whom they will be doing the same job in the same circumstances. There will be no change. The Minister said that the previous assurance that they received—that they would receive Metropolitan police rates of pay—may no longer apply; instead they will receive Essex rates of pay.

The rent allowance is another fundamental issue. It appears that, instead of receiving London rates, the people concerned will receive Essex rates. The Minister said that it was impossible to say what would happen in five years' time. I have no doubt that a great consolation for those working in the port of Tilbury will be the presence of an energetic, trustworthy and able Member of Parliament to look after their interests. I nevertheless hope that the Minister will consider the implications of the Bill.

The Minister has said, in effect, that people are being transferred to a new employer. They will not enjoy their previous rights, wages and working conditions; and, as far as I can see, they have been given no guarantee of any kind about their future. I know that the Minister is a kindly person, and that he is concerned not just about cranes but about people. Surely he accepts that the position is unsatisfactory. Can he not give some guarantee to the police who have worked so well for the port of London—helping the port to obtain work that it would not otherwise have obtained—that their rights and welfare will be maintained?

[Sir Teddy Taylor]

As the Minister will know, anyone who moves to a new employer and a different job is entitled to redundancy pay, and is enabled to start over again. Surely a job in which wages, conditions and rent allowance are different is a different job. Although the Minister may not treat Brussels with the care and attention that I consider necessary—he would be well advised to do so; I am told that Brussels prisons are very nasty places—I trust that he can at least assure us that he will look into the position.

I know that the Minister wishes to ensure that employees do not lose out too much. He seems to be saying, however, that the Port of London police have no guarantee about their future. That is unsatisfactory. I know that the local Member of Parliament will make a point of investigating the matter, but I hope that all who are involved in police matters will do so as well.

Mr. McLoughlin: I shall certainly give careful consideration to what my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) has said.

The amendment is technical. It applies specifically to the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 under part II of the Bill, as they already apply to the transfer of port undertakings in part I. The PLA police force is not a commercial undertaking, and is therefore not automatically covered by the regulations. A specific application will be required for it to be transferred to the new Tilbury company.

The regulations will protect employees' rights following the transfer of both the PLA police force and, if necessary, the transfer of any other PLA employee whose work might be considered not to be in the nature of a commercial venture.

My hon. Friend's point is not lost on me. We shall take it seriously when the PLA scheme is presented to us, although, as I said earlier, no guarantee can be given that the same conditions will apply to the PLA police force as apply to the Metropolitan police.

Let me add that I hope that the police will be included in the buy-out, and become successful operators at the port.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendment agreed to.

Criminal Justice Bill

New clause proposed by the Commons in lieu of a Lords amendment to which they have disagreed:

DUTY TO RELEASE DISCRETIONARY LIFE PRISONERS

'.—(1) A life prisoner is a discretionary life prisoner for the purposes of this Part if—

(a) his sentence was imposed for a violent or sexual offence the sentence for which is not fixed by law; and

(b) the court by which he was sentenced for that offence ordered that this section should apply to him as soon as he had served a part of his sentence specified in the order.

(2) A part of a sentence so specified shall be such part as the court considers appropriate taking into account—

(a) the seriousness of the offence, or the combination of the offence and other offences associated with it; and

(b) the provisions of this section as compared with those of section 27(2) above and section 28(1) below.

(3) As soon as, in the case of a discretionary life prisoner—

(a) he has served the part of his sentence specified in the order ("the relevant part"); and

(b) the Board has directed his release under this section,

it shall be the duty of the Secretary of State, subject to subsection (7) below, to release him on licence.

(4) The Board shall not give a direction under subsection (3) above with respect to a discretionary life prisoner unless—

(a) the Secretary of State has referred the prisoner's case to the Board; and

(b) the Board is satisfied that it is no longer necessary for the protection of the public that the prisoner should be confined.

(5) A discretionary life prisoner may require the Secretary of State to refer his case to the Board at any time—

(a) after he has served the relevant part of his sentence; and

(b) where there has been a previous reference of his case to the Board, after the end of the period of two years beginning with the disposal of that reference; and

(c) where he is also serving a sentence of imprisonment for a term, after he has served one-half of that sentence;

and in this subsection "previous reference" means a reference under subsection (4) above or section 32(4) below made after the prisoner had served the relevant part of his sentence.

(6) On determining for the purpose of subsection (3) or (5) above whether a discretionary life prisoner has served the relevant part of his sentence, no account shall be taken of any time during which he was unlawfully at large within the meaning of section 49 of the Prison Act 1952 ("the 1952 Act").

(7) The Secretary of State may defer a prisoner's release under this section for a period not exceeding six months if he is satisfied that exceptional circumstances exist which justify such a deferment in the public interest.

(8) In this Part "life prisoner" means a person serving one or more sentences of life imprisonment; but

(a) a person serving two or more such sentences shall not be treated as a discretionary life prisoner for the purposes of this Part unless the requirements of subsection (1) above are satisfied as respects each of those sentences; and

(b) subsections (3) and (5) above shall not apply in relation to such a person until after he has served the relevant part of each of those sentences.'

The Lords do not insist on their amendments to which the Commons have disagreed, but propose an amendment to the words so restored to a clause proposed by the Commons, to which the Lords desire the agreement of the Commons: In subsection (3), leave out 'subject to subsection (7) below'.

Lords amendment considered forthwith.—[Mr. Greg Knight.]

7.54 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The amendment is purely consequential, introducing a drafting change that resulted from an amendment to which the House agreed when the Lords amendments were considered on 16 July. The House agreed to the deletion of subsection 7 of a new clause on discretionary life sentence procedures. That subsection gave my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary power to defer a prisoner's release by up to six months. Following the deletion of subsection 7, the cross-reference in subsection 3 is no longer relevant, and the new amendment removes it.

Question put and agreed to.

Water Industry Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

7.56 pm

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): I beg to move, that the Bill be now read a Second time.

As five Bills relating to water consolidation are before the House this evening, I shall, with permission, speak to all five together, as they form part of the one consolidation.

The Water Act 1989 substantially restructured the water legislation of England and Wales. Functions previously vested in the water authorities were divided between a new national body known as the National Rivers Authority, and the companies appointed as the new water and sewerage undertakers.

The two main Bills in the consolidation are the Water Industry Bill and the Water Resources Bill. They bring together the principal legislation from the 1989 Act and elsewhere, dealing with the new undertakers and the National Rivers Authority respectively.

The third Bill, the Statutory Water Companies Bill, consolidates the provisions in the 1989 Act that deal with the corporate structure and powers of the statutory water companies. The fourth Bill, the Land Drainage Bill, reproduces the functions of the internal drainage boards and local authorities. The fifth Bill, the Water Consolidation (Consequential Provisions) Bill is ancillary to the four main Bills. It covers consequential amendments and repeals relating to the other four.

In preparing the consolidation, the Law Commission issued a report in which it made a number of recommendations for minor technical amendments to improve the consolidation. All five Bills were referred in the usual way to the Joint Committee on Consolidation Bills during their passage in another place. The Joint Committee reported that the recommendations of the Law Commission were necessary to produce a satisfactory consolidation of the law, and that the five Bills, taken together, amounted to a single consolidation.

7.58 pm

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): We are always supporting consolidation measures, which make life easier for those who must deal with legislation. As usual, we congratulate those responsible for the consolidation and the drafting, and the Law Commission. I am sorry that there was a slight hiccup last week, when we could not get the Bills through in a reasonably short time.

Opposition Members will always be co-operative on measures of law reform and consolidation, and we praise the Law Commission's work. I understand, however, that there is a considerable backlog of law reform and consolidation Bills, and I only hope that things will move rather more quickly. To ensure that they do, I shall say no more today.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Mr. Greg Knight.].*

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported, without amendment.

Motion made, and Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 75 (Third Reading), and agreed to.*

[Mr. John Fraser]

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

WATER RESOURCES BILL *[Lords]*

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported, without amendment.

Motion made, and Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 75 (Third Reading), and agree to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

STATUTORY WATER COMPANIES BILL *[Lords]*

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported, without amendment.

Motion made, and Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 75 (Third Reading), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

LAND DRAINAGE BILL *[Lords]*

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Mr. Sackville.]*

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported, without amendment.

Motion made, and Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 75 (Third Reading), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

WATER CONSOLIDATION (CONSEQUENTIAL PROVISIONS) BILL *[Lords]*

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Mr. Sackville.]*

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported, without amendment.

Motion made, and Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 75 (Third Reading), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

Deer Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

8.6 pm

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

This Bill, like the water consolidation Billls, is a consolidation Bil with amendments to give effect to the Law Commission recommendations which are contained in the Commission's report on the Bill. The purpose of the Bill is to consolidate the Deer Act 1963—which has been amended extensively over the years—and the Deer Act 1980.

During its passage in another place, the Bill was referred to the Joint Committee on Consolidation Bills. The Committee reported that the recommendations of the Law Commission were necessary to produce a satisfactory consolidation of the law and that, in all other respects, the Bill was pure consolidation. The House will wish to express its gratitude to the Law Commission for its work on the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Mr. Sackville.]*

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported without amendment.

Motion made, and Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 75 (Third Reading) and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time and passed, without amendment.

Statute Law Revision (Isle of Man) Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second reading read.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The purpose of this Bill, which applies only to the Isle of Man, is to remove an anomaly whereby many obsolete Westminster statutes continue to form part of the law of the Isle of Man even though they have been repealed for the United Kingdom.

The Bill therefore extends to the Isle of Man a series of enactments that have already been used to repeal statutes in United Kingdom legislation. It also takes the opportunity to repeal for the island 30 or so miscellaneous measures which are similarly obsolete.

During its passage in another place, the Bill was referred to the Joint Committee on Consolidation Bills. The Committee reported that it was satisfied that all the enactments proposed to be repealed by the Bill were either obsolete, spent, unnecessary or superseded—in due course, that will apply to every hon. Member—and that there was no point to which the attention of Parliament should be drawn.

This is yet another Bill that has been prepared and drafted by the Law Commission, this time in conjunction with the Isle of Man authorities. I should like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the House, to acknowledge and express appreciation for the work of the Law Commission and of parliamentary counsel in preparing the consolidation and statute law revision measures—such as those before the House this evening—that do so much to tidy up the statute book and present it in a modern form. Study of this Bill is a fascinating microcosm of 1,000 years of Isle of Man history. I commend it to the House.

8.11 pm

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East) *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I shall call the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor), but I remind the hon. Gentleman and the House that this is a consolidation measure and it is only in order to discuss whether consolidation should take place.

Sir Teddy Taylor: That is exactly the point that I want to raise. As the Solicitor-General rightly said, this is a technical Bill that repeals some 700 obsolete enactments that have been repealed for the United Kingdom but not for the Isle of Man. The Solicitor-General omitted to mention that there are two items that are not in that category and I wonder whether we should consolidate them. One of those measures is the Military Lands Act 1900 and the other is described as 7 Jac. 1 c.4.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but if I understand him correctly, he is dealing with Acts that are not consolidated. If that is the case, it is out of order.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I am not seeking to do that. I am simply saying that we are repealing two proposals that did not apply to the United Kingdom but only to the Isle of Man. I simply want to know what they are. This went through the House of Lords without any discussion. The Isle of Man has no representative in the House, and it would be wrong for us to repeal this legislation without knowing what it is. The measure is entitled Assurance of the Isle of Man.

I went to the House of Commons Library because we have an obligation to the Isle of Man. I asked about that measure. We looked up the books and found that it was an Act for the execution of divers laws made against rogues, vagabounds, sturdy beggars and other lewd persons. The Library said that it must be a private Bill but, sadly, it was not available.

Although we are restricted in our discussion, bearing in mind our obligations to the Isle of Man, it is important to know what we are repealing. My simple point is whether the Solicitor-General can tell us what it is; what was the assurance of the Isle of Man and why is it necessary to repeal it now? It is a technical matter, but it is important. If we are dealing with legislation that applies to the Isle of Man, we should know what we are doing. If we do not, we are not doing our job for the Isle of Man.

8.13 pm

The Solicitor-General: I understand fully the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor), and I shall give him an answer.

If I understand him correctly, he was referring to the Bill that is mentioned in abbreviated form and described as 7 Jac. 1. c4 under the title, Assurance of the Isle of Man.

That Act settled the lordship of the Isle of Man on the Earl of Derby and his heirs. The lordship was revested in the Crown by the legislation of 1765, 5 Geo. 3 c. 26, which was repealed by the Statute Law (Repeals) Act 1976. Therefore, this Act is obsolete. I hope that that gives my hon. Friend the information that he requires.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported, without amendment.

Motion made, and Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 75 (Third Reading) and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time and passed, without amendment.

Agricultural Holdings (Scotland) Bill [Lords]

Order for Second Reading read.

8.16 pm

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Having regard to my Scottish ancestry, which involves the law and farming in Scotland, I am glad and privileged to have the opportunity, on behalf of my Scottish colleagues, to introduce this Bill, which consolidates the Agricultural Holdings (Scotland) Act 1949. That Act remains the primary piece of legislation on agricultural tenancy matters in Scotland, but it has been quite extensively amended over the years. The Bill incorporates these amendments and disposes of certain spent provisions.

It has long been recognised that there was a need to clarify the statutory position in Scotland which, because of the many amendments, had become unnecessarily complex. The Bill is pure consolidation and makes no change in substance to the existing law, but the result will be a much simpler and more straightforward account, which will be welcomed by those who need to advise and act on behalf of farmers and landowners in Scotland.

The preparation of this Bill has been a long and difficult task, and I must thank all those with an involvement in its preparation. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Mr. Sackville.]*

Bill immediately considered in Committee: reported, without amendment.

Motion made, and Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 75 (Third Reading) and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time and passed, without amendment.

Northern Ireland

8.18 pm

The Solicitor-General (Mr. Nicholas Lyell): I beg to move, That the draft Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Regulations 1991, which were laid before this House on 18th June, be approved.

Again I feel privileged to introduce these regulations.

When the new Emergency Provisions Act comes into effect on 27 August, the whole of the Emergency Provisions Act 1978 will be repealed, including the regulations contained in schedule 3 to that Act. As these regulations remain essential provisions, the House needs to ensure their continued survival after the repeal of the 1978 Act. That is the purpose of this statutory instrument. It consolidates the existing regulations without amendment.

Question put and agreed to.

Scottish Bus Company (Privatisation)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

8.19 pm

Mr. Henry McLeish (Fife, Central): I am pleased to have the opportunity to discuss the privatisation of the Scottish Bus Company with particular reference to the sale of Fife Scottish, the bus company which covers the five parliamentary constituencies of Fife, including my own.

I regret having to bring this matter before the House because the debate is about the incompetence of the Scottish Transport Group, the insensitivity and duplicity of Scottish Office Ministers, and the intimidation of the management-employee buy-out of Fife Scottish by Stagecoach Holdings Ltd. They were the key players involved in the sale of Fife Scottish and, in a sense, the debate is about the failure of the management buy-out to buy its own future. What began as the sell-off of the best bus company in Britain has become the sell-out of the Fife Scottish bus group and the abandonment of the clear principle of which the Government often talk but on which they rarely act.

It is interesting to refer back to the earlier debate on the Ports Bill because there was much talk about support for management-employee buy-outs but, as the debate ensues, we shall find that, in the Scottish Office in particular, there is no enthusiasm for such a step towards the privatisation of a particular company.

The intimidation, insensitivity and incompetence to which I have referred has left 850 of my constituents very bitter, bewildered and betrayed. They have been frustrated and blocked by an unprincipled and unprecedented set of circumstances and by a coincidence of factors that I should more appropriately describe as a conspiracy by certain groups to kill the hopes and aspirations of a very enthusiastic work force, including the management.

The tragedy is that the employees and management of Fife Scottish did nothing wrong. They had worked enthusiastically for three years to set up the context in which to bid for their company, their jobs and their future. They had invested large sums of money from their earnings into the management-employee buy-out. They had made tremendous gains in efficiency to turn Fife Scottish into not just the best bus company in Britain, but the most profitable. They also brought the skills, enthusiasm and commitment to the service that they deployed for the benefit of the people of Fife. The simple question is, why did they fail when they had everything going for them, and when the Government purported to support the idea of a management-employee buy-out? That is the key issue that I wish to discuss.

Before I get to the technical aspects of the debate, I refer to the Scottish Office. A group of Tory Ministers said that they supported management-employee buy-outs. They invested £50,000 in the quest for the buy-out within the company, but when the bid was made it was rejected out of hand. Of course, that group of Tory Ministers wanted to get the highest price for the company, but when Fife Scottish put in a second bid, the Scottish Office Ministers again rejected it. I hope that the Scottish Office will publish the detailed bids from Stagecoach Holdings to satisfy my curiosity and that of the employees as to whether it submitted a bid that was not heavily qualified by conditions that were dealt with in secret.

The group of Tory Ministers made it quite clear that Fife Scottish could obtain no assistance from public funds, although the Scottish Office was happy to sit and see the Scottish Development Agency invest £500,000 of taxpayers' money in Stagecoach Holdings, thereby giving it a competitive advantage in terms of the security of its equity base. We heard from Scottish Office Ministers that they wanted a quality bus service, so why did they sell out to a company with no track record of services in Britain, a company with an unenviable record of employment conditions and a reputation for tough talking, asset stripping and anti-competitive practices? That was the quality handed down to the people of Fife by Scottish Office Ministers.

The employees, the people of Fife and I might say that this was nothing more than characteristic Tory hypocrisy. We could also say that it was a breach of good faith, but the tragedy is that the charges against the Government go much deeper than that. The story that must be told this evening is about the role of the Scottish Office, the Scottish Transport Group and Stagecoach Holdings.

To set the scene for the details that will follow, I draw the Minister's attention to the private meeting attended by my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown). We warned the Minister at that time that we had heard from Deloitte, which was advising the Scottish Transport Group, that the level playing field was fast disappearing. There would seem to have been no continuing enthusiasm for the management-employee buy-out and it was implied that perhaps there had been too many management-employee buy-outs.

We also heard that the Scottish Transport Group had completely bungled the estimate of sales and proceeds from the privatisation process, so it appears that, as Fife Scottish was well back in the list of sales, Ministers were looking for the highest bid and excluding all considerations of quality, of management-employee buy-outs and a host of other considerations which were important to people whom I represent. We advised the Minister that those concerns had been expressed by the STG and from Deloitte and that in confidence we were willing to exchange our concerns with him.

The Minister said—and confirmed in a letter—that we should have no fears and that it was a level playing field. Of course, the Scottish Office ministerial team was still wedded to the idea of giving management-employee buy-outs a fair wind. We were also reassured two weeks before the bid that there was nothing wrong and nothing to be upset about.

As for the bidding process itself, Stagecoach Holdings had put in a bid almost £2 million in excess of the valuation of the company's assets. We believe the figure to have been £9·1 million—the Minister can correct or confirm that figure. That meant that the bid was, we believe, more that £1 million above the Fife Scottish bid which, in turn, was £1 million more than a realistic valuation of the company's assets. One does not have to be a financial genius to work out that if one bids way above the asset value of a company, it is extremely difficult to get the necessary financial support.

Indeed, the first act of sabotage carried out Stagecoach Holdings was to put in a loss-leading bid. The company had upped its turnover in Britain from about £28 million to nearly £100 million in about two years. It could deploy

[Mr. Henry McLeish]

assets and investment and, at a stroke, put the fledgling management-employee buy-out at a competitive disavantage, so that is what it did.

From the moment of the first bids, known as the sealed bids, it was clear that the company was loss leading in a way that would destabilise the management-employee buy-out. Ministers may say, "That is the marketplace, and if a company wants to loss lead, that is fine." But Scottish Office Ministers have a responsibility not to be carried away by a company with assets but whose record on quality is dubious, to say the least. Some consideration should have been given over and above the final deliberations to the management-employee buy-out, which was a fair bid based on a fair appreciation of the assets. The bid by Stagecoach Holding Ltd. was not that type of bid.

Now we come to the heart of the matter. There were two sealed bids—one for about £8·1 million and the other, we believe, for about £9·1 million. Because Fife Scottish had bid realistically it found, to its amazement, that it had been outbid by Stagecoach Holdings and was apparently being given short shrift by the Scottish Transport Group, Deloitte and, it would appear, by the Scottish Office.

Despite that financial pressure at an early stage, Fife Scottish obtained a commitment for the extra £1·1 million from the Bank of Boston and put in another bid to the Scottish Office. That bid was competently submitted—there was never any doubt about that. Indeed, I quote from a private and confidential letter from Mr. M. S. Roxburgh, commercial and planning executive to Mr. Stuart of Fife Scottish Omnibuses Ltd.:

"If prior to completion a new competitive offer is made, STG is obliged to make the contents of such an offer known to the Secretary of State, and there may be no alternative but to consider that offer. It is therefore in your interest"—

that is, in the interests of Fife Scottish—

"to be able to complete the transaction as soon as possible. STG will not be obliged to recommend to the Secretary of State acceptance of the highest or any bid."

The STG itself then reneged on the principles that it had agreed with the Secretary of State for Scotland, and which were part of the legislation that went through the House.

I will tell the shabby tale of incompetence that ensued after the second bid was received, but first I shall give the details of the technical background to the bid. Following submission of the formal offer by Touche Ross on behalf of Fife Scottish on 24 April, Touche Ross was engaged in discussions and correspondence with the STG. The question of increasing the price in the management-employee buy-out's former offer was discussed. The important aspect was that the STG did not reply to letters dated 24, 28 and 29 May from Touche Ross.

Consequently, Touche Ross wrote to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) on 7 June 1991, and Henderson and Jackson, the solicitors acting for Fife Scottish, wrote on 10 June to the STG, with a copy to the Secretary of State for Scotland. Again, no replies were received.

I will spell out what that shabby process meant in practice. Fife Scottish timeously submitted a bid on 24 April. On 9 May it got in touch by telephone with the Scottish Transport Group. On 24 May Touche Ross wrote a letter to Mr. Roxburgh of the STG:

"I refer to our telephone conversations today and on 9 May when I explained that it might be possible for the management team to consider an increased offer for Fife Scottish if that became necessary. I understand that you will have advised the relevant parties of this and it may now be helpful to provide you with further information."

The telephone call of 9 May was not passed on to the Scottish Office. I ask the Minister to confirm or deny that when he replies. The letter went on to suggest that a new offer of £9·1 million was being submitted, and to offer to meet representatives of the STG that week. Again, that was not done, because there was no response to the letter. Finally, Touche Ross's letter said:

"I should be most grateful if you would ensure that this information is conveyed to the Scottish Office and I trust that I shall hear from you prior to any final decision."

No action was taken; there was no response.

After the letter that referred to 9 May and 24 May, another letter was sent on 28 May, again to Mr. Roxburgh, referring to telephone conversations on 24 and 9 and a previous letter sent on 24 May:

"regarding an increase in the offer from the MEBO team at Fife Scottish . . . I find this surprising when the offer from the MEBO team is close to the rumoured £9·1 million from Stagecoach, particularly in the light of competitive issues surrounding East coast bus services. There has been no attempt whatsoever to negotiate acceptable terms with the MEBO team and I must ask you to give further consideration to our request for a meeting".

Again, no action was taken. The letter was not even acknowledged.

Exasperated, Touche Ross again wrote to Mr. Roxburgh, who was obviously an avid reader, but not so good at sending letters on to the Scottish Office or replying to the people who had sent them, as follows:

"I refer to our telephone conversations on 9 May, and 24 May and my letters dated 24 and 28 May, to which there has been no response. I have heard indirectly that these approaches have not been properly considered as they did not represent a formal offer. If this is indeed the case. I find it astonishing that you have been unable to advise me of your position, to enable the offer of the management and employees to be properly considered. I should like an explanation as to how your approach can be compatible with the requirements of the relevant legislation."

The letter ended:

"I must insist that this offer is communicated to the Secretary of State for Scotland without further delay and that you acknowledge receipt of this letter."

The House has guessed it in one—no action was taken, and no response was given.

The company had intimated on 9 May that it wanted to submit a formal bid and to have further discussions. Yet between 9 May and the time that the Scottish Office was willing to make a formal announcement on 29 May there was no reply to eight representations to the STG. That is disgraceful. It may involve a great deal more than a Fife Member of Parliament heaping disgrace upon the STG. We must ask what the role of the STG is. That is simple—it is handling the privatisation. Taxpayers are paying Deloitte hundreds of thousands of pounds to advise the STG and for it in turn to advise the Scottish Office.

Will the Minister tell the House whether, before 29 May, he knew of any of the representations made to the STG, and to Mr. Roxburgh in particular? More specifically, was the hon. Gentleman aware that on 9 May, a few days after the sealed bids were submitted, Fife Scottish, as was allowed for in the privatisation document, wished to discuss a new way forward and to meet either the

STG officials, Scottish Office officials or Ministers? These points are crucial to my argument, and I hope that the Minister will deal with them in his reply.

The Minister may want to comment on another interesting point. This whole shabby process continued until the Fife Members received letters dated 28 May confirming that the Scottish Office would be making a formal announcement on 29 May. It is now quite clear that Stagecoach was given preferred bid status on 23 May; indeed, we believe that a deposit was lodged with the Scottish Office on 20 May. So in essence, we were to be given a formal announcement nine days after the debacle unfolded, and after the whole process had been sewn up by Ministers and the Scottish Transport Group.

At 9.20 am on the day on which I received the letter from the Scottish Office, I telephoned the Minister and asked whether he had received any further representations regarding a bid. My judgment was that the Minister had not received any further representations and I asked him to contact the Scottish Transport Group to ascertain what had happened to the formal bid which had come in by telephone on 9, 24 and 28 May and which had then been faxed to the STG on 29 May and conveyed to the Scottish Office on the same day.

The important point is that it was a competent bid. The question that must be posed is what level of incompetence led the STG not to bother the Scottish Office ministerial team with any of the discussions and bids until the very day on which the Scottish Office was to make a formal announcement. Was the STG guilty of a dereliction of duty in not consulting its political masters at the Scottish Office? My judgment is that it was.

There is another, more serious, point, however. Did Scottish Ministers know about the discussions, telephone conversations and bids, and, if so, why did they do nothing about them? It seems to me that we need an inquiry into what Mr. Roxburgh, the commercial and planning executive of STG, and Mr. Elwyn, the chairman and chief executive of STG were doing between 9 May and 29 May. Not only was their behaviour disgraceful; it was a gross dereliction of duty not to pass on important information affecting the future of 850 employees. I hope that the Minister will respond to that.

Two weeks later, after the Minister had withdrawn the announcement of 29 May, the Secretary of State confirmed that he was proceeding with the bid after due consideration. Let me quote from the letter of 7 June advising me that, after deliberations, Stagecoach Holdings Ltd. was to be given preferred bid status:

"I do however wish to emphasise that I am satisfied that the sale process has been properly conducted in accordance with the Disposal Programme and that the objectives of the Disposal Programme in this case will be met by proceeding with the sale of Fife Scottish to Stagecoach."

It is obvious, following the three days in the Court of Session, that the STG intimated to the Secretary of State for Scotland on 29 May the existence of the final offer. It is quite clear that the right hon. Gentleman did not exercise his discretion to look at the bid sensibly, because he was swayed by the advice given by STG to the effect that, because it had come in after the sealed bid process, it should not be considered. I believe that the ministerial team at the Scottish Office is in dereliction of its duty because it did not take the new offer seriously and, indeed, because it did not know about it until the eleventh hour. That crucial point is germane to my argument.

Fife Scottish did not lose. It could never win, because there was a conspiracy of forces. The incompetence of the Scottish Office and STG prevailed, and Ministers made the decision regardless of quality of service, of the management-employee buy-out consideration and of the company record of Stagecoach Holdings Ltd.

The whole shabby tale does not finish there, however. I can report to the House that, before the judicial review was heard in the Court of Session, my hon. Friends the Members of Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) and for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) and I had a meeting with the senior management of Fife Scottish on a Saturday evening at which we were told of the company's decision to pull out of the judicial review process.

When asked why, the company's representatives gave a very forthright answer. The bus industry had heard from Stagecoach Holdings Ltd.—in characteristic style—that if Stagecoach lost in the Court of Session, and if Fife Scottish secured the contract, Stagecoach would come into Fife and destroy the newly fledged MEBO operation. Two of the directors decided that they had had enough, and I can understand why. At that point, the Bank of Boston withdrew its funding, with the result that the financial structure of the company nearly collapsed. Following frustration at the incompetence of the Scottish Office, we now have the first signs of intimidation by Stagecoach Holdings Ltd.

Fortunately, the courage of the employees and the finance of the Transport and General Workers Union came to the rescue, and Fife Scottish decided to proceed with the judicial review. The House will understand how the 850 employees felt. For three years, they had done nothing wrong. They had been treated with contempt by the Scottish Office and now, in the marketplace, they found that they were dealing with a predator who would stop at nothing to secure the bid and who was prepared to threaten to come in and destroy their company. I find that sickening in the extreme—but that was part of the process in which Stagecoach was involved.

There is another serious matter that I wish to raise in connection with this affair, and I have written to the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Waker) to tell him that I am raising it. The *Glasgow Herald* of 26 February 1990 reported that my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) had had a discussion with the hon. Member for Tayside, North in the Committee that considered the legislation:

"Mr. Wilson said: 'The question which now arises is, when the various parts of the Scottish Bus Group come up for sale, will he'"—

the hon. Member for Tayside, North—

"'be lobbying for management-employee buy-outs, which is supposed to be the Scottish Tory policy, or will he be lobbying for Stagecoach, because the two will be in direct opposition?'".

It gives me no particular pleasure to say this, and I am not a judge of the activities of hon. Members—there are appropriate Committees for dealing with such matters—but in the *Dunfermline Press and West of Fife Advertiser* on Friday 31 May, we read:

"Last-minute bid stops bus sell-off . . . Tayside North Tory MP Bill Walker who is also a Stagecoach director said he had written to Ministers expressing his concern at the turn of events. He said 'The decision they made originally was the right one.'".

[Mr. Henry McLeish]

How did he know? I do not know whether it was the right decision or the wrong one. Clearly the hon. Member for Tayside, North has extra-sensory perception—or, at least, an unusual insight—into what was happening.

After that article in the *Dunfermline Press*, the *Sunday Mail* reported:

"Mr. Walker expressed his concern about the delay in a letter to the Scottish Office.

He said, 'The original decision made by Ministers was the right one.'

He was not available for comment last night."

The *Daily Record* reported on 11 June in an article entitled "It's War on the Buses":

"But last night Mr. Walker, MP for Tayside said"—

I want hon. Members to note the next word—

"'We stuck to the rules for bidding for Fife Scottish and won fair and square.

If anyone is suggesting I have done anything improper, they had better have proof to back it up.'"

I had a meeting with Mr. Brian Souter, the chairman of Stagecoach Holdings, in Westminster Hall cafeteria. Mr. Souter may be a good businessman, but he has an awfully slack tongue. He said to me, "Mr. McLeish, don't be silly. Mr. Walker has been doing the same as yourself and Mr. Brown. He has been lobbying intensively on our behalf and of course, not only is he a director of Stagecoach (Malawi) Ltd"—which I find an interesting idea—"and Stagecoach International Ltd., but he is a paid consultant." I bow to the greater wisdom of my colleagues in this place, but his behaviour outraged and incensed the people who had fought for three years and then found that there was a conspiracy of interest in the Scottish Office, in this House and within Stagecoach Holdings which frustrated their admirable hopes and aspirations for the future.

I feel very sad that this matter has to be raised. I hope that a Committee of this House which deals with such matters, would want to receive the submission that I will put forward about this matter and that it will be considered once more.

To complete the story of the sell-out of those 850 employees, I refer to another comment made by Brian Souter in Westminster Hall cafeteria. He said that, if they managed to take over Fife Scottish, he would destroy the competition of Rennies and Moffat and Williamson within nine months. He said, "That's the way we operate."

Will the Minister confirm that I sent him a letter on 7 June advising that we had serious information about anti-competitive practices around the country involving Stagecoach and that we had details of transactions in the bus industry which could result in Stagecoach taking over north of England firms which already had an investment in Scottish bus companies? I received a reply to my letter from the Minister on 10 June which was illuminating, but unhelpful. He wrote:

"With regard to points you make about Stagecoach's competitive activities within areas of their existing operations, I suggest that, if you have any evidence of anti-competitive practice, you draw it to the attention of the Office of Fair Trading."

That seemed reasonable, but notwithstanding the fact that in the procedures for the disposal of the companies within the ambit of the Scottish Bus Group, those anti-competitive practices had been mentioned. It was stated that, if there was a hint of any company closing down its competitors, that would be a serious issue which should be addressed. What happened? There was a dismissive letter from the Scottish Office advising that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry should be contacted for further discussions. That was not done at the time, but it will be done now.

A tragic situation has developed which brings no credit on Scottish Office Ministers for having been involved in such a shabby and duplicitous process. The privatisation of Fife Scottish has been highly irregular and unprofessional in the extreme, and it provides a shocking insight into the tawdry behaviour of what employees in my constituency can describe only as a complete whitewash of their aspirations and a determination to sell to Stagecoach, regardless of whether there was an MEBO involving £50,000 of taxpayers' money and regardless of quality and the £500,000 invested in Stagecoach through the Scottish Development Agency. We have now reached the stage where I cannot trust the Scottish Office to deal with any further privatisations of the Scottish Bus Group, if the experience of the Fife team is anything to go by.

We are looking at some fairly serious accusations of intimidation, incompetence, insider dealing and indifference, on behalf of the Scottish Office, to all the activities around it. I have met the Comptroller and Auditor General, Sir John Bourn, who is interested in an investigation into the matter before he considers the wider aspects of privatisation of the bus group in Scotland. I will pass my material to him after this debate and on the completion of the court case.

I want to refer the activities of the hon. Member for Tayside, North to the Select Committee on Members' Interests. I want an investigation by the Scottish Office into why the STG refused on eight occasions to respond to letters or telephone calls from Fife Scottish and, in turn, did not pass on any of the information to Scottish Office civil servants or Ministers. Of course, I would like the Scottish Office, if it was technically possible, to hold Stagecoach Holdings Ltd. to account for its intimidation, destabilisation of the management buy-out because of the loss-leading bid, and anti-competitive practices which could result in Stagecoach Holdings Ltd. controlling every bus route and service between the north of Scotland, the east coast of Scotland, through the central belt of Scotland and into Glasgow. All that has happened after the Government said that bids would be received from two or more companies and that they could not be on a contiguous basis. What hypocrisy that was when we consider what has happened.

What has happened may be disturbing the conscience of the Scottish Office, but there is nothing much that we can do now. The employees have a new owner, and I wish them well. Stagecoach Holdings has a group of men and women whom it does not deserve. For the benefit of the travelling public in Fife and for the benefit of the employees, I hope that it will go from strength to strength.

I believe that there is enough evidence, however, for a wide-ranging inquiry into the issues that I have raised. The behaviour of STG has been so deplorable and disgraceful that the chairman and chief executive should be suspended until the matter has been resolved. That would be a small price to pay for the betrayal of 850 employees and the best bus service in Britain, which has been passed over to a shady group with no track record and no good employment conditions and which has made hasty promises which I fear will not be kept.

8.57 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): The hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) has used some strong language, but I reject his allegations. The procedures that were adopted followed the disposal programme. I shall refer to the details later on, but four management-employee buy-outs have succeeded, and they have succeeded because they have won. The hon. Gentleman referred to a meeting that we had. I made the position clear at that time. He asked for a level playing field. Of course, preference is given to management-employee buy-outs in terms of the disposal programme.

The hon. Gentleman asked about letters that were received and considered by the Scottish Transport Group. No formal increased bid was received until about 10 am on 29 May. When we received that formal offer from the Scottish Transport Group we agreed that it would be right further to consider the position. I reported that decision to the hon. Gentleman and we discussed it on that occasion. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that all bids received were fully and properly considered. I cannot go further than that. However, in view of the fact that the appeal period relating to the court action which was recently raised has not yet expired, there is not much further than I can say on that point.

Mr. McLeish: That simply is not good enough. I have the private and confidential letters, which I am quite willing to make available to Scottish Office civil servants and Ministers. It was quite clear, as early as 9 May, in the telephone conversation on 24 May, and then in letters on 24, 28 and 29 May that a bid—a higher bid—was being considered and that representatives were anxious to discuss further with the STG or the Scottish Office. Is the Minister telling me that he knew about those conversations prior to the telephone conversation that I had with him on the morning of 29 May?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am not saying that. What I can give the hon. Gentleman is the chronology of events. The Department was aware that, on 24 May, Malcolm Roxburgh of the Scottish Transport Group received a phone call from Touche Ross that the MEBO would come up with a further sum. That was followed by a letter from Touche Ross on the same date, indicating a possible increase and a wish to discuss. However, I must stress that the letter which made a formal increased offer was the letter of 29 May, and the hon. Gentleman and myself discussed it on the programme. At the time, the Secretary of State was away. I went into the matter thoroughly and I believe that it was absolutely competent for the Secretary of State to consider the matter further in the light of the circumstances and the facts that the hon. Gentleman had put before me. It was absolutely right that he should follow the best legal advice. That has been done. The disposal programme has been followed and the winner was absolutely clear.

Mr. McLeish: I must again repeat that that simply does not square with the facts. Can the Minister answer the question that I asked? Did he see, was he aware of or was he informed about—any way that he would like to receive this question—the 9 May telephone conversation, the 24 May telephone conservation, the 24 May letter or the 28 May letter? Of course, he was eventually made aware of the 29 May offer. Can he confirm whether he was informed about those previous contacts desperately seeking some discussion of a revised bid?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman is suggesting that a formal offer was made on 24 May. That is not the case. A formal offer was made on 29 May. The hon. Gentleman is asking what I knew. I knew very well on 29 May, because the hon. Gentleman had telephoned. I went into the matter very thoroughly. We came to no rushed decisions on the matter. Indeed, an announcement was about to be made that morning, and that announcement was postponed. The circumstances were gone into very thoroughly by all the Scottish Office lawyers and I am glad to say that it was absolutely clear at the end who the winner was.

I have listened very carefully to what the hon. Gentleman has been saying. He is concerned about the privatisation of the SBG, but most particularly concerned about the sale of Fife Scottish. As the hon. Gentleman is aware, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State announced on 10 June 1991 that he had granted consent to the Scottish Transport Group to sell that company to Stagecoach (Holdings) Ltd., which is based in Perth and owns and operates a number of bus companies in the United Kingdom and overseas. The hon. Gentleman has raised a number of questions relating to that consent, in view of his support for the unsuccessful bid made by the management and employees of the company. He has questioned whether the sale has been properly conducted.

As the hon. Gentleman knows, the sale has been the subject of proceedings in the Court of Session. The management buy-out team submitted to the court a petition for judicial review seeking a reduction of the Secretary of State's consent. That petition was dismissed on 11 July. We have this week received the text of Lord Coulsfield's opinion, but the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that we have not yet had time to consider its terms in any detail. However my right hon. Friend welcomes Lord Coulsfield's decision. I understand that no appeal has been lodged against the court's judgment and that there is unlikely to be one. Nevertheless, the period for an appeal has not yet expired and, in those circumstances, it would be wrong for me to comment in detail on the circumstances of my right hon. Friend's decision.

The hon. Member for Fife, Central has criticised my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). I can say only that my hon. Friend made Ministers aware of his interests in all the dealings involving Stagecoach at the beginning of the privatisation programme. I cannot comment on the——

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North) *rose*——

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: On this point?

Mr. Wilson: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way. This is interesting. He has said that his hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) made his interest known from the outset of the privatisation process. Does the Minister mean from the outset of the Bill's consideration by the House?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: He made his position absolutely clear to Ministers from the time at which he had an interest. We never had the slightest doubt about that point throughout the process——

Mr. Wilson *rose*——

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No, I have made my position absolutely——

Mr. Wilson *rose*——

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: If the hon. Gentleman wants to table a written question, he may do so. I cannot give him the specific date. I have been aware of my hon. Friend's interest throughout the process.

Mr. McLeish: Will the Minister give way?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No, I cannot— *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North is an honourable man and the House should so regard him.

Mr. McLeish *rose*——

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No, I have answered that point and want to go on to the next. The hon. Gentleman can come back later if he wants.

I cannot comment on the detail of the bids, which are commercially confidential, but I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's suggestion that there was anything improper about the conduct of the sale or about the way in which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State reached his decision. I believe that the work force have said that they will co-operate with the new owners, and I welcome that. I am sure that Fife Scottish will have a strong future as a bus company and will continue to serve the travelling public in Fife very well, as it has in the past.

Mr. McLeish *rose*——

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I should like to answer the hon. Gentleman on one point. He recently visited the Scottish Office with a deputation of employees from the bus company and handed in a petition, containing a considerable number of names. The petition suggested that the present arrangements that are operated by Fife regional council, by which pensioners and the disabled can travel free, will be ended by the sale of Fife Stagecoach. I am glad to confirm that that is not the case. Stagecoach proposes to run Fife Scottish as a bus operating company, providing timetabled services. Fife regional council's concessionary fare scheme will continue to apply to the service as before.

Although I cannot comment in detail on the sale, it may be helpful if I explain the background to the sales of the subsidiaries of the Scotish Bus Group.

Mr. McLeish: The Minister is going off the subject.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am not off the subject; I am on it. I must again repeat to the hon. Gentleman that we are within the time scale for an appeal, and if he— *[Interruption.]* I must make it absolutely clear to the hon. Gentleman that if those concerned wish to appeal, they have the right to do so, so I choose my words with great care.

Mr. McLeish *rose*——

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, but reluctantly.

Mr. McLeish: The Minister can speak freely tonight because he knows that there is no cash available for any appeal in the Court of Session, which would cost thousands of pounds. What we have heard tonight allays none of the fears that have been expressed in this House —*[Interruption.]* I shall continue despite the involvement of the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart). None of our fears have been allayed, because the Minister has chosen to miss all the essential points. There was never any doubt about the legalities; what we are talking about are the procedures involved. It is clear that the Minister was not aware—this information was not available to him through his civil servants or the STG—that new bids, new telephone conversations and new letters were around and about. Will he confirm that he did not know until the 29th?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman must appreciate that he is raising a legal question about whether a properly constituted legal bid was submitted on an earlier date. All I can say to him is that I was absolutely certain in my own mind on the morning that we spoke together on the telephone that I was absolutely correct to consider that bid further, as was the Secretary of State. The fullest possible legal advice was taken and accepted by the Secretary of State before a final decision was arrived at. I think that that was correct.

The Transport (Scotland) Act 1989 provides the Secretary of State with power to draw up a disposal programme for the whole of the STG's undertaking with the exception of its shipping operations for which the Act makes provision for transfer to the ownership of the Secretary of State. That leaves the Scottish Bus Group which, before implementation of the disposal programme began, consisted of 10 separate bus subsidiaries.

The disposal programme was published on 6 February 1990 and copies have been made available in the House. Since it is however now some time since the disposal programme was published, I think it would be helpful if I were to refer to certain passages in it which set out the objectives of the programme.

The disposal programme was prepared by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State after consultation with the Scottish Transport Group. The programme provides for the disposal of the subsidiaries and the arrangements to be made in preparation for the dissolution of the Scottish Transport Group. Section 2(1) of the Transport (Scotland) Act 1989 set out the main objective of the Secretary of State in preparing the disposal programme. That is the promotion of sustained and fair competition between the SBG companies and between them and other bus companies. That objective is being promoted primarily by offering the Scottish Bus Group for sale as 10 separate undertakings with a view to the establishment of independent companies operating within a competitive framework in the bus industry.

The general approach which the disposal programme requires STG to adopt is to offer the companies listed in the programme for sale on an individual basis. The disposals are required to be effected generally by means of sale and purchase agreements relating to shares in the subsidiaries disposed of. The programme does, however, provide for subsidiaries not disposed of in this way to be wound up prior to the dissolution of STG.

The appendix sets out in detail how the companies will be advertised for sale on a phased basis. They will be placed in the national trade press. All those conditions were followed and an information memorandum would be made available for a nominal charge to prospective purchasers who registered an interest in a company,

provided that STG is satisfied that the prospective purchaser has sufficient financial backing or the prospect of sufficient backing.

Prospective purchasers will be invited to submit indicative bids and other relevant information and may be invited to have discussions. Sealed bids——

Mr. McLeish: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will you make a judgment on the relevance of the wider implications of the matter to the specific issue of the sale of Fife Scottish to Stagecoach Holdings?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I did not follow the hon. Gentleman. Is he complaining that the Minister is going into matters which are wider than those which he raised?

Mr. McLeish: Yes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a matter for me. The debate on the motion for the Adjournment can be wide.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman assumes that there will be no appeal. I am not entitled to make any such assumption. I will proceed on that basis. He is unrealistic if he pursues the debate on any other basis.

Sealed bids will be required to be submitted to STG by a closing date. When seeking the Secretary of State's consent for a sale, details of all bids received for that company together with a statement of its reasons will have to be submitted. Following the Secretary of State's consent, arrangements will be made with the successful bidder for completion of the sale. Clearly, the disposal programme provides that discussions will take place as necessary between prospective purchasers and a negotiator acting on behalf of STG before the submission of sealed bids by purchasers.

STG reserves the right not to invite a formal bid from any prospective purchaser and is not required to give any reason for not inviting any such bid. STG is required to obtain the Secretary of State's consent before deciding not to invite any bid. STG is not obliged to recommend to the Secretary of State acceptance of the highest or any other bid for a particular undertaking. No disposal will take place until a management-employee team has had a reasonable time in which to lodge a bid.

Bidders are required to include all relevant information in their bids, including the following details: names of the principals involved; details of the shareholding and financial structure proposed for the company or group of companies the basis for employee participation, and any limits on the transfer of shares; a statement of their future intentions for the business; the price being offered for the company; and so on.

As I mentioned earlier, the legislation sets out the main objective in preparing the disposal programme as being the promotion of sustained and fair competition in the bus industry. It provides that no buyer of a bus company, including persons connected with that buyer, will be allowed to buy any other bus companies operating in contiguous areas, as defined in the programme. There is also an overall limit of two on the number of companies that one buyer can acquire. These restrictions apply to the nine area-based operating companies, but not to Scottish Citylink Coaches. In order to promote the competition objective, STG is also required to make inquiries of intending bidders to establish what links they have or might intend to have with other companies in future.

I am well aware that the hon. Gentleman sets high store by the provisions in the disposal programme concerning a preference for bids involving employee participation. The Secretary of State has a statutory obligation to have regard to the desirability of promoting the acquisition by the employees of a controlling interest in the companies to be sold. For that reason, preference is given to bids involving the acquisition of such a controlling interest.

Such bids can take the form of a management-employee buy-out, MEBO, or an employee buy-out, EBO. In the case of MEBOs, at least 25 per cent. of the ordinary shares in the company should generally be owned by or on behalf of non-management employees to satisfy the requirement of adequate non-management employee share ownership. It is open to bidders to make whatever arrangements they consider appropriate to satisfy that requirement, and non-management employee share ownership could well be above that figure.

As a general principle, shares should be available to all management and non-management employees on equal terms. The shareholding arrangements could be by means of an employee share ownership plan ESOP, by arrangements for employees to buy shares, or both. Where a bid, which involves a controlling interest by employees along the lines that I have specified, is otherwise comparable with a third party bid, a price preference will be given to the bid involving employee ownership. Further passages in the disposal programme set out arrangements regarding pensions and travel concessions.

I stress that four of the sales so far have been to management-employee buy-outs: Lowland Scottish, Scottish Citylink, Eastern Scottish and Kelvin Central Buses. Northern Scottish has been sold to Stagecoach. Midland Scottish was sold to GRT Holdings, and Strathtay Scottish to the Yorkshire Traction Company Ltd. Clansman Travel and Leisure Ltd. and Rapsons Coaches have jointly been awarded preferred bidder status in the sale of Highland Scottish.

An important matter to which the disposal programme does not refer is the publication of sale proceeds. The position is that the total proceeds for the sale of all the SBG's subsidiaries and the prices obtained will be made public only after the privatisation process has been completed. Earlier publication of prices realised could prejudice the sale process.

The hon. Gentleman wanted a chronology of events and I shall give him that chronology as it is known to the Scottish Office. On 8 February 1991, the sale advertisement appeared, 11 information memoranda were issued and the indicative bids date specified. On 7 March 1991, indicative bids were due and five were received. In the week commencing 18 March 1991, the agreed purchasers were advised that 25 April would be the final bid date. On 25 April, five formal bids were received. The Stagecoach bid was the highest. On 8 May, the STG board considered the bids and recommended Stagecoach. On 9 May the STG requested the Secretary of State's consent to make the sale to Stagecoach. On 17 May——

Mr. McLeish: Will the Minister give way?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No, just let me finish the chronology. The hon. Gentleman can intervene later.

Mr. McLeish: On that very point. After mentioning the board meeting on 8 May, the Minister moved to 9 May. Was the Scottish Office informed on 9 May of the telephone conversation held between the STG and Touche Ross about the interest of Fife Scottish in readjusting that bid?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: To the best of my knowledge, I was not, but I shall have to check that from the papers.

On 17 May, there was a submission to Ministers. On 23 May, the Secretary of State made it clear that he was content and the letter of consent was issued to the STG. On 24 May Malcolm Roxburgh of the STG received a phone call from Touche Ross, as the hon. Gentleman staged, that the MEBO would come up with the further sum. That was followed up by a letter indicating that the increase was possible. The hon. Gentleman is putting a legal argument on whether that constituted a formal offer. It was not recognised as such and was not treated on that basis.

On 27 May Stagecoach signed a deposit agreement. On 28 May the deposit cheque was received by the STG's bank. On 29 May the Touche Ross letter was delivered, the hon. Gentleman telephoned me, and I called off the announcement which was due to be made two or, perhaps, three hours later that morning, in order to look thoroughly into all the circumstances because it was clear that a formal increased offer had been made.

On 25 May, the intended press announcement was cancelled. On 30 May, a letter from the Scottish Transport Group said that its board was still of the view that the sale to Stagecoach should go ahead. On 5 June, there was a submission to Ministers that recommended consent should be granted to Stagecoach. On 10 June, there was a press announcement and a new consent letter was issued. On 13 June, a petition for judicial review was advised and papers were received. On 14 June, a petition was heard in court and the MEBO failed to obtain interim interdict, but an order was made for a first hearing of the judicial review. The first hearing, on 3 July, was adjourned and on 10 and 11 July, the hearing continued and the petition was dismissed. The appeal period expires on 1 August. That is the chronology of events.

However disappointed the hon. Gentleman may be at the outcome, I have to tell him that the advice of the lawyers was followed to the letter, which we believe was absolutely right. If he has any grounds for questioning the judgment of Scottish Office lawyers and Ministers, the proper course is to resort to the courts. The hon. Member's MEBO has done that. If I had been in any doubt, the MEBO would have won. I was in no doubt, and the MEBO lost. That is the reality; this is not a discretionary matter but a matter of fact. Four MEBOs have won and the final sale is now under consideration. In earlier discussions, the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) said that we were merely paying lip service to the matter, but four of the MEBOs have won, which is a substantial number.

I cannot go further than I have gone tonight, as the matter could conceivably come up on appeal in court. Therefore, I have chosen my words with care.

9.22 pm

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): My contribution will be brief, first because I do not want to interfere with the second Adjournment debate, to be introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin), and secondly, because the subject of this Adjournment debate has been set out not only ably but brilliantly by my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish)—in contrast with the Minister's performance.

I say without malice that the speech that we have just heard from the Minister—if "speech" is not too strong a word—was a disgrace. I thought that the long passage that he blabbered out while reading from notes was particularly bad—it was clearly written about two years ago. The Minister did not even change the future tense into the past tense. I hope that the *Hansard* writers will do him no favours. He told us what was going to happen—it was an old speech written when the process was under way.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): My hon. Friend was quoting.

Mr. Wilson: The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State says that his hon. Friend was quoting. In that case, we look forward to seeing several columns of quotations in *Hansard* tomorrow. The Minister's speech was a disgrace with no attempt to address the detailed points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central.

I wish to iterate some of the perspective on the matter. I spent many long hours in Committee listening to similar feats of eloquence from the Minister. No one doubts the Minister's good will or his integrity. We all knew that, at that time, the Minister was the front man for much darker forces. We did not know the entire details of how the privatisation of the Scottish Bus Group would work out, but we were certain that Stagecoach—unloved, unwanted, but so influential—would end up with two large slices of the action. That is what we knew from day one, and that is precisely what happened. It did not matter too much how that was to be achieved—it was part of the end goal and, by heavens, one way or another it would be achieved.

It is a dreadful story. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) is welcome to intervene if he understands the issue, but if he wants to sit there muttering, that is his hang-up. The case relating to Fife is a dreadful one and the Minister has conspicuously failed to answer the detailed questions posed by my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central about the eight representations made between 9 and 29 May. Either those representations were not reported to the Scottish Office, or they were and they were ignored.

How is it that the central figure in the privatisation, Mr. Roxburgh, the solicitor acting for the Scottish Transport Group, could receive such communications from interested parties without responding to them? How could he still be acting within the terms set out for him by the Scottish Office? How could that happen?

The Minister should consider the eight communications that my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central has detailed. He should tell us what was done about each of them. He should tell us in what sense Mr. Roxburgh has been called to account for his actions, or lack of them, on the eight representations made between 9 and 29 May.

I want to consider the role of the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), which has been an issue for a long time. I regret that the hon. Gentleman is not present. I have said most of what I am going to say tonight before, but I would be much happier saying it if the hon. Gentleman were here. It is remarkable that such a diligent director of Stagecoach has not made it his business to be in the House tonight.

I remember the Committee stage of the Transport (Scotland) Bill very well, as does the Minister, I am sure. I remember particularly the performance of the hon. Member for Tayside, North, who was diligent in his attendance. However, the hon. Gentleman did not make many speeches in Committee, but, occasionally, he leapt into action. Anyone who studies the record of the Committee will find that the hon. Gentleman repeatedly intervened to represent the interests of Stagecoach.

On one occasion the hon. Member for Tayside, North nipped out of the Door to telephone the Stagecoach management. He then came back to refer to the interests of Stagecoach. Every time we drew attention to the hon. Gentleman's behaviour, he said, reasonably, that he was acting in his role as a constituency Member. Although Stagecoach is not based in the hon. Gentleman's constituency, he pointed out that some of his constituents worked for it. Those were the grounds on which we were led to believe that the hon. Gentleman took such an active interest in the proceedings in the good name of Stagecoach.

The Committee stage ended in 14 February 1989. Imagine our surprise a few weeks later when we read a reference to the hon. Member for Tayside, North as a director of Stagecoach. Imagine our further interest when we read in the Register of Members' Interests that in April 1989, at most six weeks after the Committee stage and some three months before the Third Reading was completed, the hon. Member for Tayside, North——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. If the hon. Gentleman is implying some impropriety on the part of the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), who is absent, he is not going about it in the correct way. There is a procedure laid down that he should follow. It is not the procedure that he is following tonight.

Mr. Wilson: I cannot imagine that by reading from the Register of Members' Interests I am attributing impropriety.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: As I understand it, the hon. Gentleman was suggesting that the hon. Member for Tayside, North had expressed certain views in the proceedings on the Bill prior to the entry in the Register of Members' Interests. That carries serious implications, and the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) must not pursue them in the manner in which he has. He must raise them through the proper procedures laid down.

Mr. Wilson: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I will restrict myself to factual matters. I will not speculate. The factual matter is that the Committee stage ended on 14 February 1989 and the Register of Members' Interests shows that, in April 1989, the hon. Member for Tayside, North——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is either not listening or is disregarding what I said. The hon. Gentleman is now clearly suggesting some impropriety on the part of the hon. Member for Tayside, North.

Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie (Glasgow, Pollok): My hon. Friend is reading from——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not raise the point in that way. The appropriate way is to write to the Select Committee.

Mr. Wilson: It is difficult to question the Minister without referring to these matters.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is referring to the conduct of the hon. Member for Tayside, North. That is not a matter for the Minister, but a matter for the hon. Gentleman. If the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North wishes to refer to the conduct of the hon. Member for Tayside, North, he must not raise the matter in the House. He must write to the Select Committee.

Mr. Wilson: I am referring to what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central. He has read reports in the press in which the hon. Member for Tayside, North claimed that he approached the Minister, using the word "we" in terms of Stagecoach, to raise certain concerns about the interests of Stagecoach with the Scottish Office. I ask the Minister directly: did the Scottish Office receive such representations from the hon. Member for Tayside, North?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not persist in disregarding the advice of the Chair. My attention has been drawn to the relevant passage in "Erskine May". On page 389 it says:

> "Where one Member makes an allegation against another Member, he is required to do so in writing to the Registrar, who refers the allegation to the Committee and informs the Member concerned."

By implication, the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North is making an allegation against the hon. Member for Tayside, North, who is not here tonight. He should instead follow the procedure that I have described.

Mr. Wilson: I shall leave this subject entirely. My hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central and I will write to the Select Committee on Members' Interests. I stress that I have made no allegations. The hon. Member in question was advised by my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central of his intention to raise these matters on the Floor of the House tonight. I have asked the Minister a direct question, which is germane to the debate: did he receive the representations to which I referred? The whole business stinks to high heaven.

Housing (Glasgow)

9.32 pm

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): I should like to convey through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my thanks to Mr. Speaker for allowing me this second Adjournment debate, which was a pleasant surprise. I also thank the Minister, who is responsible for housing in Scotland, for giving me the opportunity to talk about a matter that is important to me. Like most Glaswegians of my generation, I was brought up in an old tenement building, in a room and kitchen with an outside toilet. Therefore, throughout my life in public office, I have always felt it important that people get a decent home and decent shelter.

Many of us in the city of Glasgow felt that, when everyone had a home with adequate rooms and a bathroom, all problems would be solved. However, we know from the housing situation not only in Scotland but throughout the United Kingdom that people need more than that for their housing needs. I hope to highlight some of the problems that have arisen in my constituency. As the debate is about housing in Glasgow, the problems in my constituency are relevant to those in any Glasgow constituency. I am glad to see that, along with my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson), my hon. Friends the Members for Glasgow, Pollok (Mr. Dunnachie) and for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) are here. My hon. Friend knows a great deal about local authority housing. He is a former leader of the Renfrewshire district local authority.

Both Glasgow district councillors and officials take pride in trying to give a good service to council tenants. When I was a Glasgow district councillor, I found that the local ward councillor could solve tenants' minor problems by making representations to the housing manager. If there was any difficulty with the housing manager, the local ward councillor could ask to see the convener of housing. If there was any difficulty with him, the local ward councillor could appeal to the leader of the group or to the committee. However, problems that could be solved in that way when I was a councillor cannot be dealt with in the same way by the present councillors. They are experiencing great difficulties, due to the fact that the Government are starving local authorities, particularly the housing authorities, of the money they need.

The houses in Broomknowes road in my constituency were built in the inter-war period. It is referred to as intermediate housing. They are grey sandstone buildings. Although they are old, they are in better condition than some of the houses that were built in the 1960s. I have spoken to a tenant who lives in Broomknowes road who went to live there when she was a young girl. She is now in her fifties. The standard in those tenements is so high that they are a credit to the local authority and to the people who live there.

Only one thing is needed. The windows are deteriorating. Consequently, those properties are not properly draught-proofed. Ten or 15 years ago, the Minister knows that the local authority could have said, "Let's get this through the budget. It's a 50-year-old property. The people who live there are good tenants. We want to encourage them to continue what they have been doing, in some cases for generations." The Minister's aim must surely be to provide decent housing. If tenants take a pride in their properties, they ought to be encouraged.

The people who live in Broomknowes road cannot get double-glazed windows for their properties, even though that is a standard provision in other houses. They need double-glazed windows because their houses are on a main road, with heavy buses passing by. The houses ought to be insulated against noise as well as against cold in winter.

Mr. Gordon McMaster (Paisley, South): Does my hon. Friend agree that this is a false economy, and that it is to be found in Glasgow and elsewhere? As the Government have starved housing authorities of the necessary funds, replacement windows cannot be provided for tenants. Windows just have to be patched up. Over 15 years, that is a false economy. It would be cheaper to replace the windows than have to keep patching them up. However, that option is not available to housing authorities. They do not have the funds for that purpose.

Mr. Martin: My hon. Friend is correct. One of my constituents in that area told me that the council could carry out only minor repairs to a window sash. One part of the window was repaired. The tradesman went away and did not return until weeks later to repair another part of the same window. Someone has to pay that tradesman. His wages come from public funds. If the work were properly carried out, morale in the area would be raised. A problem that could have been solved easily in a councillor's surgery has led to the tenants' association making representations to the community council and to the community council holding a public meeting.

When I travelled from Westminster to Glasgow to speak there, members of the regional council were present to support the district councillors. The local housing manager was also there. The starvation of funds has led to the involvement of Uncle Tom Cobley and all in a problem that should be easily resolved. I think that the people of Broomknowes road are entitled to a better deal.

I had not intended to refer again to the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn). In various housing debates, however, the hon. and learned Gentleman has refered to the big, empty, soulless housing units that Labour-controlled authorities had built on the outskirts of Glasgow. I assume that he was referring to Drumchapel, Easterhouse, Castlemilk and Priesthill.

If the hon. and learned Gentleman had been brought up in the tenements in which I was brought up, he would know that, in the 1950s, people told lies to get into housing in those areas. So high were family standards then that brothers and sisters who slept in the same room never saw each other unclothed. On winter nights, boys would have to be dressed if one of their sisters wanted to wash at the sink. When the Drumchapel and Easterhouse accommodation became available, a mother and father could have their own room, and brothers and sisters could live separately in a flat with a bath. It was like winning the pools.

If the hon. Members who talk of soulless communities knew anything about housing in Glasgow, they would appreciate that such peripheral schemes gave those in the city centre a breathing space. Those schemes were similar to the current "merchant city" scheme. That scheme would not have been possible if people had not been rehoused away from the centre of the city. Not every peripheral

scheme involves a bad housing estate. I have mentioned the Balornock and Barrmullock schemes before, and I am sure that there are high-demand schemes in every constituency that contains good council housing stock.

The Minister has failed to help the local authorities in one regard. Many of the estates were started up in the late 1940s and early 1950s, when men and women finished their army service and started families. Now, those people are pensioners. They have lived and built up communities on those estates. They should be given flats designed for elderly people in the surroundings where they brought up their families.

If we are serious about creating communities and keeping them stable, why cannot we accommodate such people? They brought up their families in four or five-apartment tenements or houses with front and back doors, but now they need smaller accommodation. Why can they not be accommodated by one of the schemes that I mentioned earlier? Let me cite a specific case: it may be appropriate for me to do so on a day when a Minister has talked about doing away with regiments in the British Army.

Some members of that family are now dead. A man came to see me who had been a prisoner of war, having been captured at Dunkirk when with the Cameron Highlanders. He could not accept a proper job after the war because, having been in Poland and exposed to severe cold without a proper diet, he was not as robust as he had been when a young soldier.

The main political parties talk about patriotism and how we must wrap ourselves in the union jack, and nowadays we talk about the great tradition of the British regiments. The man who came to see me in that case had come out of the forces and wanted a decent home, and I am pleased to say that he got one. Unfortunately—it must have been a million-to-one chance—the tragedy that occurred to his family was dreadful. In his old age, he, his wife and his son—three people in the same house—contracted cancer. I know that certain members of that family died. They all may be dead by now.

I felt a sense of failure on behalf of society at that time. Although that family had lived in that house since 1945 —in a community in which I lived—with the minister, priest, home helps and neighbours aware of their plight and visiting them because they knew that they needed support, society let them down when they needed alternative housing. Because they needed a bathroom on the ground floor, they were told, "You have plenty of points for another home, but you will have to move away from your present community."

We all carry some responsibility for letting that family down. We must not simply heap all the blame on the local authority. I hope that families such as that will not be forced, by circumstances beyond their control, to move from the local communities they love and have played a part in creating.

Much is said about multi-storey flats. In my constituency I have the 32-storey Red road flats, among the highest in Europe. They were built by the father of the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell). I remember him well. He was a building manager with Glasgow corporation, and I knew him when I served as a young councillor. I recall working with him on various committees. I had the highest regard for him.

Although in England they are called flats, we in Scotland refer to them as houses, even though they may be in high-rise blocks. Such flats suit some people—particularly, say, married couples with teenagers, when everybody in the household is out working. Such homes are easy to decorate and are sometimes more secure. When people come home after a day's work, such flats are usually warm, and the people living in them may not want homes with front and back doors and the bother of looking after a garden.

A big problem with some multi-storey flats is security. Many multi-storey flats were built not just by local authorities but as a result of decisions taken by Government. Both Labour and Conservative Governments of the past told local authorities, "If you don't build multi-storey dwellings, you will not get grant." Local authorities had people pounding on their town hall doors demanding to get out of the slums in city centres —in places such as Anderson, where I was brought up, Old Springburn and the Old Gorbals. People were demanding, "Get us out of these rat-infested places." Local authorities were told by central Government to build non-traditional houses.

As a result of what happened in the past, we still have multi-storey flats, and I could take the Minister to some developments in my constituency which are absolutely beautiful. One could literally eat off the floor in the entrance hall. The lifts are well cared for and in superb condition. Other multi-storey flats, on the other hand, are not so good, and the reason is usually lack of security.

It is clear that multi-storey properties will be with us for a long time to come, and I fear that we are, as it were, spoiling the ship for a ha'p'orth of tar. We have spent a fortune on such housing and we have employed caretakers, but they are not there 24 hours a day. We spend a lot of money on lifts, sound insulation and so on, but we need a concierge service to provide security and stop vandals coming into the building and causing havoc. In an ordinary tenement dwelling, the worst that can happen is that someone can put graffiti on the wall. However, if a vandal gets into a multi-storey flat and damages the lift, it may mean that someone with a heart disorder might be required to walk up 18 floors.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): What if there is a fire?

Mr. Martin: Yes, it could cause problems in any emergency. An ambulance may be needed or a doctor may have come to call. A concierge service has been introduced in some multi-storey flats in Glasgow and I hope that the Minister will be prepared to expand that service.

My hon. Friend the Member for Pollock served with me on the local authority when we said that there should be some experiments on the sale of council housing. Therefore, I speak as a Labour Member who was not frightened to say that we should look at the sale of council housing. However, we should not have embarked upon the wholesale selling of council housing. In my constituency, the best housing stock has been bought and the worst is left lying there, sometimes derelict.

If, in the 1950s, people were glad of their corporation house to rent, why should not the same apply to young couples in the 1990s? Circumstances change. Now, young couples who have lived all their days in one community are being told that they cannot have a house. In fact, strangely, a lady in my constituency came to see me and said, "My Sandra can't get a house." I said, "Your Sandra

[Mr. Martin]

can't get a house because you have bought your house, the woman next door has bought her house and so has everybody else." The Sandras of this world should be able to get decent housing in their community.

Fair enough—by the sale of council housing we have given people the bargain of a lifetime. People are proud of their homes, and I can see the improvements that they make to them. However, there should be new housing for young couples who are not sitting tenants and who do not have an opportunity to buy their house. The problem is that people have to be tenants before they can buy their council house. How are young couples to become tenants if there are no houses to rent?

The Minister might say that the housing association movement is receiving a fortune from the Scottish Office and is rehabilitating the tenements throughout Glasgow. I am proud of the work that is being done by the housing associations in my constituency. I was a founder member of one of them. There is the Springburn Possilpark housing association, Milnbank and Reidvale. In fact, a photograph of one of the back courts of the Reidvale tenements in the Dennistown area appears in Prince Charles's book, "A Vision for Britain", as he was so impressed by the beautiful way in which it has been done up.

However, there are problems in the housing association movement. It does a good job, but there is a lack of accountability. The Minister has often talked of local authorities being accountable, but he fails to highlight the fact that the housing associations have a great deal of autonomy. They have general management committee meetings, but the Minister knows that full membership consists only of tenants and householders. They alone can attend an AGM. At least within local authorities everyone over the age of 18 in a house can have a say in whether the council is doing a good job. Sometimes, the associations disregard decisions made at the committees' AGMs. They are becoming remote, and the Minister should consider ways of encouraging those associations to become more involved in the community. I cite an example.

Possilpark in Springburn wanted, with the help of public grants, to take over Springburn public hall, which has lain derelict, to sandblast it, to do it up internally and to sell it to the private sector. I said that I did not mind a bit of it going to the private sector, but that as it was a public hall, surely it had some function for social activities such as weddings and dance classes, so that the community would get something back from the urban aid money put into the project.

I was told that the community would have a nice clean building and that the housing association would have its value added tax paid from the profit it made from the sale of the building. I could not convince the housing association that the real function of a community-based association was not always to have foremost in its mind the worry of getting wages for the staff and keeping the association going—it should be to ensure that the community got the best deal.

Flats are being built in my constituency, and everyone says that that is great, because Springburn has lain derelict and its planning has been in a state of decline. However, when one-bedroomed flats are sold for £42,000, it is not the 8,000 local unemployed people in my constituency who will buy them. If they are one-bedroomed flats, families will not buy them—at best, they will go to a couple.

The Minister has a responsibility through Scottish Homes to ensure that the committees are more accountable to the public whom they serve. The waiting list system is a puzzle to me. I have complained before that, when a constituent of mine asked to be put on the waiting list, she was told that the list was closed. She then discovered that her neighbour was put on the list a week later. When I inquired about that, I was told that the first constituent had tried to be put on the list on Monday the 22nd and that the neighbour tried on Tuesday 23rd, and on Tuesday the 23rd the list was reopened for a day.

That leads to abuse. I am not saying that anyone is dishonest, but if someone phones Jeannie to say that the list will be open first thing at 9 am, I know that Jeannie will try to put her name on the list. That is unfair to the person who, the day before, had appeared on the scene and wanted to put her name on the list. If public money is involved, everyone should have a fair chance. Nobody would tolerate the circumstances that I have described if a local authority were involved.

I welcome the private sector in places such as Springburn. I believe that there is room for everyone to be involved in housing, and that there should be a social mix. The private sector can always move quickly, and I am pleased that it has done so in the centre of my constituency in parts of Dennistown and in Portland Dash, where the famous Speirs wharf is being built. The people there might be in the high-income bracket and therefore not after council housing, but they bring in a population which can serve schools, churches and community groups, which can all benefit. I am happy to see the private sector coming in.

I do not want to stray wide of the subject of housing, but people from the private sector raise problems with me involving not only housing but planning in general. Developers often feel that, with the two-tier local authority system in Glasgow, sometimes they get——

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment lapsed, without Question put.

Motion made and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Mr. Martin: I shall be brief now, Mr. Deputy Speaker; I have nearly finished.

Private developers often feel that, with the two-tier planning authority structure, they get permission from Glasgow district council to build houses, offices or commercial developments, only to discover that the region has called the plan in. Developers sometimes feel that it would be best to let the region consider the matter—perhaps it has a legitimate right to consider it—only to discover that the district council has appealed against the call-in, as it is legally entitled to.

If someone has £3 million to invest in property in my constituency, and the property market is fluctuating because of business rates, bank rates and all the rest, that person will be getting nervous. It would be understandable if such a developer decided to invest in a new town next time, not in a city with two planning authority structures. I hope that the Minister will bear that in mind.

I finish by thanking you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for your time, and the Minister for listening.

10.2[illegible]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I congratulate the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) for having spoken effectively in the debate. I have greatly enjoyed visiting his constituency several times, and I know that he has taken a keen interest in housing, in seeing housing associations develop and in generally improving conditions for his constituents.

It will amuse the hon. Gentleman to know that a year or so ago, just before the end of the year, I was in a position to make a supplementary allocation of about £3 million. We ascertained that Glasgow could make full use of such a sum, so it was almost all given to that city. To my surprise, I saw in the evening paper the headline, "Insult to Glasgow". I read the article and suddenly realised that the award had been thought to be the main allocation, although it was only a supplementary allocation. I received an apology shortly afterwards.

I assure the hon. Gentleman that we shall take the needs of Glasgow seriously into account. The city is the largest public sector landlord in western Europe, and has the biggest and most pressing problems. I do not wish the hon. Member to doubt that I see Glasgow as a great city. I have enormously enjoyed visiting it since I was a boy, when I used to be taken to the dentist there. The dentist was a lay preacher and I learnt much about Christianity when I had no chance to answer. The campaign, "Glasgow's Miles Better" has an enormous impact. The city has now been brought forward tremendously. Not only the People's Palace but the Burrell collection, the garden festival and a stream of other successes have put Glasgow firmly on the European map as a city of culture.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman that we should concentrate not only on the problems of the merchant city but on the peripheral housing schemes—the hon. Gentleman mentioned specifically the problems of high rise flats. Many of the points that he covered are matters for the district council, and I have no doubt that it is acting on many of them.

Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie (Glasgow, Pollok): What about money?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman asks about money. I will make available as many public sector resources as I possibly can, but if there is a shortfall between what is intended for the local communities concerned and what is available in public resources, all the other possible sources of funding need to be considered, including funding from housing associations—Scottish Homes—and the private sector. Let me give an example.

Mr. Gordon McMaster (Paisley, South): I endorse all that the Minister says about the turn-around in Glasgow, which I also praise. I seek an assurance from him, however, that, given that he proposes to do all this for Glasgow, he will not take the money away from authorities such as Renfrew district, which not only have peripheral housing estates but which are on the periphery of Glasgow and should not be forgotten.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. Last Thursday, I made an extra allocation of £128,000 to his district council. I realise that it was for environmental improvements, not in Foxbar but in Ferguslie Park, but I hope that the money will help, and we will bear the needs of Foxbar particularly in mind. I made the chairman of Scottish Homes aware of the visit that I paid with the hon. Gentleman to his constituency, and I am certain that the discussions on that matter will be taken forward.

We envisage the urban regeneration schemes developing much further, into smaller urban renewal initiatives of which there are now three in Scotland—Alloa, Kilmarnock and Falkirk. We hope that there will be three more before very long. The hon. Gentleman is quite right in saying that we must give additional attention to the peripheral housing schemes in his constituency and elsewhere in Scotland. The Greve report stressed the importance of looking at an empty property and considering the possibility of disposals and the housing association movement has a strong role to play.

The hon. Member for Springburn mentioned the valuable example of Speirs Wharf which, if not in his constituency, is on the edge of it. He is absolutely right. However, I stress that that project was undertaken not just between the district council and the SDA. It also involved Historic Scotland, which has given more than £12 million in grants to historic churches in Scotland and to historic buildings generally. Although it is a small part of the picture, if the hon. Gentleman has historic buildings in his constituency, he should contact that body. I am sure that his proposals will be considered sympathetically.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the position of the Gordon Highlander. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence made it clear earlier today that housing needs must be addressed——

Mr. Martin: Cameron Highlander.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: That is an important correction. I myself was a Cameronian, and that institution, too, was founded by a Cameron.

I regard the officials in Glasgow as giving a very good service. One example of the way in which they have excelled is to be found in the Hamish Allan centre for the homeless. When young people—or anyone with a problem that has caused them to be homeless—go there, they are really well treated. They are made to feel at home and there is no element of stigma attached to going to the centre. It is performing an extremely valuable role, and I believe that other councils in Scotland would be well advised to look at the excellence of the service that it has provided with a view to following its example. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that we have made an additional allocation to Glasgow in respect of homelessness projects and I believe that Glasgow is proceeding with such projects successfully and effectively.

The hon. Gentleman is obviously interested in what the local authority can do to help to enhance its resources. There are two things that it could do. If right-to-buy sales were processed within six months rather than 12, that would result in many hundreds of thousands of pounds extra coming into the system. Let me give the example of the rents-to-mortgages scheme: a quarter of all the expressions of interest have come from the Glasgow area. If a small number of tenants—say 50—buy under the rents-to-mortgages scheme, that will bring in £500,000 of receipts which will go an immense distance towards renewing the window frames in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. If one of the district council's priorities is to build houses, that is an absolutely legitimate aim; the

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

council is entirely within its rights to pursue that aim—if it is the council's priority. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Pollok (Mr. Dunnachie) must appreciate that one of the problems facing Glasgow is whether it should spread the funds available to it thinly or concentrate on specific upgradings. I understand that it is doing the latter and that is a matter for Glasgow and not for me.

With regard to housing associations, Glasgow has had spent on it almost half the total available for the whole of Scotland. It has had about £500 million spent on it. Much of that may have gone to the inner city, but that will spread outwards in future and will concentrate increasingly on peripheral housing schemes.

Mr. Dunnachie: What about the private sector?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I realise that there is a strong prejudice in Glasgow against the private rented sector, but I believe that the best landlord that a man can have is himself. If Glasgow wants to enhance its receipts, having a voluntary rents-to-mortgage scheme will undoubtedly improve the amount of funds that it can spend on its public sector stock.

Mr. Dunnachie: I have raised the matter before, but received no answer.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: That was about a completely different point on repair grants. I have written to the hon. Gentleman fully about that and, I understand, action has been taken.

This year, £82 million is being spent by Scottish Homes in Glasgow. In spite of that, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) calls for its abolition. That is seriously irresponsible. Scottish Homes is performing an extremely valuable role, as the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) has recognised. I believe that it should be strongly supported.

Mr. McMaster: I would not defend the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars). I want to refer to the use of capital receipts of the sale of houses to fund the ideas referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin). However, the arithmetic does not work out if we carry it to its logical conclusion. Where there is a diminishing housing stock and the best houses are sold and the loan debt must still be financed with fewer tenants, eventually all the council's receipts will be used to finance the loan debt which has not decreased.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman should be aware that £1,600 million has been made available to spend on public sector stock as a result of right to buy sales. The receipt from right to buy is much higher than the outstanding debt on each house which varies from area to area. It may be £4,500 or £6,000. The average council house sale varies between £10,000 and £12,000, and that is well above the average outstanding debt in Scotland. The great strength of right to buy is that it benefits everyone, not just the aspiring tenant who wishes to own, but the public sector.

Scottish Homes has been spending those huge sums in Glasgow this year and it is also giving priority to homelessness projects and to urban regeneration initiatives. Such initiatives affect Castlemilk and North Forgewood in Motherwell. I believe that that role will increase. I am glad that the hon. Member for Springburn has struck up such a good relationship with Scottish Homes. His particular point on the whole is not so much a point for me as one for him to pursue with the chairman of Scottish Homes and at a local level. I hope that a suitable arrangement can be worked out.

Housing projects are successful where well-established agreements are worked out at community level. It would be easy for us to go faster, but if we did that we would not have the support of local communities, and the housing projects concerned would not stand the test of time.

I have mentioned that Glasgow can do a lot more to enhance receipts by shortening the processing time for council house sales and by considering a voluntary programme from rents to mortgage. I regard the other call that was recently made in Glasgow—again it was by the Scottish National party; I think that it was the hon. Member for Govan—that £976 million of capital debt should be written off as totally inappropriate. That sum would have to be raised either by extra taxation or through borrowing. It follows that any decision along those lines would have to be considered most carefully and would require legislation, and we have no such proposals.

As for resources to Glasgow, I must make it clear that, before we make allocations, we look first and foremost at Glasgow, because it is far and away the biggest public sector landlord not only in Scotland but in western Europe. Its needs are greatest and we must therefore look at them carefully. I receive complaints that too much is going to Glasgow and not enough is going to the rest of Scotland, but, objectively, the needs are greater. The hon. Member for Pollok is shaking his head. Needs are greater in Glasgow than in many other parts of Scotland. However much he is given, the hon. Gentleman will try for more. Whatever Government are in power, Glasgow will not get everything that it wants. It must make the best of the opportunities before it. The Greve report recommended the disposal of empty stock. I recommend that the possibilities should be effectively followed up.

On resources for this year, the provisional housing revenue account capital allocation of £92 million includes more than £4 million to honour commitments given to fund the costs of approved innovative projects in Castlemilk. Excluding that, the gross allocation gives the council an allocation of £616 per council house, which is above the Scottish average of £559. The council's net allocation of £60·5 million is 11 per cent. higher than the corresponding allocation for last year. That increase, together with resources of £60 million, which the council expects to draw from its covenant scheme, should enable the council to sustain its substantial capital programme.

Again I congratulate the hon. Member for Springburn on his success in the ballot. I also congratulate Glasgow on its many successes. I stress that Glasgow's success is in the interests of Scotland's success. I should like not only much better housing in Glasgow but more job opportunities in Glasgow. We must work for that as well.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at sixteen minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 24 July 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LONDON UNDERGROUND (SAFETY MEASURES) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Order for Third Reading read.

To be read the Third time on Tuesday 15 October.

KING'S CROSS RAILWAYS BILL *(By Order)*

Order for consideration, as amended, read.

To be considered on Tuesday 15 October.

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [13 May], That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Debate further adjourned till Tuesday 15 October.

KING'S CROSS RAILWAYS BILL

Motion made,

That the Promoters of the King's Cross Railways Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session?

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read) and, having been amended by the Committee in the present Session, shall be ordered to lie upon the Table;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Order of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (No. 3) BILL *[Lords]*

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the British Railways (No. 3) Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office no later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

Ordered,

That, if that Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agents for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by them stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

Ordered,

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

Ordered,

That the Petitions relating to the Bill presented in the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

Ordered,

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

Ordered,

That, in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words 'under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)' were omitted;

Ordered,

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

Ordered,

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Caribbean

1. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to visit Cuba to discuss security in the Caribbean.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones): My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no plans to do so.

Mr. McAllion: I am sure that the Secretary of State regrets that answer almost as much as I do. Does the Minister of State agree that the only basis for security in the Caribbean is respect for the sovereign independence of all the countries in that area? Will he therefore join me in deploring the US-backed campaign of destabilisation against the Government of Cuba? Will he tell the Americans that their proper role in the Caribbean is not to break international law and undermine legitimate Governments but to show respects for those Governments by entering into constructive dialogues with them on the way forward towards peaceful coexistence?

Mr. Garel-Jones: The United States is not using or threatening to use force against Cuba. In May, President Bush laid down the conditions for improvements in relations in a message to the Cuban community of Miami. He said that Cuba should hold fully free and fair elections under international supervision. I recognise that Fidel Castro and his regime remain a constant attraction to the hon. Gentleman and many of his hon. Friends. After all, he is the last remaining member of what might be called the international Militant Tendency who has not allowed his membership to lapse.

Mr. Forman: Would not one of the best contributions to greater security in the Caribbean—this is a point that my right hon. Friend could easily make were he to visit Cuba—be for the Soviet Union, now that the cold war is over and so-called peaceful coexistence is a thing of the past, to wind down its excessive aid of all kinds to Cuba, which still includes some military assistance?

Mr. Garel-Jones: It will not surprise the House to know that the Soviet Union is reassessing not only its position internally but its relationship with Cuba. Opposition Members should start to do likewise.

Southern Africa

3. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has held recently with other southern African leaders, in addition to the African National Congress, the Pan-Africanist Congress, Inkatha leaders and the President of South Africa.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): In recent months I have met President Mugabe of Zimbabwe and Dr. Savimbi of Angola. During my recent visit to South Africa I met a range of leaders, including some from the Democratic party.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I welcome the conversations that the Secretary of State has been having. However, if he has been meeting a range of leaders, from the ANC to Dr. Savimbi, does he agree that it may be time that Ministers met people such as President Mangope of Bophuthatswana, on the ground that moderate people as well as those who engage in terrorism should be listened to?

Mr. Hurd: I agree that a wide range of opinion is necessary and I have thought about the hon. Gentleman's point. The trouble is that Bophuthatswana is a product of a so-called grand apartheid policy which we have never accepted and it would not be sensible for Ministers to meet its president at a time when that whole policy is being changed.

Sir Peter Blaker: Would my right hon. Friend care to tell the House his reaction to reports that the South African Government have been giving aid to Inkatha at the expense of the ANC?

Mr. Hurd: Like everyone in the House, I am troubled by those reports. This morning I telephoned the South African Foreign Minister and spoke to him for more than half an hour to express our concern. I urged that the South African Government should be clear and open about what had occurred and that for the future they should make it clear that old policies had been discarded and that the policing of the country would be politically impartial and effective. In reply, Mr. Botha assured me that there had been no connivance by the South African Government at violence in the townships originated by Inkatha or anybody else.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Although the Foreign Secretary and I may disagree on many things, does he at least agree that it is absolutely imperative for the peace process to proceed? That being so, will he go even further than his conversation this morning with the South African Foreign Minister and say clearly to President de Klerk that the covert funding of Inkatha and the covert and overt collusion by the police and defence forces in the violence in the townships greatly endanger the peace process and must stop? Will he make it clear that there will be no question of this country or any other lifting sanctions until this process is completely clear?

Mr. Hurd: It is certainly true that there has been a setback to confidence in the process which, as the hon. Gentleman rightly says, must proceed, because there is no alternative. As I have said, it is important for the South African Government to be clear about the past and they must re-establish confidence about the future policing of the country.

Mr. William Powell: My right hon. Friend may be aware that his answer to the supplementary question by the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) will be received with some disappointment in parts of South Africa. Would not my right hon. Friend consider it appropriate for members of his staff in the embassy in Pretoria to talk to Bophuthatswana and the other South African homelands, if only to tell them that their future

very much depends on the political settlement that must be made in South Africa in due course and that they must join in the process?

Mr. Hurd: I welcome the opportunity to make that clear, but I am not sure that talks are needed to do that. Plainly, the future of the people living in the so-called independent homelands must be considered together with the future of all South Africans.

Mr. Kaufman: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the revelations that have been admitted and which have caused great perturbation within the South African Government, about their funding of Inkatha, must cast a very worrying light on the good faith of the South African Government in their negotiations with the African National Congress? The Foreign Secretary's response to my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) was simply not precise enough. Does not he now agree that it would be folly precipitately to lift sanctions as long as the good faith of the South African Government remains in doubt?

Mr. Hurd: I am sure that we have been right to move on sanctions in the way that we have. We are talking not about the rewarding of this or that party, but about nation-building in the new South Africa. Anyone who has been to the townships, as I did recently, sees what needs to be done; that can be done only by investment which, in turn, can come only from economic growth. That is as plain as a pikestaff.

The right hon. Gentleman asked about the financing of Inkatha. Such funding as has so far been declared and admitted belongs to an earlier stage and was brought to an end in the early part of last year. Much more serious are the allegations of connivance with violence. When I was in South Africa, Mr. Mandela spoke to me with clearly genuine passion on the subject. That is why it is crucial for the South African Government to repeat the assurance that was given to me today that they have not connived at such violence. It is also crucial that the policing of the country should be in a different tradition from that which President de Klerk's Government inherited.

South Africa

4. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contribution Britain is making towards encouraging increased educational opportunities for black people in South Africa.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): Of our growing bilateral aid programme for black South Africans of more than £9 million this year, about 70 per cent. is being spent on initiatives to increase educational opportunities for black people. Those include some 1,200 bursaries for black students attending tertiary courses in Britain and South Africa. We are also running programmes in South Africa to improve the teaching of basic literacy, English, mathematics and science.

Mr. Coombs: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that although the adult literacy rate in South Africa is, at 71 per cent., almost double that in the rest of the African continent and although spending on education for black South Africans has risen by about 30 per cent. per year in the past 10 years, compulsory schooling for children in South Africa is still not mandatory? Will Her Majesty's Government press the South African Government on that? What other measures do the Government have to improve the training of black South Africans upon which their economic and educational development depends?

Mrs. Chalker: We regard the education of all South Africans as imperative, particularly those black South Africans who have for so long been denied education. The South African Foreign Minister and I discussed that earlier in the year. We are also increasing the amount of help that we give to the technikons, the technical colleges, because so many young people there need the technical ability to apply the knowledge that they have gained. I particularly praise the Peninsula technikon and the others to which we are giving many bursaries.

Mr. Hain: I welcome the Minister's statement on educational provision, but will she condemn in forthright language the behaviour of South African Cabinet Ministers who have organised millions of pounds of slush money to divide and destroy and to create conflict in the black community and have, with the same objective, promoted shadowy forces within the South African defence force and the peace force? Does she agree that President de Klerk's reputation as a man of credibility and honour has been destroyed by that shadowy episode?

Mrs. Chalker: We have no reason to believe that President de Klerk is not entirely serious and direct in carrying out his promised reforms. There is no doubt that he has to tackle a legacy of apartheid. He has to obtain the agreement of all parties on a new constitution. On the particular matters that the hon. Gentleman raises, I have nothing to add to what my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary said other than to say that there is an urgent need to help black South Africans with investment for their education and jobs—and that we shall do.

Mr. Speaker: I remind hon. Members that this question is about educational opportunities.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: Is my right hon. Friend aware that one of the major stumbling blocks to members of the black communities taking up educational opportunities is the fact that they have to be taught and have to learn in three different languages—initially, quite properly, in their mother tongue and then in Afrikaans and English? Will she use all her influence to ensure that English, being an international language, is treated as the main language in South Africa? Will she further ensure that we give all the technical help that we can towards education so that members of the black communities can use that technical knowledge in assisting the future of their country?

Mrs. Chalker: As my hon. Friend will be aware, I cannot insist on what is taught, but, as all our help is for basic literacy and for the teaching of English, mathematics and science, as I said in the main answer, she can be assured that, in total co-operation with the South African Government, we are doing our best to enhance the teaching of English from the earliest possible age, because that is the language which South Africans, black and white, will need in the international world of the future. My hon. Friend will have heard what I said about technical education in answer to an earlier question.

Mr. Grocott: Does not the Minister understand that what is fundamentally required in South Africa is not any number of well-meaning and well-intentioned developments for the social system, but the right of black people to vote? That is what the demand has been for the last quarter of a century. Any statement about apartheid being at an end is meaningless until they have that opportunity.

Mrs. Chalker: As you reminded us, Mr. Speaker, this question is about education. Anybody who has seen the lack of education facilities in the townships will know why we believe that education is absolutely crucial. Of course, the next stage is constitutional talks and we shall do all that we can to foster them.

Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe

5. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the forthcoming CSCE conference in Moscow on the human dimension.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): We plan to send a delegation to the CSCE conference in Moscow on the human dimension, subject to developments in the Soviet Union between now and September. Participation in the conference would enable us to press for further improvements in the human rights issues that cause us concern.

Mr. Atkinson: As the conference is less than seven weeks away, will my hon. and learned Friend confirm that he has received cast-iron assurances from the Soviet authorities that representatives of the international human rights organisations and other non-governmental organisations will enjoy the same access to this conference as they did in Copenhagen last year? Is he aware of recent worrying reports that several established Soviet human rights organisations have been told that they will not have access to the conference?

Mr. Hogg: I cannot give my hon. Friend the confirmation that he seeks, but, like him, I attach considerable importance to the openness of the conference. It is very important that NGOs should have same free access to the conference and to the delegates as they had in Paris and Copenhagen. We shall continue to press the Soviet Government on that point and to monitor their response.

Dr. Kim Howells: Does the Minister agree that there is no more important human dimension to our relationship with the Soviet Union and the newly democratised countries of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary than ensuring some political stability, which will derive from economic stability and from the changes that we all hope will be made sooner rather than later? Does he further agree that more needs to be done to ensure that the Russians are able to buy the food surpluses of Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia and that by helping the Soviets we shall solve many problems at one stroke?

Mr. Hogg: I certainly accept that we shall not achieve long-lasting political reform in any of those countries, especially in the Soviet Union, without sustainable economic improvement. One cannot speak of western countries placing large sums of money in, for example, the Soviet Union. We have a role in integrating the Soviet Union into the western economy, in transferring information and technical know-how and in encouraging investment. But we must be certain that the Soviet Union not only intends to carry out the economic restructuring that is necessary but is in a position to do so.

Sir Michael Marshall: In the work of the CSCE on human rights, will my hon. and learned Friend assure me that he will continue to watch closely the development of the CSCE parliamentary assembly and its relationship with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, which has much expertise on human rights?

Mr. Hogg: I agree with my hon. Friend and I can give that commitment.

Mr. Robertson: In forming a judgment on human rights in the Soviet Union, does the Minister accept that legal civil rights are an important test—but only one test—of human rights in that country? Equally important are people's ability to vote in elections and the construction of a parliamentary process and of lasting democratic institutions. In that context, will the Minister explain why the valuable initiative that was launched by the Foreign Secretary more than a year ago to create a foundation that would allow the British political parties to work with and help the new democracies in the Soviet Union and central and eastern Europe has achieved absolutely nothing? Many other countries have been successfully involving themselves, to their great benefit.

Mr. Hogg: We have put much work into the creation of the institution that the hon. Gentleman has in mind. Indeed, we have a fairly elegant creation of our own in mind. There is a little more work to be done to it. I look forward to being in a position to reveal it, but if Opposition Members suppose that they will have public moneys to dish out to their friends they have another think coming.

Mrs. Currie: Am I right in thinking that, as the economy of the Soviet Union goes into substantial collapse, two features of that country are still intact? One is the red army and the other is the KGB, which seems to be spawning clones in other republics in the Soviet Union. Now that the central Government is much weaker, can my hon. and learned Friend guide us as to who is in charge of those institutions and whose finger will be on the nuclear button in the 1990s?

Mr. Hogg: We are seeing a fundamental transition of power in the Soviet Union. Over the next 10 years or so, there will be a complete change in the shape of that country. I should be surprised if all the constituent republics remain within the union. I am sure that much power will be devolved to the republics. That will inevitably dilute the authority and power of the KGB and the red army.

British Virgin Islands

6. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has had any recent discussions with representatives of the British Virgin Islands.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): I

had discussions with the Honourable Lavity Stoutt, Chief Minister of the British Virgin Islands, when he visited London in March 1991 and also when I visited the BVI between 20 and 22 May.

Mr. Bennett: Will the Minister confirm that there was no consultation with the elected representatives about the appointment of the new governor? Is that the right way for the Government to behave?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Consultation took place with the locally elected representatives. I know the governor-designate, Mr. Peter Penfold, well. He has a supreme qualification for that appointment, in that he is personally committed to and fond of the Virgin Islands and is committed to their welfare and progress. I hope that he receives a warm reception when he goes to the islands.

Kurdish Leader

7. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he plans to meet Mr. Talabani.

Mr. Hurd: We remain in close touch with the Iraqi Kurdish leadership. I have no plans to meet Mr. Talabani at present, but my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister hopes to meet him later this month.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: When Ministers meet Mr. Talabani, will they make it clear that the only reason why London and Washington are considering partially raising sanctions is that the western powers have failed miserably to fund properly UNICEF's programmes of humanitarian relief in Iraq under resolution 688? Instead of partially raising those sanctions, would not it be far better to defreeze Iraq's multi-billion dollar assets in the west and use those resources to fund Iraq's requirements for humanitarian relief?

Mr. Hurd: That is a highly complicated question, as the hon. Gentleman knows. There are many claims on the assets. The point that we are trying to tackle arises from the reports of Prince Sadruddin and others about shortages of food and medicines in Iraq. There are no sanctions on sending to Iraq, through the sanctions committee, medicines or food for humanitarian purposes, but the question is how they should be paid for. If we can devise—it is still an "if"—a scheme by which a limited amount of oil revenue can be spent and the proceeds fully devoted to that purpose, that is worth considering.

Mr. Bellingham: When my right hon. Friend meets Mr. Talabani, will he remind him that, had it not been for the decisiveness shown by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and by my right hon. Friend, the allies' humanitarian aid effort would not have got off the ground? Obviously, that aid has saved thousands of lives. What aid is going to the Kurds to help them to rebuild villages in their territory?

Mr. Hurd: A lot of help is going through the United Nations to the Kurds in the north of Iraq. We have not ended our efforts to reassure them. As my hon. Friend knows, a small allied rapid reaction force remains in Turkey. Yesterday, I had discussions in Ankara with President Ozal about that matter and I am satisfied that the arrangements for that force, with Turkish participation, are well in hand.

Mr. Winnick: Was President Bush absolutely right when he said that the international community's quarrel is with the criminal dictator who rules Iraq, not with the people? Is not it essential to try as much as possible to give aid and assistance so that millions of people do not suffer even more? What effective steps can be taken so that the partial lifting of sanctions helps the people of Iraq rather than the criminal dictator's war machine? As long as Saddam Hussein remains in power he will present a great danger to the neighbouring states.

Mr. Hurd: The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question, which is a valid one, is to devise a scheme—if we can—that ensures that the total of any proceeds from a limited sale of oil goes to purposes approved by the United Nations and that it is not left to the whim or discretion of the Baghdad regime.

South Africa

8. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps Her Majesty's Government proposes to take to assist towards progress in achieving democracy on a non-racial basis in South Africa.

Mr. Hurd: We will continue to encourage all parties to begin talks on a new constitution for South Africa as soon as possible. We are helping the black opposition parties to take part in shaping the new democracy.

Mr. Hughes: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. Recalling what he has already said this afternoon —that a movement towards democracy in South Africa has to be underpinned by an expansion in its economy —does he agree that if sanctions against South Africa are to be progressively lifted and if the country is to have access to international funds, the time available to the South African Government is not extensive—indeed, it is limited? It depends on what they do inside their country whether the international community continues to have faith that the South African Government will produce the democracy that we all want.

Mr. Hurd: I agree. What has happened so far is that the legal pillars of apartheid have been abolished. What now has to happen is multi-party constitutional talks to move towards a democratic constitution on the basis of one man one vote. At the same time, South Africans have to begin building a new nation and coping with the legacy of apartheid and all the poverty that went with it. That is the argument for investment, for economic growth and for wellwishers towards black South Africans encouraging, from now on, the building of a new nation—instead of thinking of new punitive measures.

Mr. Tony Banks: Does not everything revolve around achieving one person one vote in South Africa? Will the Foreign Secretary admit that until universal suffrage is achieved in South Africa and blacks have the vote there can be no question of dropping sanctions or of admitting South Africa to the civilised community of nations?

Mr. Hurd: I disagree. One man one vote is the basis on which state President de Klerk is proceeding—that is the purpose of the constitutional talks—but saying that there should be no investment and no growth between now and then would mean that on the day when there is one man

one vote in South Africa the country will be impoverished way beyond what is necessary. It is now and not then that we and the South African Government should start rebuilding South Africa.

Sir George Gardiner: Will any aid that the Government give to any party or racial group in South Africa be made conditional on that party or group remaining part of the constitutional talks to achieve democracy in that country?

Mr. Hurd: Certainly, the help that we give in the political process is designed to equip those whom we are helping to take part in the democratic process. That is the whole purpose of it.

Mr. Anderson: The Foreign Secretary has recently travelled in South Africa. If he had opened his ears he would surely have heard that the effectiveness of any contribution that we can make to democracy-building has been much undermined because of the British Government's total identification with the white minority Government. Will he now seek to reduce some of that considerable damage to British interests, first by consulting the representatives of the majority in South Africa and, secondly, by ensuring that Britain does not take the lead in the EEC and in the Commonwealth in the destruction of sanctions?

Mr. Hurd: I sometimes wonder why nice people like the hon. Gentleman persist in living in such a time warp where South Africa is concerned. He can have no conception of what Mr. Mandela and other ANC leaders have told me and many others about the British aid programme in South Africa which, at £9·5 million, makes us the biggest donor of the lot. The money is overwhelmingly devoted to helping young people, especially in the townships. I have been warmly thanked for that. Of course, we consult the ANC about where it should go and when the ANC told us that it was time to relax the sporting sanction against cricket, we went along with it and helped it to achieve that.

Mr. Colvin: Does my right hon. Friend agree that as he attaches so much importance to these constitutional talks, it is extremely important that the state of Bophuthatswana participates in those talks, whatever he may think of the status of that state? Surely, if he wants to see what South Africa may be like after reaching the free society of non-racial democracies, he has to go no further than Bophuthatswana, which has been free of apartheid for many years.

Mr. Hurd: I do not think that many people would accept that Bophuthatswana is the model for the future of South Africa. I have no disrespect for its leader and there is nothing personal in this, but, for the reasons that I have already given, I do not believe that it would be right to enter into conversations with him.

Dalai Lama

9. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will now meet the Dalai Lama.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

Mr. Eastham: May I express my appreciation to the two diplomats who visited the Drapchi prison in Tibet to see 89 political prisoners? As the Chairman of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs has recommended that we recognise the Dalai Lama as a marker for peace, democracy and human rights, conditions which could hardly be said to exist in China at present, why do not the Government change their policy?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We, too, are grateful to the two British diplomats who visited Tibet in July. They visited the prison in question, but were unable to meet any prisoners. More generally, they commented that there was severe resentment among Tibetans about the presence of Chinese, but there were no obvious signs of tension on the streets of Lhasa. Of course, we raise the subject of human rights with the Chinese at every possible opportunity. For example, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State emphasised our concern to the Chinese Foreign Minister and the general secretary on a visit to China in April. However, the Dalai Lama has no plans to visit Britain at present so the hon. Gentleman's question is hypothetical.

Mr. Adley: While the cultural revolution throughout China in the 1970s was quite ghastly, does my hon. Friend recognise that the few of us who have recently been to Tibet—I can see only one of them in the Chamber now—saw no sign of tension in the streets of Lhasa? Furthermore, contradictory to the propaganda put out by the Dalai Lama, there was visible and open observation of the Buddhist religion on every street corner. Therefore, will my hon. Friend continue to rely on the advice from our embassy in Peking about the best way to deal with these sensitive matters?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Naturally, we listen to the advice of our embassy in Peking. We are concerned deeply about human rights violations and we take the opportunity to make our concern clear to the Chinese on all suitable occasions and at the United Nations.

Dr. Godman: Is it the Government's considered view that the Dalai Lama will never be allowed to return to his country? Is it not time that the United Nations, the European Community and the leaders of the advanced industrial nations stood up to the nasty, vicious old men in China who have inflicted such brutal outrages against the people whom that man so nobly leads?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Of course, the question of the Dalai Lama's return to Tibet must be a matter for discussion between the Dalai Lama and the Chinese. The Chinese have offered to talk to the Dalai Lama, but, at present, they have set conditions with which the Dalai Lama is not happy. That impasse has to be resolved. We continue to encourage the Chinese to talk and we believe that dialogue offers the best solution.

Mr. Foulkes: Is it not sad that although you, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition, the Prince of Wales, the Pope and now——

Mr. Hurd: And the Lord Chancellor.

Mr. Foulkes: All right, and the Lord Chancellor, and now President Bush have met the Dalai Lama that the Prime Minister had neither the sense nor the courtesy to do so? Will the Minister ensure that when the Prime Minister goes to Beijing as the first European head of state to do so

since Tiananmen square he protests not only about violations of human rights in China, but about the clear violations of human rights in Tibet?

Mr. Adley *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Foulkes: The hon. Gentleman denies it, but *The Guardian* on Monday quotes the American ambassador in Beijing as saying during his visit to Lhasa that the Government's presentation of prison conditions in Tibet was as phoney as a $3 bill. We must protest about that.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has been in touch with the Dalai Lama who wrote a letter of congratulation to him on his election as leader of the Conservative party. The programme of my right hon. Friend's visit to China has not yet been finalised, but I have no doubt that human rights will form a part of his discussions with the Chinese leaders.

Sir David Steel: Is the Minister aware that when the Dalai Lama was here he reiterated to those of us who met him that his wish was merely to return to Tibet as the spiritual leader of his people without any claim for international autonomy for Tibet? In those circumstances, why do Ministers continue to refuse to meet him?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Dalai Lama is not planning to visit the United Kingdom at present. The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) said that President Bush had met the Dalai Lama. When President Bush did so, he emphasised the fact that the Americans regard Tibet as part of China. Those who press for such a meeting should consider whether it should be on the same terms.

Iraq

10. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimate he has made of the number of children under the age of five in Iraq who are likely to die of starvation or disease in the absence of additional humanitarian assistance.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The report of the latest United Nations mission to Iraq estimates that 300,000 children below the age of six are malnourished. We have repeatedly stated that we have no quarrel with the Iraqi population. It is, however, the responsibility of the Iraqi regime to co-operate fully with the United Nations and thereby ensure that relief is brought to those in need.

Mr. Strang: But surely the Government are not going to turn their back on the dying children in Iraq? The Minister and his right hon. Friend are humane men and they well know that the British Government have United Nations authority to unfreeze Iraqi assets in this country. Why do they not do so and establish with the United Nations agencies on the ground in Iraq a mechanism to ensure that the money is used to avoid human starvation, suffering and death?

Mr. Hogg: There are two issues wrapped in that question. The first is that of Iraqi assets in United Kingdom jurisdiction. We have made it plain that while Mr. Richter is held in custody in Baghdad we can not agree to a release of the assets held in the United Kingdom. As for the report of Prince Sadruddin, he is recommending that there be a sale of oil under the provisions of article 23 of resolution 687. We shall reflect on that.

There are two important points to be dealt with: first, that the money goes into a United Nations account and is disbursed in accordance with the wishes of the Security Council and, secondly, that if food is purchased it is distributed in an even-handed way. We shall come to a final conclusion when we determine whether those specific provisos are capable of being met.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Will my hon. and learned Friend remind the House that if there is any suffering among the children in Iraq it is because of the brutality of Saddam Hussein and his complete insensitivity to the well-being of his people? If there were to be any arrangement which would allow the Iraqis to purchase foodstuffs and other supplies for their people, could my hon. and learned Friend assure the House that it would be done within the organisation of the United Nations so that no money purported to be destined for the children gets into Saddam Hussein's hands?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend makes an important point. We have quite a lot of evidence about the state of affairs in Iraq, and I can tell the House that one group of people that is not suffering from malnutrition is Saddam Hussein and the Ba'ath party. Privation is focused on the ordinary people of Iraq. Resolution 687 relaxed restrictions on the import of food, humanitarian necessities and medicines —which were never covered by the sanction regime. It is important to ensure that if oil is sold moneys thus released are used only for purposes of humanitarian relief and, to some extent, for other approved purposes, such as the special commission, the demarcation commission and the compensation fund.

Mr. Sillars: How long will the United Kingdom take to reflect on the sale of oil, bearing in mind that every day probably costs the lives not only of children but of men and women as well? What is the position of other members of the Security Council on this period of reflection?

Mr. Hogg: We shall come to a very early conclusion.

Sri Lanka

11. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations with Sri Lanka.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have supported the Sri Lankan Government in their efforts to overcome terrorism, but have also made very clear our concerns that all parties must respect human rights. Our response to Sri Lanka's unwarranted expulsion of our high commissioner has been to cancel high-level visits, further restrict arms sales and delay consideration of major new aid commitments. We will review these policies once a new high commissioner is in place.

Mr. Pawsey: I thank my hon. Friend for that typically helpful and detailed response. I take on board what he says about the importance of human rights, but can he suggest when a high commissioner will be reappointed to Sri Lanka? Can he also say when we might resume the provision of development aid to that island?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his support for our human rights policies. A new high commissioner will be appointed in the very near future, but I cannot say when. He will, of course, continue to make representations of the kind made by Mr. Gladstone. We have not cut off aid; we have merely reconsidered one £3 million tranche of aid that was under consideration. Aid already in the pipeline, and already being spent in Sri Lanka, continues.

Mr. Faulds: Would not it be appropriate if hon. Members expressed their strong approval of the stand taken by David Gladstone, our former high commissioner, on the appalling abuses of human rights in Sri Lanka? I hope that the House will endorse that.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman and very much support what he says.

Middle East

12. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Britain's contribution to finding a diplomatic and peaceful solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict acceptable to the international community.

Mr. Hurd: We have been second to none in our support for Mr. Baker's initiative. We have urged all concerned to show flexibility. We welcome the constructive Arab responses to President Bush and Mr. Baker, and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister had an excellent discussion on the subject with President Mubarak this morning. I encouraged the Israeli Foreign Minister, Mr. Levy, when I met him on 18 July, to seize this opportunity for progress towards peace.

Mr. Townsend: Does my right hon. Friend agree that we have the best opportunity for settling the vexed Palestinian-Israeli problem that we have had since the previous round of fighting between the Israelis and the Arabs, and that it is therefore essential for the United Kingdom and our European Community partners to pull out all the stops to encourage a long-term peaceful settlement? Does my right hon. Friend also accept that the Syrians, several other Arab countries and the Palestine Liberation Organisation have made genuine concessions, and that the international community is entitled to look to the Israelis to make similar concessions shortly?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with my hon. Friend. We are now waiting for the considered Israeli response to the new situation and, in particular, to the Syrian President's response to President Bush. There is a chance here. The Israelis have within their grasp something for which, quite legitimately, they have been aiming for 40 years—an opportunity to sit down and talk peace and negotiate their disputes with those of their Arab neighbours who are still at war—still belligerent—with them. But of course, at the same time, the Israelis have to discuss with representatives of the Palestinians the problems of the occupied territories.

Mr. Janner: Has the Minister seen the reports this morning to the effect that Prime Minister Shamir compared President Assad's response to the Baker initiative with the response of the late President of Egypt when he came to Jerusalem? There is therefore hope of movement. Recognising that President Assad has total control in his country and is in fact a military dictator making his own decisions, whereas the Israeli Government is democratically elected—even if some of us would not have voted for them, just as we would not have voted for the Government here—does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the best way that we can help is by understanding the sensitivities of the Israeli Government and of the people who desperately want peace?

Mr. Hurd: I have always tried to do that, and the talk I had with the Israeli Foreign Minister last week was an example of both of us trying constructively to understand the view of the other. The hon. and learned Gentleman makes a fair point.

Mr. Temple-Morris: Will my right hon. Friend accept congratulations thus far and will he further commend Secretary of State Baker for his painstaking shuttling in an effort to achieve peace in the region? Does my right hon. Friend agree that, to get Israel to the conference table—and, more important, to keep her there—the continuing application of United States pressure is absolutely essential?

Mr. Hurd: I am accepting no congratulations, but I agree with what my hon. Friend said about James Baker. The energy and persistence that he has shown in the face of occasional discouragement are not only worth praising but, as my hon. Friend said, absolutely essential. I have never supposed that other pressures—whether by Europe or by Arab countries—can be an adequate substitute for the sustained energetic interest of the United States in achieving a settlement.

Mr. Ernie Ross: Has the Foreign Secretary had a chance to study the report of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs that came out this morning? If he has—as I have—was he shocked to read, in part IV, which is headed "Obstacles to Regional Stability" that the Committee identified Islam as such an obstacle without in any way separating Islam from fundamentalism? Does he not think that, given that the report will be studied, that is at least a regrettable mistake, and that it will be compounded by the fact that there is no mention of Jewish fundamentalism which clearly threatens the area and the Israeli Government?

Mr. Hurd: I looked quickly at the report, but I did not happen on that particular phrase. It is not a matter for me. The hon. Gentleman will have to take it up with the Chairman and members of the Select Committee.

Mr. Dykes: May I thank my right hon. Friend for his robust efforts in trying to bring the Israelis and the Palestinians together at long last under a true peace treaty, which is now within their grasp and within the grasp of the whole international community? Does my right hon. Friend agree that money does, indeed, come into it, in the sense that the entire world community would, I am sure, favourably and positively consider the question of economic assistance to a near-eastern common market of all those countries if a true peace treaty were eventually attained?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, indeed, and of course the tragedy is that, although this is an area rich in resources, those resources are not properly used for the benefit of the people, not least because of the persistence of this poisonous dispute. Although particular help may be

needed in particular matters, once the dispute is settled, the resources are there to make the area one of the most prosperous parts of the world.

Mr. Kaufman: I pay the warmest tribute to the efforts of Mr. James Baker, which have been indefatigable and determined and which have quite certainly brought about the greatest possibility of a middle eastern peace settlement since the 1940s, but does the right hon. Gentleman agree with me that it is important quickly to solve the outstanding issue of the representation of the Palestinians at the talks—because represented at the talks they must be? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree with me that Mr. Shamir is right to draw attention to the enormous concessions and progress made by the Syrians and that it is now for Mr. Shamir to make a similar advance on behalf of Israel, because it is the state of Israel perhaps more than any other country or people in the region that stands to benefit from the ending of a dispute which has bedevilled and impoverished the region?

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman puts it well. We are waiting for the considered response of the Government of Israel. The first response of the Prime Minister was encouraging, as the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) and the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) have pointed out. We hope that that will develop into a positive response. Of course the Palestinians must be properly represented and a great deal of work has been devoted to overcoming that obstacle. The idea of having a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation seems to have gathered strength and support. We very much hope that that will happen. I also very much hope that it may be possible to suspend the building of settlements in the occupied territories at this time. There is no doubt that the building of settlements by Israel in the occupied territories constitutes a very considerable obstacle to peace.

New Zealand

13. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will meet the New Zealand Foreign Minister.

Mr. Hurd: We met in April and again in May in Washington. There are no present plans for a further meeting.

Mr. Amos: In view of the still close cultural, historical and political links between the two countries, will my right hon. Friend continue to ensure that New Zealand has open and fair access to the United Kingdom market and to other markets in the EEC? Will he also do his best to support New Zealand in the next round of the GATT talks so that our friends on the other side of the world know that we have not forgotten them?

Mr. Hurd: I am glad to say that my talks with my New Zealand colleague and the talks of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister with his New Zealand colleague show that our dealings and relations are in excellent shape. Of course New Zealand, perhaps as much as any other country, stands to benefit from an open European Community and from success in the GATT talks. That is one of the matters that we discuss most often with New Zealand and in which it has a wholly legitimate interest.

Baltic States

14. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what new initiatives he has recently taken to strengthen links between this country and the Baltic states.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Since new authorities were elected in the Baltic republics our contacts with them have developed steadily. Baltic leaders have paid several visits to London over the past year. British diplomats have been frequent visitors to the Baltic capitals. We keep in touch with the Estonia and Lithuania information offices in London. We are already backing projects in the Baltic republics through the know-how fund. We hope to add to these and to expand cultural and educational contacts through the British Council.

Mr. Flynn: As the attacks on the Baltic states by the Soviet Union have continued relentlessly with attacks on border stations and the present attempt to impose on the Baltic states the sale of all union factories at ruinously disadvantageous prices to those states, will the Minister assure us that the increased aid to the Soviet Union under the G7 agreement will be conditional on respect for the legitimate aspirations of the Baltic states, one of which is full independence?

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point. We have taken every opportunity, including the opportunity last week, to impress upon the Soviet Union the vital importance of getting down to meaningful negotiations with the Baltic republics. That is the only way forward and we will continue to stress that at every opportunity.

Mr. Wolfson: May I thank my hon. and learned Friend for his positive response on both points? May I encourage him to ensure that the Soviet Union is continually reminded of Britain's long-standing view about the illegitimate occupation of those lands and that we believe that their opportunity for economic growth will be much greater if they are allowed to pursue their own destinies?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend is right to say that the British Government have never recognised the de jure integration of the three Baltic republics into the Soviet Union. He is also right to stress that it is absolutely vital that there are negotiations between the Baltic republics and the Soviet Government with a view to determining the future of those republics.

Middle East

15. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had about solving the outstanding problems in the middle east; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend keeps in close touch with all concerned. He discussed those issues with our G7 colleagues during the recent economic summit. The political declaration issued by the summit contained a substantive passage on the middle east. He raised the peace process with the Israeli Foreign Minister on 18 July.

Mr. Canavan: Does the Minister agree that Mr. Shamir's latest response to the Baker initiative is a welcome indication that the Israeli Government are at last

beginning to shift from their intransigent position? Will the Minister, along with the Secretary of State, try to use his influence to pursue the point that was made in the Foreign Affairs Select Committee report, which was published earlier today, that a comprehensive peace plan should be based on United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, which provide for the recognition and security of Isreal as well as the recognition of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination?

Mr. Hogg: I suppose that this is the first time that I have agreed with every single point that the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) has made. I agree that Mr. Shamir's response is important. I agree, too, that any discussions must be on the basis of resolutions 242 and 338. I agree further that it is essential that the participating Arab states recognise the need to maintain the security and the sovereignty of the state of Israel.

Industrial Relations

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Michael Howard): With permission, I should like to make a statement about the Government's proposals for further reform of the law on industrial relations which are published in a Green Paper today.

Those proposals are designed to consolidate and build on the improvement in this country's industrial relations over the past 12 years. Their purpose is to ensure that we have an effective and up-to-date framework of law in order to maintain that progress throughout the 1990s. Each of the proposals contained in the Green Paper is carefully designed to meet a clear deficiency in our present arrangements. They are designed to increase the rights of individual members of the public, of individual trade union members and of the community at large.

The first group of proposals in the Green Paper concerns strikes and other forms of industrial action. It is worth recalling that, before 1980, the law gave trade unions a virtually unlimited licence to organise strikes and industrial action, no matter how remote they were from the original dispute. There was no requirement for strike ballots, and the law allowed the disruptive effects of industrial action to be spread far and wide by flying pickets.

As a direct result of this Government's legislation, the law now protects jobs and businesses against secondary action and secondary picketing and, for the first time in our history, strike ballots have become a generally accepted feature of British industrial relations. Few now seriously question the role our legislation has played in reducing the number of strikes to its current level—the lowest for more than 60 years. We now propose to strengthen the law in the following ways.

First, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced in his statement on Monday, we propose to provide a new right for members of the public in relation to unlawful industrial action which affects a public service. At present, the employer has the right to bring proceedings against a trade union which organises an unlawful strike. Members of the public, who are usually the specific target of industrial action, have no such right. If the employer does nothing, the citizen is defenceless.

We need to look no further than the recent strike of refuse collectors and other council employees in Liverpool for evidence of the need for citizens to be able to take action for themselves to protect the services on which they depend.

We therefore propose to establish a new right for members of the public to seek an injunction to halt unlawful industrial action affecting a public service if the employer concerned fails to use the remedies available to him. This proposal has been widely welcomed. It will enhance the protection of the public and it will be a further deterrent to unlawful industrial action.

Secondly, we propose to make it a legal requirement that unions should give at least seven days' notice of a strike. A period of strike notice is a well-established feature of the law in other countries. This requirement will help to protect the general public from the hardship caused by lightning strikes in public services. It will also allow employers to take steps to safeguard jobs and businesses.

I turn now to the rights of individual trade union members. The House will recall that in 1979 union members had no statutory right to elect their leaders; nor did they have any statutory right to vote in a secret ballot before a strike; and they had no protection against fines and expulsion from their union if they refused to strike. In short, the law allowed union leaders to exercise what the Attorney-General of the day described as "lawful intimidation" against their own members. Now as a result of our legislation, every union member has the right to elect his leaders by secret ballot and to vote in secret before he is called out on strike.

But experience has shown that the existing law does not always provide fully effective protection against fraud and malpractice in trade union ballots. For example, the Transport and General Workers Union elections for its national executive in 1990—and before that the general secretary election in 1984—both had to be re-run because of allegations of widespread vote-rigging in the first ballot.

Accordingly, the Green Paper proposes a number of changes in the law to strengthen the democratic rights of union members by giving them the opportunity to inspect their union's membership register to detect bogus and duplicate names and by requiring records to be kept of the number of ballot papers issued and returned in each locality. In addition, we propose to extend the requirements for fully postal voting and independent scrutiny, which have applied to union elections since 1988, so that they also cover strike ballots and ballots on union mergers.

I propose a number of further changes in the law to strengthen the rights of union members. The first concerns an employee's freedom to join the union of his choice. As a result of the Employment Act 1990 no one can lawfully be refused employment because he is, or is not, a member of a trade union. But it is still the case that operation of the Trades Union Congress's so-called Bridlington principles can deny individual workers the opportunity to belong to the union which they believe will most effectively represent their interests.

Indeed, the Bridlington principles can effectively deny an employee any choice at all in the union that he joins. In some cases, they prevent him from belonging to any union except the union that he wants to leave. If a union member disagrees with the policies of his union, he may find that his only choice is between remaining in that union and ceasing to be a member of any union affiliated to the TUC.

It is no surprise, therefore, that the Bridlington principles have come under increasing strain and that they are now regarded as unworkable even by the leaders of major TUC unions. For example, the general secretary-elect of the Transport and General Workers Union, Mr. Bill Morris, said recently that the Bridlington principles are "ripe for review" and that

"today when we are about choice and opportunity for the individual there is no choice or opportunity within them".

The recent turmoil in the Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians is clear evidence of the truth of those remarks. We therefore propose that, where more than one union represents employees in a particular occupation or industry, individual employees should be free to choose which union they join without the constraint of any arrangement between trade union bosses which is designed to deny them that freedom of choice.

The second proposal for strengthening the rights of union members concerns the practice of making automatic

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deductions from employees' pay on behalf of their union. It is a clear anomaly in the law that deductions, which may include special strike levies as well as union subscriptions, can be made from the pay of a union member without his consent.

If those so-called check-off arrangements have been agreed between his employer and his trade union, there is nothing that an individual employee can do to escape from them, short of resigning from his union. There is evidence that, in some cases, these arrangements operate without even the knowledge of the employees concerned. In the construction industry, for example, some employees found that through the check-off they were paying subscriptions to a union that they had never joined.

Accordingly, we propose to make it unlawful for any deduction to be made from an employee's pay on behalf of a trade union without his individual, written consent. We do not propose to make the practice of the so-called check-off unlawful, as it is in France, but we do propose that in future it should have to operate with the consent of each employee.

The third proposal concerns the ability of members to ensure that the finances of their unions are managed, and are seen to be managed, properly. The Lightman report on the conduct of the National Union of Mineworkers' finances during and after the miners' strike of 1984-85 revealed serious irregularities. The findings of that report indicated a clear need to strengthen the law to protect the rights of union members. The Green Paper contains a number of proposals to increase the accountability of union leaders to their members for the conduct of their unions' financial affairs, and to strengthen the powers of the independent certification officer.

The final proposal in the Green Paper concerns the legal status of collective agreements. The law in this country is virtually unique in creating a presumption that collective agreements are not legally binding on both parties. In most other industrialised countries, it is normal practice for collective agreements to have the status of contracts that impose obligations equally on both parties. In those countries, employers and trade unions alike find that that brings greater clarity and precision to collective bargaining, and greater stability to industrial relations.

Furthermore, the effect of the United Kingdom's tradition of non-binding collective agreements is, in practice, to create an imbalance of obligations. On the one hand, trade unions are free to ignore agreements that they have signed, and to organise and threaten strikes even while those agreements are in force. Employers, on the other hand, are legally obliged to observe the terms of a collective agreement when they are imported into the individual contracts of their employees. The result is that the terms of collective agreements are legally enforceable by employees against their employers, but not by employers against trade unions.

Now that there is a much wider acceptance of the role of the law in industrial relations, the Government believe that the time has come to consider a change which would give positive encouragement to the development of legally enforceable agreements that would be binding on both parties. The proposal in the Green Paper is to reverse the present statutory presumption so that a collective agreement would be legally binding unless it contained a specific provision to the contrary.

Employers and trade unions would, of course, remain free to decide whether or not to make collective agreements legally binding. But changing the law in this way would mean that negotiators would have to consider in each case whether there were advantages in giving all or part of a collective agreement the status of an enforceable contract, and it would make it easier for them to conclude legally binding agreements if they wished to do so.

We have now reached a decisive stage in the history of industrial relations in this country. As a result of the legislation that the Government have introduced since the 1980s, our industrial relations have achieved a stability and a maturity that seemed unattainable in the 1970s. It is now generally accepted that the law has a legitimate and necessary role to play in protecting the individual and the community as a whole against the abuse of industrial power.

These proposals will benefit individual members of the public by giving them protection against lightning strikes, and a new legal right to stop unlawful strikes in the public services. These proposals will benefit union members by giving them the right to join the union of their choice, the right to protect the funds of their union from mismanagement and the right to decide for themselves whether union dues and strike levies should be automatically deducted from their pay. These proposals will benefit the country as a whole by making it even more attractive to overseas investors by providing further safeguards against irresponsible industrial action and encouraging legally enforceable agreements which are common practice in almost every other major industrialised country.

The choice before the House and the country is now clear. On the one hand, we could undo much of the legislation of the past 12 years, and in some respects go further than ever before in increasing the power of trade unions and making strikes easier, longer, more frequent and more damaging. That is the policy of the Labour party and its trade union supporters. On the other hand, we can carry forward the process of reform and build on the achievements of the past 12 years. That is what the proposals in the Green Paper are designed to achieve, and that is why I believe that they deserve the support of the House.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): The Secretary of State is right to say that legally enforceable collective agreements have not been the tradition in our country, but it is commonplace elsewhere in Europe. I assume that he is proposing that they are introduced in the same way as in the rest of Europe. Will he confirm that, in recent years at least, it has usually been employers, not trade unions, who have been in breach of collective agreements? Will he further confirm that, if these proposals are applied in the same way as they are in the rest of Europe, Rolls-Royce could not have issued the notices of termination to staff, ITN could not have dismissed its staff as it did recently, and the printing companies could not be de-recognising trade unions as they are doing? I assume, therefore, that the Secretary of State will do this in such a way that it will cover agreements between trade associations and unions as well as individual unions and employers.

As for customers who sue in respect of unlawful strike action, will the Secretary of State confirm that unions have no immunity now under the law if they call unlawful strike action? As for suing in respect of unofficial action, will he confirm that the problem has been not a gap in the law, but the fact that, because the action is not endorsed by a union, the plaintiff ends up suing an individual employee? That is why the law has not been applied more often in the past.

As for the bits and pieces on scrutineers of union ballots, balloting requirements and the finances of unions, there is a slight contrast, is there not, between the frenzy of activity in respect of union finances and the Secretary of State's total indolence last year when he received letters on behalf of the staff of BCCI? [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] But again—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us have a stop to this pointless behaviour.

Mr. Blair: If the Secretary of State can show that there are genuine problems to which he has a genuine solution, of course we shall examine them carefully. Naturally everyone has an interest in seeing fair play at union elections, but why are the proposed measures to apply to unions only and not to companies? Why are the unions to be refused the right of direct debit in respect of union dues, but every other society, every other unincoporated body and every corporate body will be able to use direct debit without restriction? Why is there one law for unions and another for companies? Why are these highly complex rules to be applied to union members registering votes with their union, but not to shareholders registering their votes with companies? Why are there all these measures to insist that unions consult and inform their members but absolutely nothing to require employers to consult and inform employees? Is the citizen not an employee as well as a consumer?

I have gone through the Green Paper. I may be wrong, but I think that there are about 50 to 100 separate measures concerning union members and their union. Will the Secretary of State confirm that there is not one right anywhere in the document given to employees to require fair treatment from their employer? Indeed, on the seven-days cooling-off period, he says, again rightly, that there are similar provisions in the rest of Europe. So there are—in France, for example; and in Italy last year such provisions were introduced. When the provisions were introduced there the duty not to take action unilaterally was imposed not just on unions but on employers. Will that be the case here? Will the provision come with the same package of rights with which it comes elsewhere in Europe?

Is not the case about even-handedness nowhere more surely shown than in respect of the centrepiece of the Green Paper, which is an attempt to outlaw the arrangement between unions not to poach each other's members—the Bridlington rules? The Secretary of State says that he proposes not abolition but review. How does the proposal amount to a review of the Bridlington rules rather than their abolition? If he has any vestigial sense of responsibility, and if the proposal is not—it almost certainly is—a partisan piece of mischief-making, will he at least examine and discuss with employers the impact of such a move not just on inter-union disputes but on single union agreements, through which the proposal will drive a coach and horses?

In addition to heeding the warnings about the potential damage that could be inflicted by free-for-all industrial relations, is not the most telling point about the proposals not only their utter irrelevance to the key issues of the 1990s—training, skills and unemployment—but the fact that the Government will grant employees the theoretical right to join any union, and even the theoretical right to join a different union on different days of the week, but refuse absolutely to grant the right that exists in every other European country to allow that union to represent its members at the workplace? Employees have the right to join a union but are denied the right to have it represent them, which is the reason for joining it. Can there be anything more one-sided, partisan and irrelevant?

When the Secretary of State took office 18 months ago, he said on the "Today" programme that there would be no more union legislation because he wanted to concentrate on training. Is not the real reason for the Green Paper that he has so miserably failed on training that he must return to the old Tory refrain about unions? Is not that the hallmark of the Government? Those irrelevant, one-sided proposals are before us today because the Government have created the fastest rising unemployment in Europe and have not a clue what to do about it, and because the training of the British work force, so vital to our future, is being neglected and undermined by funding cuts pushed through by the selfsame Ministers. Because the Government have no answers to the problems of the 1990s, they return to the battles of the 1970s. That is the hallmark of this Government.

The Secretary of State could have used today to try to build a new partnership for success at the work place between Government and industry and between employers and employees—that would have been more possible today than ever before—but he has chosen not to do so. Instead, he has set out the agenda on which his party will fight the election. Whatever may have been the case in the past, it is no longer the agenda for the future of this country. For that reason, among others, we shall have a change of Government after the election.

Mr. Howard: Everything that the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) has said this afternoon bears the imprint of the trade unions which own his party lock, stock and block vote. They elect the Labour party's leader, choose its Members of Parliament, dominate its national executive and control its party conferences. The hon. Gentleman said that we should be talking about training. He should talk about training to the Transport and General Workers Union which sponsors him and the leader of his party. Just two weeks ago, that union voted to boycott youth training, employment training and the training and enterprise councils.

All hon. Members will have noticed that, on each of the proposals in the Green Paper, the hon. Gentleman maintained a cowardly silence which reflected his failure to face up to his trade union paymasters.

The hon. Gentleman specifically asked whether the proposals would cover agreements between trade associations and trade unions. I am happy to consider that suggestion in the context of the consultation document that we issued today. He rightly said that at present trade unions have no immunity from the consequences of unlawful action. The difficulty is that only employers and trade union members can take action in respect of such unlawful action. If they do not choose to do so as a

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consequence of damage suffered by the public, the individual citizen is defenceless. We are taking action to ensure that the citizen can do what is necessary to defend himself against unlawful industrial action that is specifically targeted at him.

The hon. Gentleman sought to draw an analogy between check-off and direct debit; but check-off is not direct debit. It is the removal of money from the pay packets of trade union members. All we say is that they should give their consent before that happens. Is the hon. Gentleman against or in favour of that proposal? Perhaps he will let us know.

The hon. Gentleman suggested that nothing in the document required the law to deal fairly with employees, but the law already requires fair treatment of employees. That has been the purpose of all the laws that we have passed in the past 12 years. That did not happen under the laws that were in force when Labour was in power, but it certainly happens under the laws that have been in force since we took office.

The hon. Gentleman raised the question of the effect that the abolition of the Bridlington principles might have on single union agreements. The proposals would have no effect whatever on such agreements. It is currently possible for employees to join another trade union and not to affect the operation of single union agreements. None of the proposals would have the slightest effect on single union agreements.

When the House judges the hon. Gentleman's response to the proposals, it will want to bear in mind the fact that, when we debated the legislation that provided the first ballots for trade union members, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) described our proposals as irrelevant effrontery. The hon. Member for Sedgefield described them as a shabby, partisan strategem. We made the hon. Gentleman eat the words that he uttered then, and we shall make him eat the words that he has uttered today.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that Opposition Members should be ashamed of their attitude? How can they claim to speak up for British working men and women when 155 Labour Members, including the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), are sponsored and paid for by trade unions? Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that Opposition Members will answer only to their paymasters and not to the people that we represent?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is entirely right. The extent to which the Labour party is beholden to its trade union paymasters is reflected in its every utterance on this subject.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): What has happened to all the recent protestations and claims about how good industrial relations are in this country? Is it not clear that the statement is absolutely unnecessary? It is crude and blatant electioneering, and the Secretary of State is abusing industrial relations for crude electoral reasons. The British people are far too sophisticated to fall for that. By linking himself to this operation, the Secretary of State is bringing the Department into disrepute.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman, who is sponsored by the Society of Graphical and Allied Trades, at least gives the Government credit for the improvement in industrial relations which has been achieved during the past 12 years. I am happy to acknowledge that it is our legislation that has led to that improvement in industrial relations. If we are to maintain that record in the 1990s, we need to keep the law under review and deal with specific and identified shortcomings in our present arrangements. That is what the Green Paper seeks to do.

Sir Norman Fowler (Sutton Coldfield): Contrary to what the Opposition—*[Interruption.]* If I may declare an interest, it is as a member of the National Union of Journalists.

Contrary to what the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) said, is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that his proposals will be widely welcomed by the public, in particular the requirement to give seven days' notice of industrial action? Is he also aware that some of the most damaging industrial action in Britain takes place in essential services, such as transport and the health service? May I have my right hon. and learned Friend's assurance that the search for a better way of dealing with strikes and industrial action in essential services will not stop at this point?

Mr. Howard: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his support. He played a distinguished part in putting on the statute book the reforms of the past 12 years. I take note of his point, although I believe that a combination of the measures which he himself started in what became the Employment Act 1990 and the new rights which we give individual members of the public in these proposals will go a long way towards achieving the improvements that he has recognised are needed for essential services.

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): I have spent a large part of my life trying to improve industrial relations and working for better industrial relations, and I find the Secretary of State's proposals this afternoon disastrous. How does he think that his petty proposals on collective bargaining and, not least, on check-off, which has worked successfully in many industries both for employers and for trade unions, will improve industrial relations? My hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) struck the right note this afternoon in the proposals that he made. The Secretary of State will damage industrial relations, not improve them.

Mr. Howard: At least the right hon. Gentleman, who is sponsored by the Amalgamated Engineering Union, has not followed the silent example of the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) on the nature of the proposals. The right hon. Gentleman spoke about the check-off and its success during the past few years. If the check-off genuinely has the consent of trade union members whose money is taken from their pay packets, nothing will change. The only proposal that we make is that those members should have to give their consent. If the right hon. Gentleman suspects that that will lead to a change, it can only be because those trade union members do not consent to what is happening at the moment.

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): Can my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that in relation to action that an individual citizen or citizens can take, provided that the trade union has repudiated the unofficial

action, action cannot be taken against the trade union, and the citizen would have to find the leaders of the unofficial strike? Will he confirm that seven days may not be long enough for strike action notice and that we may need more time for negotiations to take place? Will he further confirm that the Government would like to see more three-year wage deals and could well set an example themselves by going for that where they are an employer?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend made three points *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) must sit down. He has not been called to put a question. *[Interruption.]* Order. This is disgraceful behaviour. The hon. Member knows perfectly well that we do not behave like that here.

Mr. Howard: I thought that Opposition Members were proud of their association with the trade union movement. My hon. Friend made three points—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that we have a busy day ahead of us. I shall have to put a limit on speeches, so I ask hon. Members to settle down, please. I shall allow questions to continue until 4.20 pm. We are then to have a ten-minute Bill, which I understand will be opposed. We shall move on to the Opposition day debate very late. I ask hon. Members to settle down.

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend made three points. First, he asked about the rights that we would give members of the public. I am happy to confirm that those rights would apply to all unlawful action in public services, both official and unofficial. He rightly assessed how they would work in relation to unofficial action.

Secondly, the seven-day notice period is intended primarily not as a cooling-off period but as a period of notice to members of the public. I shall carefully consider any representations that are made in the consultation exercise on lengthening the period.

I have much sympathy with my hon. Friend's third point about three-year wage agreements.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): Before the Secretary of State's Parliamentary Private Secretary wastes his time during his cowardly political smear attacks, I tell the Secretary of State that hon. Members who are sponsored by trade unions receive no money directly from them—unlike Conservative Members, who get money in their pockets.

Does not it speak volumes for the Secretary of State for Employment that, at a time when unemployment is mounting month by month and will reach more than 3 million, he feels it imperative to fiddle with the trade union movement, hoping to gain some political advantage? I welcome what the right hon. and learned Gentleman has done today because it is another nail in the Government's coffin. Three million individuals and their families have been deprived of their rights by his ineptitude.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman, who is sponsored by the Manufacturing, Science and Finance union, referred to unemployment. Does he think that his party's policies, which would make strikes easier, more frequent, longer and more damaging, would help to reduce unemployment?

Mr. James Cran (Beverley): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that, whatever the more timid and timorous industrial representative bodies may think about the proposals, they will undoubtedly be widely welcomed by managers and individuals in the work force because they know that many elements in the trade union movement hanker for a return to the old days of lecturing Governments, pushing companies around and trampling on the rights of individuals?

I have personal experience of that, because when I was the CBI's northern director the northern TUC spent a not inconsiderable amount of time trying to get me sacked from that post because it did not like what I was saying publicly. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that such conduct is not acceptable? Will he tell the Opposition that the trade union movement has a role, but that it is no greater than it is at present, and is probably less?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend speaks from considerable experience in these matters. He has recounted one example of unacceptable conduct by the trade union movement. Our approach must continue to be to consider our arrangements, to identify any shortcomings, and to deal with them fairly but firmly. That is what the Green Paper proposes.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Does the Secretary of State accept that Liberal Democrat Members are not in the pay of trade unions or employers' organisations? Is he aware that we have supported many of the Government's trade union reforms over the past few years and have called—ahead of the Conservative party—for several of them, including ballots? Does he accept that there is a widespread feeling that there is no justification for taking firmer measures, that they are not relevant to improving industrial and employer-employee relations and that in many ways they are not germane to the fundamental business of running the economy?

Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman tell the House what rights he would offer, for example, to the 120 journalists at the *Aberdeen Press and Journal* who were sacked because they tried to belong to a trade union, which employers denied could negotiate on their behalf? Are not those journalists entitled to have unions negotiate on their behalf? Can the right hon. and learned Gentleman explain his comment to the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) that there would be no end to single-union agreements?

Conservative Members have, rightly, been loud in their protests about the Transport and General Workers Union for undermining the Ford agreement in Dundee, but the right hon. and learned Gentleman's proposals will allow people to join another union and undermine the regulations. Simply standing at the Dispatch Box and saying that that is not true is not good enough; the right hon. and learned Gentleman must explain why. Employees need rights—they need the right to be consulted and the right to be involved. The Government have denied them those rights, which have been granted in every other European Community country.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman is mistaken in his assertions. I explained clearly in answering the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) why these proposals would not cut across single-union agreements in any way.

As for the journalists who were dismissed, the hon. Gentleman should recognise that the Government

[Mr. Howard]

introduced legislation making it clear that people should not be discriminated against because they are members of trade unions. A Conservative Government first introduced the right for those unfairly dismissed to take their complaint to an industrial tribunal and to obtain compensation. The hon. Gentleman should give credit to the Government for those and other achievements.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that there is within the public sector one particularly difficult union—the Prison Officers Association? Is he aware that there are many fine people in that union but that it seems to be run by some difficult, bloody-minded men? Will my right hon. and learned Friend take a close look at the affairs of the POA and see what he can do to reduce the industrial disputes in the prison service? There are 40 separate such disputes at present.

Mr. Howard: I understand my hon. Friend's frustration, but it is not the job of Government to interfere in the affairs of individual trade unions; it is the job of Government to establish the right framework. That is what we have consistently tried to do over the past 12 years. These proposals represent a further advance along that road.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): I am a member of the Transport and General Workers Union—unlike the Secretary of State, a barrister, who is a member of one of the most exclusive trade clubs in the country and of Lloyd's, the most crooked bunch of trade unionists in the country.

Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman explain why he failed in his statement to refer to the right of the 30,000 young trainees on waiting lists to sue the Department of Employment for their right to join a training scheme of their choice at a time of their choice? Why did not the right hon. and learned Gentleman refer to the right of someone unfairly dismissed from work, having worked there for 12 or more months, to go to a tribunal? Why did not the right hon. and learned Gentleman refer to the right to stop work if working conditions are proved to be unsafe? Those are the real rights of citizens at work, and they have been ignored by the Secretary of State. When will the Government stop attacking the trade unions and attack unemployment?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman is not only a member of the TGWU but is sponsored by that union. I find it extraordinary that he makes allegations about youth training when, just two weeks ago, the union that sponsors him voted to boycott it. The hon. Gentleman should be thoroughly ashamed of himself.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): May I, as an unsponsored and unchecked-off member of the Managerial Staffs Federation, ask my right hon. and learned Friend whether he agrees that the proof of the step-by-step approach to industrial relations reform is shown by the step-by-step approach to the record low level of strikes in this country? Does he agree that it is a major step forward to restore the individual's rights by abolishing the Bridlington agreement; and will he go a step further and ensure that the figures for membership of trade unions, which can often influence sitting rights on committees that negotiate, do not reflect the tombstone membership which all too often occurs? Will he stop this unacceptable practice of claiming to have more members than there really are?

Mr. Howard: That is an important point. The proposals that we make for insisting on the consent of trade union members before their dues can be checked off their pay packets may well go some way towards meeting that point. If my hon. Friend thinks that further action is required, he will bear in mind that this is a Green Paper, a consultation document, and I shall of course look carefully at all the representations that we receive.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): The Secretary of State had much to say about ballots taking place before strikes, and that has become the practice in this country. Is he aware that in my constituency a company called Craven Tasker (Scotland) Ltd. is engaged in an industrial dispute in which the working people followed the letter of the law before they commenced industrial action? They were immediately dismissed by the employer. Will he condemn that employer and give trade unionists who engage in wholly lawful industrial action protection against dismissal?

Mr. Howard: I am not familiar with the circumstances of the dispute, and I do not think that the hon. Gentleman would expect me to comment on circumstances with which I am not familiar. If he writes to me about the matter, I shall be happy to respond.

Sir Michael Neubert (Romford): Will my right hon. and learned Friend be assured that those of my constituents who were greatly inconvenienced by strikes on London Underground and British Rail, called at 24 hours' notice a couple of years ago, will warmly welcome the provision that such strikes will require at least seven days' notice in future? Will he confirm that such a feature exists in the laws of most other European countries and that it is high time the British people had the same rights of protection against militant trade unions?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend truly speaks for the people of London, who have been severely inconvenienced in the past by lightning strikes of which no notice was given. His point is entirely right: similar protections exist in almost all other European countries, and they are more than overdue here.

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): If past Tory propaganda about the culpability of trade unions for our poor economic performance was correct, now that we have the weakest trade union movement since 1926 and the lowest strike record for 60 years, why do we have recession and mass unemployment? Who is to blame for that?

May I refer the right hon. and learned Gentleman to his remarks about unfair dismissal provisions? Why does his statement, couched in the language of the citizens charter, make no reference to bad employer practice or to the fact that an employer can abuse an employee and break the contract of employment, and then dismiss that employee just before his two years' employment are up, thereby denying the employee recourse to the unfair dismissal procedure?

Mr. Howard: But if, as the hon. Gentleman said, the action was a breach of the contract of employment, the

employee would have rights in respect of that breach whether or not the two-year qualifying period had expired. The hon. Gentleman should be well aware of that.

As for economic performance, does the hon. Gentleman seriously suggest that it would be improved by making strikes easier, longer, more frequent and more damaging—which would be the effect of the proposals of the Labour party and no doubt of his party, too?

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, as his proposals today have been as vigorously opposed as all other previous reforms have been, we can reasonably expect that the Labour party will say next year that it was in favour of them all along? Will he agree that there could be no more effective condemnation of the complete insincerity of the Labour party on this issue than to recall that, when a proposal is brought before the House to give ordinary members of the public the right to resist unlawful action, the Labour party condemns it out of hand?

Mr. Howard: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend's second point. The Labour party's attitude to this right of individual members of the public gives the lie to the extent to which it has any real regard for ordinary members of the public.

I am not sure that I agree with my hon. Friend's first point. It would be much more characteristic of the Labour party to give the impression next year that it was in favour of the reforms, but to write small print into its policy making it clear that it would go back on them if it was ever to gain office.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk East): In order to save the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) the trouble of telling the Secretary of State that I am sponsored by the Union of Communication Workers, I shall tell him. However, as the Secretary of State knows, I like to preserve a balance. Therefore, I shall tell the Secretary of State that the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East is a director of Wathes Holdings Ltd. and all its subsidiaries; he is a consultant to the Electrical Contractors Association; he is a consultant to the Institute of Civil Engineers; he owns agricultural land and property in Cumbria; and has shareholdings in Wathes Holdings Ltd. and its subsidiaries. The difference between us is that I do not receive any money from my sponsorship, whereas he lines his pockets with the money that he receives.

I remind the Secretary of State, as I reminded him last week, that he has the worst record on unemployment of any post-war Secretary of State for Employmnet. As a test of his sincerity, will he place in the Library a copy of all cases where he says that employers are deducting contributions from union members without their consent? Will he tell us whether an individual who seeks an injunction will be eligible for legal aid?

Mr. Howard: If check-off is being made only with the consent of employees, the proposals in the Green Paper will not make any difference. However, everybody knows that that is not the case, and I suspect that the proposals may make a difference. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will at least follow the lead of the general secretary of his trade union who, speaking on the radio on Monday, warmly welcomed at least two of the proposals in the Green Paper.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The House has heard that this is a consultation document. No doubt we shall come back to it when the House resumes in the autumn.

BILL PRESENTED

Registered Homes (Amendment) (No. 2)

Mr. David Hinchliffe, supported by Mr. Tom Clarke, Rev. Martin Smyth, Mr. Ian McCartney, Mr. Eric Martlew, Mr. Gerry Steinberg, Mr. Keith Bradley, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse, Mr. Max Madden, Mr. Mike Watson and Mr. Michael Welsh, presented a Bill to make further provision with regard to accommodation and conditions provided in residential care homes and in nursing homes, and to residential security in such homes; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 18 October and to be printed. [Bill 219.]

Points of Order

4.20 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As you will realise, the Secretary of State's announcement is a precursor to legislation—a highly controversial piece of legislation. Can you confirm that Conservative Members who are employed, as most of them are, by employers' organisations or certain employers and have a direct pecuniary interest which is used to line their pockets, unlike any Labour Member in respect of the trade union movement, will not be allowed to vote on this heinous, damaging and penal legislation?

Mr. Speaker: This is a hypothetical matter, as we have not yet seen the legislation. The House knows that every hon. Member is entitled to vote on matters of public policy.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that on 18 June I raised a point of order about the failure of the hon. Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Hughes) to present a ten-minute Bill. Such a failure also occurred on 14 May. You will also know, Mr. Speaker, how disappointing it is for Back-Bench Members to wait to hear about the Labour party policy on immigration and to find that ten-minute Bills are not presented.

Mr. Speaker: We have such a Bill today.

Mr. Ashby: That is my point. The failure to present ten-minute Bills deprives other hon. Members of the opportunity to present them. The same Bill is to be presented for the third time today by the hon. Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Hughes). I ask your protection, Mr. Speaker, and ask you to instruct the hon. Member to apologise most abjectly to the House for his disgraceful behaviour.

Mr. Speaker: That is pretty bogus stuff, but it is July.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will probably know that the Chairman of the Select Committee on Health issued a letter saying that there is incontrovertible evidence that the draft report of his Committee was leaked to the Department of Health before it had been finally considered, and had been seen by Ministers and officials in that Department. Moreover, you will also be aware of allegations that a member of the Committee came to that Committee with more than 30 amendments which were clearly ghost-written by the Department of Health and which had the effect of rigging the Committee's report. Furthermore, the Member involved said that he had had discussions with the Government Chief Whip about the amendments and that he was under a four-line Whip to ensure that they were accepted. They were accepted at a sitting lasting more than eight hours.

It is clear that the effect of those shenanigans has been to undermine the principle of independent Select Committees. I therefore ask you, Mr. Speaker, to give the House your advice about what can be done, because clearly, this is a matter of collusion and conspiracy involving a member of a Select Committee, Ministers and officials of a Department and the Government Chief Whip. Therefore, I seek your advice about what action can be taken to protect the independence of Select Committees.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have been asked a question and I shall rule upon it.

I have been informed that the Secretary of State for Health confirms that a copy of a draft report was received by his Department. The House decided in 1985 that such matters should be investigated in the first instance by the Select Committee involved. If that Committee considers that there has been substantial interference with its work, the matter will automatically stand referred to the Select Committee on Privileges. I have no role in the matter, and it should be pursued on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The House——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Hon. Members should contain themselves.

Mr. Cook: As a result of your statement, Mr. Speaker, the House is in the extraordinary position of hearing that the Secretary of State has today admitted that his Department received the contents of a draft report and, after that draft report had been seen, every paragraph relating to national health service trusts was dropped. Many of them were critical of the Secretary of State and stated, in particular, that his decision to grant trust status to Bradford hospitals had made their financial position worse. There has, according to your statement, been a leak——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not go into the detail. I got up when I did because—*[Interruption.]* It is a serious breach. I have given my ruling, and it is now a matter for the Select Committee involved. If it so decides, the matter will automatically be referred to the Select Committee on Privileges, and I cannot hear questions of privilege on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Cook: The difficulty that the House is in is that, because it will rise—*[Interruption.]* It is a grave matter that affects every hon. Member——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot allow even Front-Bench spokesmen to go beyond my ruling, and I have made a ruling on this matter.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. To the other hon. Members who intend to raise the matter, I say that they must not do so either.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You have, correctly, ruled on the subject of the leak that led to a copy of the document going to the Secretary of State, but that is not the matter that I wish to raise. I wish to raise the matter of a further leak concerning the same document. The only leak that I have heard was the Chairman of the Select Committee wrongly talking about the document on the radio. That was the leak.

Mr. Speaker: I have already made my ruling on the matter, and I am not prepared to take any further detail. If what the hon. Gentleman alleges is true, it is a matter for the Select Committee and then for the Select Committee on Privileges.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is not about the leak. Surely it is in order for the majority of members of a Select Committee to disagree with a report that was written by the Chairman and his unelected advisers and by no one else. Surely the abuse is for the Chairman to expect the majority of the Committee to agree with him.

Mr. Speaker: This is not a matter for debate on the Floor of the House. I have already said that I have received information from the Secretary of State for Health, who confirms that a copy of the draft report was received in his Department.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Have you received any representations requesting the Home Secretary to make a statement to the House regarding the Bank of Credit and Commerce International documents lost in a fatal blaze in a warehouse in my constituency two weeks ago? Officials of the FBU—the Fire Brigades Union—have sent to the police today evidence that the BCCI files were in the warehouse, although the police forensic department investigating the cause of the fire has said nothing so far. Furthermore, there was a fire in another warehouse containing archives a few weeks ago. Rumours are rife in my constituency, and it is imperative that information is given to the House.

Mr. Speaker: I have received no request for a statement on that matter.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. If circumstances had been different, I would have raised this issue under Standing Order No. 20, but it has emerged within the past hour that there is a possible conflict of interest concerning Professor John Knill, the chairman of RAWMAC—the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee—and his involvement with Sir Alexander Gibb and Partners, a firm of management consultants under contract to Nirex—the United Kingdom Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive. RAWMAC has a responsibility to the Secretary of State for the Environment on major issues relating to the development and implementation of overall policy on radioactive waste management. It has to be independent. Nirex has the responsibility for making proposals. *[Interruption.]*

I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, if Conservative Members are not interested in the concerns of communities threatened by the deposition of radioactive waste. The point of order for you is that, as Professor Knill is involved with Nirex but is also the chairman of RAWMAC, his independence is in question. May I call for a statement from the Secretary of State tomorrow, as the choice of Sellafield has been announced this week and the House rises for a 12-week summer recess tomorrow?

Hon. Members: This is out of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I understand that the matter arose after 12 o'clock, and as the House will rise tomorrow I could not hear an application under Standing Order No. 20. I am sure that what the hon. Gentleman has said will have been heard by those on the Government Front Bench, and that they will consider the matter.

Mr. Robin Cook: Further to my point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall not take further points of order on the former matter. I have already ruled on it.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I wish to raise a second important point arising from the deliberations of the Health Select Committee.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman serves on that Committee, but I have already given a firm ruling on the matter. It is for the Select Committee to consider, and then for the Select Committee on Privileges. It it not a matter for me, and we do not discuss privilege on the Floor of the House. So what is it?

Mr. Clarke: With the greatest respect, Mr. Speaker—and you know I have enormous respect for you—it is an entirely fresh point. *[Interruption.]* It is profoundly unfair that hon. Members who were not even on the Committee are seeking to restrict the ability of those of us who were to draw to your attention a very important point. Given that you, Mr. Speaker, have ruled—and rightly ruled—that what has taken place is a matter for the Select Committee on Privileges, there is another document to which I wish to draw your attention. It is the document in which the Secretary of State said, in response to the Chairman:

"No public comment was made on it."

Given the role of the Secretary of State, and given that the Secretary of State will be taking decisions on applications for trust status by the end of August, should not the Secretary of State make a statement? That is a serious point.

Mr. Speaker: I have already made my ruling on this.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I am not questioning what you have said, Mr. Speaker—*[Laughter]*—and I am not raising a point of order. [HON. MEMBERS: "Sit down then."] I simply want to ask—if the rabble on the Conservative Benches will allow me to speak—whether you, Sir, will at least hear what my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) has to say before ruling it out of order. You did not allow my hon. Friend to finish his point, and I am simply asking you to do so.

Mr. Speaker: I will say this to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). Provided that he does not in any way—and I say this to him as a matter of honour—breach the ruling that I have given, which is quite clear, I will hear him. As a Front-Bench spokesman, he must not breach that ruling.

Mr. Robin Cook: I am most grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to speak. I was stopped last time not by you, Sir, but by Conservative Members. Let me make two points to you. [HON. MEMBERS: "He's raising it again."] I have been invited to speak by Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Speaker is in charge of our proceedings. If those on the Conservative Back Benches will allow another hon. Member to speak, Mr. Speaker, I will put two points to you. First, on the question of referral to the Committee of Privileges, I seek your guidance on whether there is any

[Mr. Robin Cook]

way in which we can seek to put the matter before that Committee before the House rises for three months, during which time it will be impossible for anyone to take further procedural action on what is a grave situation. *[Laughter.]* If hon. Members do not understand that it is a grave situation, they do not deserve to be Members of the House of Commons.

Secondly, I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, that the House has today been placed in the odd position of hearing through you a statement from the Secretary of State to the effect that he received the draft document. In those circumstances, would it not be better for the House—and a courtesy for the House—for the House, and not just you—to be given a statement from the Secretary of State on why he received the draft report and what he did once he received it?

Mr. Speaker: The Select Committee will consider those matters and, as far as I am aware, it is perfectly in order for a Select Committee to meet during a recess. *[Interruption.]* I understand that I may be in error, if the hon. Member is referring to the Committee of Privileges.

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. You have given the House a clear and precise ruling, which should be helpful to us all. You have clearly explained that this matter is now back with the Select Committee and is for that Committee to resolve and that the House will have nothing more to do with it unless and until the time comes. May I appeal to you, Sir, to enforce your ruling and allow us to proceed?

Mr. Speaker: As ever, that was very helpful.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I do not seek to say anything about the leaked report being referred to the Committee of Privileges, but I want some advice——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will hear the hon. Lady if her point of order is about another matter, but I remind her that this is an Opposition supply day. I will not hear the hon. Lady's point of order if it is about the Select Committee. Is it about the Select Committee?

Mrs. Mahon: I am a Back Bencher——

Mr. Speaker: And I am Mr. Speaker. Is the hon. Lady's point of order about the Select Committee?

Mrs. Mahon: It is about procedure. Can the Procedure Committee conduct an inquiry into why the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) moved 34 amendments at the last minute——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is exactly what the Select Committee on Privileges—if the matter reaches that Select Committee—would want to consider.

Immigration (Dependent Children)

4.40 pm

Mr. John Hughes (Coventry, North-East): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to permit, in certain circumstances, the immigration into the United Kingdom of dependent children of parents settled in the United Kingdom; and for connected purposes.

If the basic right to love and to marry and the important right to live with one's family are so highly valued by hon. Members, is it not ironic that the Berlin wall, which divided a country, a nation, families and loved ones should have enraged us, yet knowledge of the barriers that exist within the immigration legislation, which are just as divisive, should leave the House unmoved? Surely the celebrations at the destruction of the Berlin wall and the act of erasing that obscenity should have reminded the law-makers in this country that there can be no grounds for complacency or smug satisfaction while this country continues to operate inhumane immigration laws that divide families and discriminate largely unfairly against black people and predominantly against those from Bangladesh and India.

Anyone who was proud to posture at the bulldozed Berlin wall for the photographers should take a long look at the immigration laws and the practices that they endorse. If that person does not see a contradiction, he is guilty of the greatest hypocrisy in support of the implementation of the Immigration Act 1988 which I look forward to the next Labour Government repealing.

The race barriers at each British embassy, every British port and every British airport are the product of racist prejudice and bigotry embedded in immigration legislation. The effects of those barriers are just as cruel to parents settled in this country as were the distress and pain experienced by German families who were separated from their loved ones by the watch towers, concrete and barbed wire of the Berlin wall.

I want to concentrate today on one relatively small part of the immigration laws and will attempt to right an enormous wrong that has been perpetrated on many families and which could now be corrected, due to the introduction of new DNA technology which has exposed the Government's unfair discrimination against Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Indian children. The Home Secretary has been forced to concede that that technology is the most accurate method to determine parentage in immigration cases. Technology and my Bill would give the House the opportunity to erase from the Immigration Act 1988 a particularly cruel clause and allow the entry of children under the age of 18 to be dealt with in a just way.

Those children have the right to join their parents who have obtained British citizenship, but the parentage of those children has often been challenged and their applications refused. The argument has been used most often against children from the Indian subcontinent and particularly from Bangladesh and Pakistan. Entry clearance officers can take advantage of the fact that the registration of births of children in those countries is not compulsory. The absence of a birth certificate gives scope to say that a child's relationship is not as claimed, and permission to join parents is refused.

That discrimination really applies only to children from the subcontinent. In cases where children have been refused permission to join their families who have settled

here, DNA tests have shown beyond a shadow of doubt that their claims were true. A Home Office survey of those cases has shown that in more than 80 per cent. of cases the immigration officers had been wrong and the individuals were parents and children, exactly as they claimed.

However, the passage of time between the original applications and the DNA tests means that many of those children have now reached the age of 18 and are therefore no longer covered by the rule which allows them to join their parents. In other words, those families told the truth in the first place when their children were eligible to join their families. They were wrongly refused and now that their claims can be proven, the children are too old. That is a cruel and callous Catch-22. It is an inhuman anomaly in the Immigration Act.

Consequently, a substantial number of young people in countries such as Bangladesh and Pakistan can now prove a claimed relationship, but they were denied the right to join their parents in Britain because of the alarming number of erroneous decisions in the past. However, they are now over 18—the upper limit to qualify as a dependant of a United Kingdom settler.

Some 800 young people resident in Bangladesh have applied for entry on the basis of the stringent conditions imposed by the Home Secretary. Of that 800, decisions on 500 have been taken and less than one third have been allowed to come here. It is believed that the Home Office finds even that number to be too high.

An example of that miserable state of affairs is illustrated in the recent case taken to the European Court of Justice by Mr. R. De Mello under the instructions of the Birmingham-based solicitors Rust McKie. The case concerned Mr. Rahim, a British citizen of Bangladeshi origin and his son Angur Miah. The story began in 1976 when Mr. Rahim sponsored his wife and children, including 12-year-old Angur, to come to Britain to join him. The application applying to the whole family was refused because the immigration authorities did not believe that all the children, and in particular Angur, were Mr. Rahim's children.

In 1981 when Angur was 17, another application was made and was refused for the same reason. In 1984, another two applications were made, but they failed. The second application omitted Angur due to a clerical error. I should point out that the father is illiterate and the form was completed on his behalf.

After a lapse of 13 years in 1989—13 long years since the original application in 1976—a DNA test established that Mr. Rahim was in fact related to all his family. They were all allowed in with the exception of Angur Miah who, even after a further application in January of last year, was once again refused—this time because he had become too old. So, 14 years after the original application, Angur Miah the rightful son, cannot join his mother, father, brothers and sisters. He is exiled from his family because the Home Secretary refused to waive the conditions of the Act, or rule 53 as it has become known.

4.49 pm

Sir Marcus Fox (Shipley): The hon. Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Hughes) has been the invisible man since 14 May. This is the third attempt to bring in his ten-minute Bill. It must be the longest running ten-minute Bill in history. The wording of his present Bill differs strongly from that of his first, but the purpose is the same. Anyone who listened to what he has said must understand that his Bill represents unrestricted immigration. If it were to be allowed, the loopholes would be enormous.

We thought that, when the hon. Gentleman disappeared the first and second times, he was being got at by his Whips because they did not want the debate to be brought out into the open. He has been nobbled because his Bill now states "under certain circumstances". That is not the original wording. Never mind the Berlin wall, everything else that the hon. Gentleman said is contrary to the purposes in which Conservative Members believe—straight and fair immigration control. If Opposition Members support the hon. Gentleman in the Division Lobby, I hope that everybody in the country will read carefully what the hon. Gentleman has said.

I served on the Standing Committee that considered the Immigration Act 1971. We introduced immigration rules to try to restrict the immigration that was concerning the whole nation. What did we do? We made provision for Commonwealth citizens who were here to ensure that we could abide by the commitment to bring in their wives and dependent children. But what happened? The courts found it very difficult to implement. What made us change the position in 1988? The European Court of Human Rights decided that what we had done was sexist. If Opposition Members want to be accused of being sexist, they had better go into the Ayes Lobby. That would be interesting.

All the wrong signals would be given outside the House if we were to vote for the Bill. When thousands of people are seeking political asylum here—many for bogus reasons—there is wide-scale abuse in immigration in this country. Opposition Members have been chuntering on today about unemployment and other matters. We are concerned as well. If we were to pass the Bill, we would make a mockery of immigration controls. Conservative Members are not prepared to do that. Opposition Members have always believed in easy immigration. They have opposed every major measure that we have introduced. The best thing that we can do this afternoon is to send the hon. Gentleman to Coventry where he belongs.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 19 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business):—

The House divided: Ayes 98, Noes 124.

Division No. 224] **[4.52 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*	Eadie, Alexander
Allen, Graham	Eastham, Ken
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Edwards, Huw
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Barron, Kevin	Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Beith, A. J.	Fatchett, Derek
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*	Faulds, Andrew
Benton, Joseph	Flannery, Martin
Bradley, Keith	Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*	Godman, Dr Norman A.
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*	Golding, Mrs Llin
Caborn, Richard	Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Callaghan, Jim	Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*	Hardy, Peter
Canavan, Dennis	Harman, Ms Harriet
Cartwright, John	Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann	Hood, Jimmy
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*	Hoyle, Doug
Cousins, Jim	Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Cryer, Bob	Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Cummings, John	Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*	Lamond, James

Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redmond, Martin
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Turner, Dennis
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alan Meale and
Mr. Peter Hain.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Dame Janet
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Gregory, Conal
Hague, William
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hill, James
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Paice, James
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Rhodes James, Sir Robert
Rost, Peter
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Viggers, Peter
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Wolfson, Mark

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert G. Hughes and
Mr. Stephen Day.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. With regard to the Division that has just taken place, will you confirm, as is usual practice, that the names of those Labour Front-Bench spokesmen who vote for the ten-minute Bill that has just been introduced, about which its promoter, the hon. Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Hughes), said that if a Labour Government were re-elected, there would be an abolition of——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order.

Mr. Brown: And that Labour Front-Bench spokesmen who voted in favour——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman persists again in disregarding the instructions of the Chair, the Chair will have no alternative but to exercise its disciplinary responsibility.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I shall deal with one point of order at a time. The point of order raised by the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) was clearly bogus.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Sometimes the Opposition can change the subject matter for discussion on an Opposition day. As we have now seen 18 Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen vote for a change——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am not prepared to listen to any more of this bogus nonsense.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a completely and utterly different point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), who I understand is a Conservative, was elected as Chairman of a Select Committee on Health on the basis of Opposition votes only. I wonder whether you can tell the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, whether that has ever happened before or whether it is unique.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Chair is becoming more and more irritated by the irresponsible points of order that are being raised. We have very important business before us and we should get on with it.

Opposition Day

[19TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Government Economic Policies

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Mr. Speaker has asked me to announce to the House that he will impose the 10-minute limit on speeches made between 7 and 9 o'clock and that he has selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

5.7 pm

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): I beg to move,

That this House deplores the failures of Government economic policy, which have caused a deep and damaging recession, steeply rising unemployment and sharply falling levels of output and investment; notes with concern that the United Kingdom is at the bottom of the league tables for growth, investment and job creation of the Group of Seven leading industrial nations in 1991 and is predicted to remain at the bottom in 1992; and calls upon the Government to take immediate action to promote economic recovery and an early end to recession by lowering interest rates, by stimulating investment in manufacturing and in the regions, by fostering innovation and new technology and by initiating an extensive and sustained training programme to tackle serious skill shortages and to help combat rising unemployment.

The facts about our economic situation are not encouraging. In this month's *Economic Outlook* from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, which surveys the economic circumstances and prospects of the major industrialised countries, can be found independent and official confirmation of the depth and severity of the recession that we are now enduring. The United Kingdom is bottom of the growth league of both the Group of Seven countries and the European Community. The United Kingdom is bottom of the investment league of the Group of Seven countries and of the European Community and it is now bottom of the employment growth league of the Group of Seven, the EC and the entire OECD. That means that we have the worst record for job creation in the whole of the industrialised world. Even more depressing than the OECD assessment for this year is that next year, 1992—when, according to the Government, we should be well into recovery—the United Kingdom will remain bottom of the G7 leagues for growth, for investment and for employment growth.

An examination of the OECD's growth league reveals that the United Kingdom has been at the bottom in 1989, 1990 and 1991, this year, and that it is forecast to remain at the bottom for a further unprecedented fourth year—next year in 1992. For four successive years, we will have been at the bottom of the growth league. Not only has that never happened to our country before; it has never happened to any G7 country before.

That is the international measure of what Conservative policies have done to our economy. The national perspective is no more encouraging. According to the Government's own figures, manufacturing output is falling at an annual rate of 6 per cent.; investment in manufacturing is down by 14 per cent. and that figure could well be an underestimate. Business failures are now at record levels and unemployment is rising inexorably: the most recent figures represent the 15th successive monthly increase. Only last week, the European Community predicted that unemployment in 1992 would be double the 1990 level—that it would again be above 10·8 per cent., or 3 million.

Before the Government seek to discount that European Community prediction—as, I am sorry to say, their apologists have sought to do in a pretty brazen fashion—let me remind them that, far from being isolated, exceptional or extravagant, it is corroborated by a range of similar forecasts from City institutions, including UBS Phillips and Drew, Midland Montagu, Societe Generale, Yamaichi and Lloyds bank. All those institutions warn of a prospective rise in unemployment to 3 million.

Only this morning, on the "Today" programme, the chairman of the Association of British Chambers of Commerce said that he believed that we were heading for 3 million. He also said that the Government's prediction of a recovery in the second half of this year was false.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): Have the right hon. and learned Gentleman and his colleagues made any estimate of the number of jobs that would be lost if a minimum wage policy were introduced?

Mr. Smith: We have heard some fantasy from the Secretary of State for Employment and other apologists for the Government, who have told us about prospective job losses. I wonder whether they will look at the facts instead of the fantasies. The OECD carried out a study, on which the Government have partly relied, of the operation of the minimum wage in France. According to that study:

"The adult employment elasticity with respect to the minimum wage appears to be zero."

The hon. Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) should reflect on why 11 other countries in the European Community are able to operate a minimum wage and at the same time to have much better employment performance records than ours.

The hon. Gentleman should also realise that we must consider the issue from the point of view of justice. The other day, I received a letter from one of my constituents, Mr. David Smith—no relation, although no doubt he would be honoured to be one—of 32 Livingston drive, Plains, near Airdrie. *[Interruption.]* Perhaps Conservative Members will listen to the letter before rubbishing it.

Mr. Smith wrote:

"I have been employed as a security guard with Securiguard Services Limited for four years. During that time I have never had a wage rise. My hourly rate is £1·83 per hour for a 60 hour week 12-hour shifts, some guards do 15-16 hour shifts. I get paid every 2 weeks and my take home pay is £210 for 120 hours."

That is a scandal, and the fact that it is permitted to happen should be on the conscience of the nation. Poverty pay is a scandal in this country. That is why Labour is determined to introduce a national minimum wage, to raise the United Kingdom to the level of the other civilised countries in the European Community.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): If the right hon. and learned Gentleman consults the Register of Members' Interests he will see that I have none. I thank him for giving way so early.

As the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows, some of his shadow Cabinet colleagues have made spending commitments that have been costed at £35 billion. Will he confirm that all those commitments are Labour policy? If they are not, which have been cut or dropped?

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman asks me about Labour's spending commitments in the context of the Conservative party's expensive summer campaign which, although it has been conducted all over the country, does not seem to have had a very dramatic effect on public opinion, judging by the national opinion poll that I saw this morning.

I prefer to recall what was said the day after that campaign was launched. Nomura Securities said:

"It is trivially simple to ascribe inevitably arbitrary numbers to areas where the Labour Party would like to increase spending, assume that all this spending occurs at once and arrive at a huge PSBR. This is absurd."

I shall not embarrass the Chief Secretary to the Treasury by reminding him too often that *The Independent* observed:

"Mr. Mellor's shocking arithmetic also implied a precision about Government plans which the gilts market would find amusing."

It is pretty rich for the present Government to disparage economic forecasts by others, in view of their own abysmal record. Let us examine their forecasts for recent years in regard to four key subjects: inflation, the balance of payments, growth and investment. This is important, because the Government ask us to believe their forecasts for the immediate period ahead.

The 1988 Budget forecast that, over a period, inflation would be at 4 per cent. As we know, after that inflation took off, more than doubling to reach 10·9 per cent. in October 1990. That was an error of 210 per cent. The projection on the balance of payments was equally unreliable.

Sir Ian Stewart (Hertfordshire, North): When did the right hon. and learned Gentleman, or any Labour spokesman, suggest that it was necessary to take monetary action to control inflation? If he cannot point to any such occasion, how does he think his own economic policy could be credible in the context of reducing inflation if he ever became Chancellor?

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman should read the debate on the autumn statement of 1988, made during an important period in the development of the present circumstances. During that debate, on 14 January 1988, I said to the present Chancellor of the Exchequer:

"Tax cuts would feed straight through into increased consumer expenditure, particularly in the prosperous areas, and increase overheating of parts of the economy, exaggerating regional imbalances and, above all, adding a further twist to the increasing balance of payments deficit." —[*Official Report*, 14 January 1988; Vol. 125, c. 485.]

That is what happened.

Sir Ian Stewart *rose*——

Mr. Smith: Surely, having asked me a question, the hon. Gentleman will do me the courtesy of allowing me to reply.

I am determined to get back to my speech at some stage. Let me tell the Conservative Members to whom I have given way, however, that they do not seem to understand that inflation was caused by the present Government's inflationary own goals. We warned them repeatedly of the consequences.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Smith: I really must move on. I have given way very generously to Conservative Members, and I have a serious point to make.

There was an equally unreliable projection on the balance of payments, another important criterion which Conservative Members do not want to hear about. In 1988, the Government predicted a deficit of £4 billion; the outcome was a deficit of £15·2 billion. That was an error of 280 per cent.

As for growth, in the 1990 Budget the present Prime Minister, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, forecast growth of 1·5 per cent. between the first half of 1990 and the first half of 1991. Perhaps I am being excessively fair to him: he hinted in his Budget speech that it could be higher. On that occasion he said:

"growth should return in 1991 towards its sustainable rate of around 2·75 per cent."—[*Official Report*, 20 March 1990; Vol. 169, c. 1013.]

We know that growth over that period, from the first half of 1990 to the first half of 1991, was minus 3·1 per cent. Even if we take the Prime Minister at his generous—from our point of view—estimate of 1·5 per cent. growth, that is an error of more than 300 per cent.

The Prime Minister, again when Chancellor, forecast in his 1990 autumn statement that fixed investment would decline by 1·75 per cent. in 1991, but in this year's Budget, only four months later, the present Chancellor was forced to revise the forecast by announcing a prospective fall of 9·75 per cent.—an error, which they managed between them, of 450 per cent.

Having regard to that record, why should we believe the Government when they tell us that recovery is round the corner? After all, did not the present Prime Minister tell us in his autumn statement of 1990 that

"the British economy is coming back on track"?

There is no hint of a recession, no intimation of falling output and falling investment or of the rising unemployment which was to come. Indeed, in that same autumn statement, only eight months ago, he told us:

"We shall be back into growth next year at an accelerating rate."—[*Official Report*, 8 November 1990: Vol. 180, c. 125.]

We know what happened and we know how absurd was the prediction of his successor as Chancellor that the recession would be "short-lived and shallow".

Given that nearly every prediction by the Government has turned out to be not only wrong, but absurdly wrong, and given that they are uniquely responsible for causing the recession with all its sad repercussions, why on earth should anyone believe them when they tell us now that recovery is on the way?

At the International Monetary Fund meeting in April this year, the Chancellor told us, as reported in the *Financial Times* of 30 April, that the recovery would be "somewhere around the end of the second quarter."

That is the second quarter of this year; we are now in the third quarter of this year.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Norman Lamont) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Smith: I am surprised that the Chancellor seems to indicate dissent. Whether he knows this or that about economics, I hope that he knows that we are in the third quarter of this year. We might start from agreement on that point.

Today, the survey by the Association of British Chambers of Commerce confirms:

"The country is still in the grip of deep recession and the economy will continue to shrink for some time."

[HON. MEMBERS: "Read on."] I shall be happy to read the whole lot, if hon. Gentleman want that; it goes on for page after page. I can read out the regional quotes, too. Yorkshire and Humberside chambers of commerce state:

"Business confidence has taken a severe knock in the region."

The North West chambers of commerce state:

"The rise in confidence seen in the last quarter appears to be slipping away."

The London chambers of commerce state:

"Confidence . . . remains firmly negative in the manufacturing sector."

The Southern chambers of commerce state: "confidence has fallen considerably." [HON. MEMBERS: "Read on."] The South West chambers of commerce states:

"Confidence in the manufacturing sector has taken a decided downturn."

I am surprised that Conservative Members want more of that evidence.

To drive the point home, the president of the association, Mr. Miles Middleton, today said:

"This survey substantiates our prediction that a return to growth was unlikely this year. The country's businesses are still suffering and look set to suffer well into next year. We are not yet seeing a recovery, merely a tail off in the rate of decline . . . It is still premature to speak of a recovery. The current economic climate remains harsh and recessive."

The message could not be clearer.

The Chancellor is always on the hunt for what he chooses to call either vague or faint stirrings. Last month on TV-am he claimed to detect these stirrings in the housing market. He told Mr. David Frost:

"It may be slow at first. It will begin in certain sectors, probably in the housing market . . . These are just vague stirrings at the moment, but the signs are there."

The broadcast and those comments in particular provoked an angry reply from the president of the Housebuilders Federation, Mr. Upsall, who wrote the following day to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The president may be more capable of detecting any vague or faint stirrings in his industry. He said:

"I noted your comments on the Frost Programme on Sunday"—

the letter was written the day after—

"about the slight indications you saw of an end of the recession. You cited the housing market as providing some evidence of this claim.

I have consulted widely within the housebuilding industry and I have to tell you that there is no foundation whatsoever for your assertion. This conclusion is also widely shared by estate agents. You and your colleagues in Government should be fully aware that on the evidence of the housing market, the recession is deepening, not receding. Purchaser confidence has been totally eroded by unemployment or the fear of it and, as a result, lower mortgage rates have done nothing to improve sales, which have in fact slackened since a brief upturn in the market in March.

There will be no recovery in the housing market until an end to the recession is in sight and this will not occur until interest rates are further and substantially reduced. There is no doubt that your reliance for so long on high interest rates is driving the country deeper into recession, creating unnecessary unemployment and eroding the investment basis for any recovery."

I have in my possession the reply which the Chancellor sent to Mr. Upsall. I shall not bore the House by reading out the tedious defence which he deploys. We shall no doubt get it later when he makes his speech. I shall spare the House that. Bearing in mind what Mr. Upsall said, I could not but bring to the House what the right hon. Gentleman said in his reply.

"Thank you for your letter of 3 June regarding my interview with David Frost. I am always pleased to hear first hand the views of businessmen; they are a valuable addition to the information available from official statistics which are, inevitably, only available with some delay."

I hope that the right hon. Gentleman took account of the robust observations of the president of the Housebuilders Federation. If he genuinely values the opinion of business men—who am I to doubt that?—he no doubt took note of what was said by some of them in a recent edition of a paper called *The Kingston Informer*. This useful publication was sent to me by Mr. Robert Markless, the excellent prospective Labour candidate for Kingston-upon-Thames. The article, under the banner headline "Lamontable", carried a sub-headline:

"Businessmen Blame MP Norman Lamont for Biting Recession".

That is bad enough, but the copy starts:

"Kingston's leading businessmen this week lashed out at the borough's MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer Norman Lamont, claiming the future is looking bleaker than ever."

That is only this month, 12 July. The copy continues:

"Former President of the Malden and District Chamber of Commerce John Hauxwell, is so angry, he has resigned from anything to do with the Conservatives.

The builders' merchant managing director stormed:

'I have been voting for the Conservative Party for 35 years, but I have resigned from everything since last October. I am so bitter at the loss of opportunities. The Tories have wrecked everything in the last three years. I don't believe there's anything that can have any effect inside 12 months. I think this recession is as bad as the 20s. The future is looking very, very bleak for Kingston businesses.'"

The article continues:

"President of the Kingston Chamber of Commerce and managing director of a local printing company, Peter Jarvis, said: 'I am pessimistic in the short-term. The message to businesses is just hang on. I would certainly say in my 33 years experience of trading in Kingston, it's the worst it has ever been.'"

I hope that the Chancellor writes back and deals with those criticisms which come from his constituency. I suggest that he opens his letter with:

"I am always pleased to hear first hand the views of businessmen."

This debate gives the Chancellor an opportunity to tell us when the much talked about recovery is to happen. I hope that he will take that opportunity today. In particular, when will unemployment start to come down, instead of rising month after month? Can he tell us whether he agrees with the gloomy assessment made by his colleague, the Economic Secretary, when he told "Channel 4 News" on Friday 12 July—the same day that *The Kingston Informer* hit the streets:

"I think you are not going to see significant growth until next year."

[Interruption.]—We shall check up on that because I do not want to misrepresent the Economic Secretary in any way. I am pretty sure that those were his remarks. Indeed, I heard them myself and I am inclined to believe my own recollection. If the Economic Secretary's remarks are right, how can there be recovery without significant growth? How can any economy survive the consequences of the plummeting fall in investment that is now occurring?

Recent Central Statistical Office figures officially confirmed for the first time that the level of manufacturing investment for this year will fall once again below the level achieved by the last Labour Government. It took the Conservatives nine long years to push manufacturing investment back up above the 1979 level, but I am sorry to say that it is now falling dramatically below that level again.

[Mr. Smith]

Because of that collapse in investment, Britain faces a serious capacity crunch. The National Institute of Social and Economic Research warned in its latest review, published only in May this year, that the level of manufacturing capacity will be reduced by some 5 per cent. by the end of this year. The institute comments:

"The loss of manufacturing capacity in the early 1980s must be partly to blame for the overheating of the economy at the end of the decade . . . It is only too likely that the present recession will create conditions for just the same kind of overheating to occur again sometime in the 1990s, if nothing is done to compensate".

The Government have ignored those warnings made by the National Institute of Social and Economic Research, the Labour party and many others because they have convinced themselves that recovery is simply the automatic product of lower inflation and the gradual reduction of interest rates from the high levels that they have maintained in the past two and a half years.

One must ask what kind of recovery the Government are looking for. The Chancellor keeps repeating that recovery will come as lower inflation and interest rates boost consumer confidence and then consumer spending. His most revealing explanation, however, occurred last month. Speaking after the OECD Finance Ministers meeting in Paris, he said:

"Consumer spending led us into recession and I expect it to lead us out."

I notice that the right hon. Gentleman is nodding. At least he remembers what he said, which is more than I can say for the Economic Secretary.

Like so many of the Chancellor's throwaway lines, that casual remark tells us all we need to know about Conservative economic strategy. They have no interest in a lasting recovery or real economic performance, but only in a short-term revival in consumer spending. They want to take us back to the familiar cycle of boom and bust; of a consumer spending spree followed by an interest rate crunch and rising unemployment; of consuming today what we should be investing in tomorrow. It is a recipe for a repeat performance of the 1980s and for another decade that begins and ends with a recession, with an inflationary boom in between. That, I fear, would be the predictable result of a fourth term for the Conservatives, and it would be a disaster for the country.

All that is desperately important because of the unique challenges that Britain faces in the single market after 1992. At one and the same time, we must face the challenge of severe competition while moving decisively to the more competitive and productive economy that some of our European partners have already achieved. To do that, recovery in the British economy must be investment-led. There must be investment in new plant and machinery, new technology, new products and new processes. There must be investment in the regions and, above all, in new skills to create the world-class work force without which success can never be obtained.

Interest rates need to be lowered to the levels of our competitors in Europe if we are to restore investment to proper levels.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): May I remind the right hon. and learned Gentleman of what the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) said yesterday following the statement on local government finance? He asked how my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment could

"justify the denial to local government of £2 billion which they need simply to maintain services even at their present level?" —[*Official Report*, 23 July 1991; Vol. 195, c. 1054.]

The hon. Member for Dagenham wants to spend £2,000 million extra on local government. Will he attain it through increased community charges, increased taxation or increased borrowing? If it is to be through increased borrowing, what impact will that have on interest rates, which the right hon. and learned Gentleman wants to bring down?

Mr. Smith: We could have had £2 billion years ago if the Government had not introduced the poll tax—*[Interruption.]* I am not in the mood to take lectures from Conservative Members about financial management.

I was arguing that fiscal policy must be used to encourage investment in new plant and machinery in our vital manufacturing sector. We must also seek to raise the levels of investment in research and development.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Smith: I have given way plenty of times and I must get on with my speech.

To combat rising unemployment we need a proper temporary work programme based on three days' employment, one day's training and one day's job seeking. I am surprised that the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) finds that amusing. Such a programme should be introduced to deal with rising unemployment, which is afflicting so many people—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Canterbury might be doing some job searching of his own after the forthcoming event.

The most important investment that the country needs to make is in our people, particularly young people. It is staggering to consider that, in recession-gripped Britain, many companies face serious skill shortages. As today's Association of British Chambers of Commerce survey comments:

"Particular problems of skill shortages exist in regions such as the West Midlands, where even though nearly half of manufacturing employers are shedding labour, nearly a third are reporting recruiting difficulties".

The recent National Economic Development Office report entitled "Partners for the Long Term: the Lessons from the Success of Germany and Japan" highlights the lower level of investment in what it calls human capital relative to other advanced countries. The report says:

"Not only does a higher percentage of 16 to 18 year olds remain in full-time education in Germany (47 per cent. in 1987), and Japan (77 per cent. in 1988) compared with the UK (35 per cent. in 1988), but the availability of part-time education and training in craft skills is greater"

in those countries.

It is little wonder, when we consider such facts, that this month's OECD *Economic Outlook* which, after all, the Government co-operates in compiling, drew attention to the United Kingdom's

"chronic skill shortages and inadequate training of the labour force".

The OECD went on to argue that

"an upgrading of vocational and general training levels would appear essential".

Given the mild language used by the OECD, which must have its copy approved by the Treasuries of the individual countries with which it deals, that is an astonishing statement.

Hon. Members know from their own experience that hardly a day goes by but someone, whether it is an industrialist, a business man, a trade unionist or a teacher, tells us what he or she knows to be true: that our training is wholly inadequate to meet the needs of a modern economy and an ambitious society. Nearly every international comparison shows, with frightening repetition, that we are not only behind the rest of the European Community, but we seem so complacent that further slipping behind is inevitable. The Government have still not restored the resources available to their previous inadequate levels. They still do not appear to accept that they have a responsibility to foster training among the employed work force as well as for the unemployed and young people. The Government say that they have no responsibility for helping to train the existing work force. Could anything be more foolish? They need urgently to revise their assessment because the other countries in the European Community do not hesitate to invest in such training. Investment in people, technology and the regions is the key.

In the 1990s in post-ERM Britain the economic agenda needs to be principally concerned with improvement in our supply side. Improving our productivity capacity and performance through investment will enable us to reduce the productivity gap between our country and our more successful competitors. It is through investment that we can create the wealth which alone can sustain higher living standards for our people and provide proper resources for our essential public services.

I say with genuine regret that that priority was absent in the locust years of the 1980s. We wasted the opportunities that were presented by North sea oil revenue. We consumed instead of investing. The House will recall that demand was stimulated by a credit free-for-all and by tax cuts for the rich. Year after year, as we went from bust to boom to bust again, crucial investment in the infrastructure, the transport system, the public services and in training and manufacturing industry was persistently neglected.

We cannot afford to make those mistakes again in the pivotal decade that lies ahead. That is why, under a Labour Government, the thrust of fiscal and monetary policy will be to create the economic conditions that will maximise investment in our productive economy. We shall aim, as the Government failed to do, at macro-economic stability instead of practising the rollercoaster economics of boom and bust. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members do not like to hear that. Not only they but the public will hear it between now and the next general election.

We will promote a supply-side strategy that will improve the capacity of our industry and the skills of our people. Above all, ours will be a strategy for the long-term sustained recovery of our economy. Compare that, as the public will do in the months ahead, with the wing-and-prayer antics of a beleaguered Government desperately seeking to create the illusion of recovery, no matter how insubstantial and—to borrow a phrase from the Chancellor—however shallow and short-lived. Britain deserves a better way forward for the 1990s. The opportunity to choose cannot be long delayed. We say, "The sooner the better."

5.42 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Norman Lamont): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"congratulates Her Majesty's Government on its pursuit of sound economic policies; notes that those policies have led to a large fall in inflation; notes also that as inflationary pressures have eased, interest rates have been cut substantially, while the £ sterling has maintained its position in the ERM; and calls on the Government to continue with its prudent policies, which will lead to a resumption of sustained growth.".

We have been amused by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith). We always enjoy his speeches and he always enjoys these occasions. So do I. This is an important debate, and if the economy was in as serious a state as the right hon. and learned Member says, it would have been much more enjoyable to hear the views of the Leader of the Opposition on economic policy. His name is at the top of the Opposition motion, and it is a mystery why he cannot lead his party in an economic censure debate and give the House his carefully considered views.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East presented his usual list of selective quotations by me. I am certainly optimistic, unlike the right hon. and learned Gentleman who engaged in gloom-mongering. If he had made any effort to provide the House with an accurate representation of what I have said, it would be clear that my statements about what would happen to the economy have been consistent. I set out my view in evidence to the Treasury Select Committee in December, in the Budget in March, and in what I have said more recently. That view has been that recovery would begin in the second half of this year. I reiterate that and shall give my reasons.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lamont: I shall do so in a moment.

Since 1979, the Government have made it clear that their central objective in economic policy is the control of inflation. We promised that we would beat inflation, and that is exactly what we are doing. In recent months we have achieved some remarkable successes. Every serious measure of inflation is on a firm downward track. Even at its peak of 10·9 per cent. last October, inflation was over 4·5 percentage points lower than the average rate under the last Labour Government. Headline inflation has fallen by over 5 percentage points since October to 5·75 per cent., the lowest figure since August 1988 and lower than the last Labour Government achieved in any month in any year of their term of office.

Mr. Radice: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lamont: I shall give way when I have made more progress.

The underlying rate of inflation never rose as far as the headline rate so, of course, it has not fallen as quickly, but here, too, the trend is clearly downward. The rate of increase in the retail prices index, excluding mortgage interest payments, has come down by more than 2·5 percentage points since the autumn. That is good news.

Mr. Radice *rose*——

Mr. Lamont: I shall give way in a moment. The hon. Gentleman should contain himself. I shall not give way if he persists in interrupting.

The fall in the rate of increase of the RPI is not good news for the Opposition, but I have worse news for them. Inflation will continue to fall in the months ahead. The last two CBI surveys of expected price changes have, for the first time since the 1960s, shown a zero balance. That is an excellent guide to the sort of inflation that we can expect later this year and at the end of the year.

I know that many firms have had a hard and painful struggle, but we are firmly on course for an inflation rate of 4 per cent. by the last quarter of 1991. Ours is the only major industrialised country in which inflation is lower than a year ago, and by the end of the year I expect our inflation rate to be below the EC average. That will be a remarkable achievement and should be welcomed by everyone in the House.

Mr. Radice: In his Budget statement, the Chancellor said:

"there are good reasons to expect that the recovery will begin around the middle of this year".—[*Official Report*, 19 March 1991; Vol. 188, c. 165.]

We are now in the middle of this year. Has the recovery begun?

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman's naivety is astonishing. We are only a few weeks into the second part of the year and the statistics for output in the second quarter have not yet been published. There are some encouraging signs, such as the excellent retail sales figures which were published earlier this week. I certainly stick by what I said in the Budget statement and to the forecast at that time that the recovery would begin in the second half of the year. I expected some hon. Members, although not the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice), to ask within a few weeks whether the recovery had started. It is extraordinary that the hon. Gentleman should ask such a question.

German inflation is expected to rise and, by the end of the year, our inflation rate may be lower than that of Germany. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East did not speak about that. In an interview published in *The Sunday Telegraph*, the right hon. and learned Gentleman described himself in a memorable phrase as a "German nut". Surely he is impressed by the fact that, with any luck, our inflation rate will be lower than that of Germany.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): I fully understand that the Chancellor is committed to reducing inflation. There is no question about that. But it is almost 12 years ago that the same claim was made in the medium-term financial strategy—that this was a Government determined to reduce inflation. I have a copy of the document in front of me. The Government have had 12 years and at the end of that time they have the same objective as they had at the beginning. What happened meanwhile?

Mr. Lamont: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for drawing attention to the fact that over the whole of this decade we have reduced inflation and reduced it massively. We reduced it far below the level of the Labour Government and, as I said earlier, the rate that we have now is below the rate achieved in any month of any year by the last Labour Government.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lamont: I will give way in a moment.

We should be proud of that success, because the reduction in inflation is not just temporary. We are in the process of making Britain a permanently low inflation country.

Unemployment is still rising, as one would expect at this stage of the cycle, but the rate of increase has slowed. They key to minimising the rise in unemployment and reducing it thereafter is labour market flexibility. The faster wage bargainers adjust to low inflation, the better the medium-term prospects for employment. Our trade union reforms, pursued in the teeth of opposition from the Labour party, have transformed the attitudes of managers and workers. More and more, there is evidence that workers are looking beyond the size of their pay cheques to take account of the long-term future of their company. If they continue to do so, employment prospects will recover relatively quickly once the recession is behind us.

However, considerable damage to long-term job prospects would be done if we were to accept a minimum wage, advocated by the Opposition, which would price hundreds of thousands of people out of their jobs, or if, as the Opposition suggest, we signed up to the social charter lock, stock and barrel.

As inflationary pressures have eased, we have been able to cut interest rates—not just once or twice, but seven times since the peak last October.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lamont: If I had predicted last autumn that inflation would fall from 11 per cent. to under 6 per cent. that the pound would remain strong against the deutschmark and that we would cut interest rates from 15 to 11 per cent., the Opposition would have howled with derision. Yet that is exactly what we have achieved.

The effects of our interest rate cuts on business finances and household budgets have been considerable. Overall, industry's annual interest bill has been cut by more than £5 billion, and a family with a typical mortgage of £30,000 will see its disposable income increase by about £60 a month.

Mr. Foulkes: At last. I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. The Chancellor has rightly said that the level of inflation, has gone down, but it has gone down at a substantial price—a huge increase in unemployment. Does the Chancellor still think that is a price worth paying?

Mr. Lamont: As the hon. Gentleman knows, I have repeatedly made it clear that there is no conflict between fighting inflation and the long-term prospects for employment. If we give up the fight against inflation, that will be bad for long-term employment prospects. It is precisely because the Opposition are not remotely serious about fighting inflation that we do not take them seriously when they talk about unemployment. The reintroduction of unemployment in the speech made by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East was noticeable. In debate after debate, when unemployment was falling for some 44 months, the Opposition never mentioned unemployment. Only now has the right hon. and learned Gentleman reintroduced it.

Our cuts in interest rates have been measured and prudent. They have not endangered sterling's position in

the exchange rate mechanism. Against the deutschmark, sterling is trading at almost exactly the level of last October. Nevertheless, we have reduced interest rates by four points during a period when German interest rates have increased. The differential between British interest rates and those of Germany is at a 10-year low and United Kingdom interest rates are now less than 1·5 percentage points above those of France.

Real interest rates in the United Kingdom are below those in France and Germany, but that does not stop the Opposition demanding yet more and larger interest rate cuts. Those are the same people who endorsed our membership of the ERM and professed to want low inflation. They cannot have it both ways. It is utterly naive to claim that we can cut interest rates more quickly and stay in the ERM and keep inflation down at the same time.

Everyone knows that Labour's policies and the disciplines of the ERM would not mix. Some Labour Members are honest enough to admit that. I could not put it better than the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) who said:

"The first act of a Labour Government will have to be a devaluation. We can't say it publicly and we shall have to appear as respectable. Scout's honour we wouldn't do such a thing."

Policy remains tight, as it must do, to consolidate the dramatic progress that we are making on inflation. But success in the fight against inflation has enabled me to loosen monetary conditions substantially. But after every interest rate cut, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East demands another. However, he does not seem to acknowledge that monetary policy operates with a substantial time lag. After every interest rate cut he demands another, even before the first has had time to have effect. Just as we forecast in the Budget, lower inflation and lower interest rates will lead to recovery. Recent statistics published are consistent with the view that I took in the Budget.

Mr. Marlow: As my right hon. Friend has already said, and as has been pointed out several times, the Opposition have a policy of spend, spend, spend. If they spent all those thousands of millions of pounds, how could they cut interest rates as well?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is correct. The Opposition have not the slightest hope of containing either interest rates or the level of taxes, which would have to shoot up dramatically as a result of their spending.

Recent statistics are consistent with the view that the pace of recession slowed in the first half of the year. GDP fell by about 0·5 per cent. in the first quarter, a little less than in the last quarter of 1990 and significantly less than in the third quarter of last year. We expect the total fall in output to be about 3 per cent., significantly less than the 5 per cent. fall in the 1980-81 recession. That fall should be set against the rise of 28 per cent. seen in the long upswing of the previous decade.

Mr. Budgen: My right hon. Friend says that monetary policy has been substantially eased and of course it is true that there will be a considerable time lag between the easing and the time that it takes effect. But surely, at the very least, the easing of monetary policy ought to be seen in the M0 figures, and M0 is increasing by only 2 per cent. at present. Does not that argue against what my right hon. Friend says?

Mr. Lamont: I fear that my hon. Friend is not correct. I intended to come to that specific point. The M0 figures show a marked increase this month and I shall be referring specifically to that. But my hon. Friend is right to say that the evidence of interest rates working is when they affect the monetary aggregates. As he well understands, it takes time for that to happen, but the evidence that it is happening on the narrow definition of money is there.

Unemployment has continued to rise, as one would expect at this stage of the cycle, but the rate of increase has slowed noticeably. The rise in June was the smallest since January. Manufacturing output continued to decline into the second quarter, but, again, at a much slower rate. Manufacturing industry has held up relatively well in the recession. The fall in output is expected to be only half that of the 1980-81 recession.

There has been some excellent news in the past week. Retail sales rose by 1·25 per cent. in June. They reached the highest level since last December, excluding the abnormally high March figure. In addition, the United Kingdom ran a current account surplus in June for the first time since 1987. That improvement was not due to a sharp fall in imports; it reflected the excellent performance of British exporters.

In the past two years, manufactured exports have increased by no less than 18 per cent. in volume terms. We have heard little from the Opposition and from the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) about those good statistics, yet he normally appears on the television when the trade figures are announced each month. One of the newspapers compared him to a vulture with an appetite for carrion. The hon. Gentleman will be rather lean and hungry in the next few months, because the news will get better and better.

We expected business investment to fall throughout most of this year. In fact, in the first quarter it was unchanged from the last quarter of last year, and still more than 40 per cent. higher than the level that we inherited from the previous Labour Government.

Interpreting economic statistics is particularly difficult because of the effects of the Gulf war. The evidence that we have is consistent with economic recovery in the second half of the year. To deal with the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) made, the six-month growth rate of M0 has increased from about zero at the end of 1990 to 3·75 per cent. at the end of June. Consumer confidence, as measured by the EC-Gallup survey, is increasing. Output expectations—historically, a good indicator of manufacturing output and non-oil GDP—show signs of recovery. Indeed, several other surveys, including that of the Association of British Chambers of Commerce, show the same signs.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East referred to that survey. He said that he was prepared to quote all of it. He might have quoted the part that says:

"Business confidence continues to rise across the country."

He might have quoted the part that says:

"The signs of the end of the recession are certainly more pronounced and less elusive this quarter."

The right hon. and learned Gentleman was very selective in his quotations from the survey.

Much of economics consists of the search for the perfect leading indicator—the crystal ball that foretells the future. As my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West will know, fashions change; one indicator

[Mr. Lamont]

comes and another goes. In the past 12 years, there has been one infallible indicator of recovery—the apocalyptic prophecies of the Opposition. Ten years ago, the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) told us:

"there is no light at the end of the tunnel."

We know what happened next. The second quarter of 1981 duly marked the start of the recovery, and the economy turned in eight years of sustained growth averaging more than 3 per cent.

We heard many of the opinions of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East on our forecast. He did not mention the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East, who said in 1986 that there was no chance of an improvement in unemployment. Not surprisingly, that pronouncement was followed by 44 consecutive months of falling unemployment. It fell by more than 1·5 million, yet the Opposition hardly mentioned the subject. I am not saying, "Do not listen to what the Opposition say"—by all means do so—but just remember that the opposite is bound to happen.

We can be confident. We have no intention of changing course and giving an unjustified, artificial boost to demand. Recovery will come, as it always does, from businesses controlling their prices and costs and from wage bargainers adapting to low inflation. On the high streets, stores are cutting prices. That is how firms can help to beat the recession and to boost demand. The consequences of a phoney stimulus would be just as damaging for our economy as a prolonged recession. Taking the easy course might lead to a short-term boost, but in the longer term it would mean higher inflation and higher unemployment.

Our consistent refusal to take the short-term view has enabled us to achieve the success of the past 12 years. When the dust of this recession settles, the gains of the 1980s will shine through again. The 1980s was the first decade since the second world war in which the United Kingdom grew faster than France or Germany. Manufacturing productivity grew faster than in any other major industrial country. Our share of world trade in manufactures has risen in each of the past two years for the first time since records began. Perhaps the Opposition think that that is failure.

Real personal disposable income is up by more than a third since 1979. Real wealth is up by 60 per cent., and the number of shareholders has tripled. Conservative Members do not regard that as failure.

The persistent refusal of the Opposition to see anything but misery ahead is predictable but not very admirable. What I found truly mystifying about the speech of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East was the gaping lack of any attempt to present a coherent alternative policy. When he became shadow Chancellor, it was hoped that he would make a better fist of it than the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). It would have been difficult to do any worse, but all we heard from the right hon. and learned Gentleman was waffle—superior to that of the Leader of the Opposition, but none the less waffle was what it was.

We used to know what the alternative strategy of the right hon. and learned Gentleman and the Labour party was. In 1983, it had an alternative economic strategy of exchange controls, import controls, massive increases in Government spending to boost demand, and the whole apparatus of planning. We must not forget that the right hon. and learned Gentleman was among those who spoke up for those policies. What has made him change his mind? It must have been what he described as eight more years of disastrous Tory policies. The terrible failure of those years convinced him that he was wrong and we were right. That was the result.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East knows how to memorise his lines. He says that he recognises that the Government's responsibility is to get inflation down. He supports membership of the exchange rate mechanism. We even hear him talking of supply side policies. I am not entirely convinced by this puzzling, mystifying and sudden conversion. There is one real divide on economic policy between the parties—between Conservative Members, who are prepared to take the tough decisions that we know to be right, and Labour Members, who are prepared to will the ends but not the means.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East proclaims the virtues of low inflation, but he is not prepared to do what is necessary to achieve it. All of us know that the way to control inflation is to control demand, and that the way to control demand is interest rates—all of us apart from the right hon. and learned Gentleman. He is on record as saying on television, astonishingly:

"We will not be using interest rates for controlling demand."

Yet the Opposition's motion specifically calls on the Government

"to take immediate action to promote economic recovery and an early end to recession by lowering interest rates"

and manipulating demand.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East says that we should cut rates by a full percentage point. That was his policy in October 1987, when interest rates were 9·5 per cent. It was his policy in March 1988, when interest rates were 8·5 per cent. It was his policy in October 1990, when interest rates were 15 per cent. It is his policy today. Interest rates are always 1 per cent. too high.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman has another string to his bow, but, like most Labour policies, it is inefficient, ineffective and unfair: it is credit controls, which would do nothing to increase savings or to reduce demand. Credit controls cannot reduce the overall level of interest rates, only the distribution of credit. Some people —the well advised or the wealthy—get all they want. The rest—ordinary people at the back of the mortgage queue —get nothing. Perhaps the right hon. and learned Gentleman could explain how stopping people borrowing is a painless way of reducing demand.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman claims that he is ready to answer the hard questions of economic policy. Perhaps he will answer this question: how would he deal with the inevitable sterling crisis that Labour's fiscal and monetary irresponsibility would precipitate? He has obviously given that question serious thought, because earlier this month he told the *Financial Times* the answer:

"There will be no sterling crisis when we take power. But even if there were, all I would have to do is pick up the phone and talk to someone on first name terms."

They probably know him as John. I only hope that they remember which John.

There we have it. Now we know where the right hon. Member for Leeds, East went wrong when the last Labour

Government let spending get out of control. He need not have gone crawling to the International Monetary Fund, if only he had eaten a few more prawn cocktails.

When the Labour party talks about supply side socialism, it is certainly serious about increasing supply—the supply of bureaucrats. According to Labour's policy documents, there would be a never-ending flow of ministries, agencies, quangos and commissions. The other day, I went through the policy document and discovered equality tribunals, contract compliance agencies, national vocational councils, development agencies, technology transfer centres, British Technology Enterprise, the Office of Technology Assessment, a Health Technology Commission—I had better stop there. It sounds like an answer from the Leader of the Opposition—not so much a citizens charter, more a bureaucrats bonanza.

Where are the national plan of the 1960s, the social contract of the 1970s? In the dustbin of history. That is where Labour seems to be looking for its policies. From among the uncollected rubbish of failed policies, Labour comes up with the national economic assessment—the same policies, only older and mouldier; tried, tested and failed.

Nowhere is that more apparent than when it comes to the Labour party's approach to the labour market. The Labour party opposed and resisted every one of our trade union reforms. Earlier today, when my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment was before the House, we heard Labour's predictable pledge to oppose the next steps in trade union reform as well.

We should not be surprised. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East—this does not seem to be well known—was the shadow employment spokesman who led Labour's opposition to ballots before strikes and ballots in union elections. He said then that to require ballots was "intellectually disreputable", "an irrelevant effrontery" and would

"gravely undermine the effective pursuit of their members' interests"—[*Official Report*, 8 November 1983; Vol. 48, c. 170.]

by unions. If that was his view then, why is it not his view today, and how do we know what his view will be tomorrow?

The Labour party is firmly committed to removing one of the greatest competitive advantages that this country has—low marginal rates of tax. Labour's proposals would hit the small business man employing 20 people as much as it would the corporate executive employing 20,000 people. That is a strange way to encourage the recovery to get off the ground.

Everyone knows that Labour's extravagant spending plans would mean higher taxes for everyone, not just the better-off. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East and the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) do nothing to stop their colleagues going up and down the country promising massive extra spending. When the Labour party talks to the groups of voters it wants to bribe, its £35 billion worth of promises are firm commitments and high priorities; when it talks to the generality of taxpayers who would have to pay the bill, they are vague aspirations and distant goals. Either way, they are a con on the British people.

The 1980s were successful because we took the tough decisions that were needed to get the British economy back on track. We controlled public expenditure, reduced taxes, reformed the trade unions and privatised and deregulated industry. None of that was easy, but it was necessary.

On each of those items, the Labour party would discard our hard-won gains. Behind the presentational veneer, Labour remains committed to massive increases in public spending, borrowing and taxation, the reversal of our trade union reforms and regulation—in short, the tried and failed policies of the past.

We are beginning to see the rewards of fiscal and monetary discipline: we are within sight of our goal—much lower inflation. Inflation is coming down; we have been able to cut interest rates, while keeping the currency strong; and we have certainly laid the foundations for the recovery of the economy. The evidence for that is growing daily. We know it, Labour knows it and the country knows it too. I invite my right hon. and hon. Friends to reject the Labour party's motion.

6.14 pm

Mr. Peter Kilfoyle (Liverpool, Walton): Forgive me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I stumble over the proprieties peculiar to the House, but I am the newest Member and a comparatively naive one—naive enough to believe that I can replace the late Eric Heffer in Parliament.

As everyone knows, Eric Heffer was a Member who was loved and respected by many hon. Members on both sides of the House and by many far beyond this place. Who could fail to be moved by the tremendous battle that he put up against his terrible illness? Yet the people of Liverpool, Walton have sent me here to represent them in this place.

I know that, conventionally, one is expected to be non-controversial in one's maiden speech. The paradox is that my constituents have been subject to great controversy during the past 12 years. They have been squeezed between two conflicting yet symbiotic tendencies. On the one hand, they have suffered from that sterile ideological throwback—the Militant Tendency. That malignancy has been cast to its political doom from the tarpeian rock of the Walton by-election.

More insidiously detrimental to their well-being has been that other confrontational and mendacious tendency within Government, promising all and delivering nothing. The Government will shortly be called to account at the ballot box. The electors of Liverpool, Walton have already given their verdict, with the Tories' worst by-election result since 1980. It has been a judgment on the Government's declared "managed decline" of a great city. There is no doubt that the Government's perverse economic policies have effected their objective of running down the city of Liverpool and its citizens.

Nearly 27 years ago, Eric Heffer made his maiden speech. In it he highlighted, after 13 years of Conservative government, the areas of neglect that particularly concerned him. It was with a sense of déjà vu that I read through them in that speech.

Then unemployment on Merseyside as a whole was 24,000; now it is 7,403 in the division of Walton alone, notwithstanding the fiddled figures. The independent assessment of the unemployment unit shows a far worse situation, with one in three people unemployed in some wards in Walton and a total of 11,027 people unemployed, nearly 27 per cent.

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Eric underlined the population drift as jobs went. He spoke of 42,000 people lost to the north-west. Under the Government, we have lost 335,000 manufacturing jobs in the north-west—35 per cent. of the total. Many of those were in Liverpool as jobs were lost at Tate and Lyle, Standard Triumph, Dunlop, Hartley and many other firms —thus, the population drift has quickened to a flood.

Other concerns of Eric's included the lack of skills training, the neglect of the transport infrastructure and the uncertain regional policy. Yet what do we have today? The Government have frozen the upgrading of the main north-west railway line. That line was planned as our high-speed link to the channel tunnel, but now there is no track, no rolling stock and no engines or any terminals appropriate to it. There have been massive cuts in regional aid in the north-west—down by more than 70 per cent. —which is the biggest single cut of any region. There has been a chaotic approach to training which leaves my city and many others bereft of the skills needed to compete in the modern world.

Instead, we have been assured that prosperity will come to all, even Liverpool, on the basis of the trickle-down theory. It is what the novelist Joseph Heller characterised as the Milo Minderbender school of economics: what is good for Milo is good for the country. That is not the case. There has been no trickle down to the people of Liverpool. Life has grown steadily worse under the Conservative Government. We have a council that is making painful decisions in order to stay within the law; we have a vibrant voluntary sector which struggles to relieve the worst effects of Government-inspired deprivation; and we have supportive private businesses, loyal to the city which demand more constructive recognition of their contribution to the city's regeneration.

In short, we have a city of many talents battling against the odds to be part of the economic mainstream of life. Liverpool deserves the motto of Everton football club, "Nihil satis nisi optimum"—nothing but the best is good enough. Of course, the people of Liverpool realise that we have little hope of that under a Conservative Government. Hence we have a paltry two Conservative councillors out of 99 in the city and no Tory Member of Parliament. It is well understood that our economic revival will come only with a Labour Government.

Having sacrificed too many aspirations on the altar of political and economic dogmatism, will this Government not now relent in the remaining months which they have left and expiate some of their sins? What does it profit a party if, having won government, it suffers the loss of its own soul?

Let me tell of what has happened to my constituents. One of my closest friends in Walton, after nine years on the dole, at 39 years of age, married with three children, finds that he cannot afford to take up the university place he has won through hard struggle. He would be worse off by between £9 and £12 a week. Where is the incentive there?

Another constituent, at 27 years of age, married with two children, has applied for 524 jobs without success. He approached me during the by-election with the words, "I'm sorry to bother you, I'm just one of the unemployed". Imagine the low self-esteem implied in those words. He has had his pride crushed out of him. That is what the Government have achieved—a generation without jobs, prospects or even hope. Is it any wonder that my people treat their promises with derision?

When Oscar Wilde cynically defined democracy as "bludgeoning of the people by the people for the people", he may have had Liverpool in mind. We have certainly been well and truly economically bludgeoned by Government policy. We prefer to see democracy in a purer light—

"noble in motive and far reaching in purpose".

We then ask ourselves, where is the nobility and purpose in record unemployment, stagnant production, social deprivation and human misery, attributable to 12 years of Government mismanagement? This Government will not be forgiven, but will be remembered in Keynes' words as

"the slaves of some defunct economist. Madmen in authority who hear voices in the air and are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back".

6.22 pm

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): It is a privilege to follow the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle). I was one of those who heard his predecessor, the late Eric Heffer, make his maiden speech, and I concur with every word that the hon. Gentleman said about him. Eric Heffer had many friends on both sides of the House, not only in his own party. He was as critical of his own party as he was of the Conservative party.

The hon. Member for Walton made a rather contentious speech in which he criticised the Government. That is not supposed to happen in a maiden speech— [HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"] I do not object to that in the smallest way. I only recall that Eric Heffer was as likely to criticise his own Front-Bench spokesmen as he was to criticise what was then the Opposition. I am sure that the whole House looks forward to hearing the hon. Gentleman on many occasions in the future, and I am certain that he will be a worthy representative of his constituents, just as his predecessor was.

It must have been difficult for the shadow Cabinet to choose last week the subject for this Supply day debate. No doubt they wanted, at the end of the Session, to have a good rousing round-up debate on the economy. Unfortunately for them they picked the subject too late to change it. Just two days ago, it became clear that the economy was changing rapidly for the better. Clearly, the Opposition could not foresee the mistake of picking a Supply day debate of this type that would be held after such excellent trade figures and the beginning of the retail recovery, two factors which came rather earlier than even I had expected.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) has been highly critical of the Government again today, and his criticism appears to become more strident as time goes on. I do not believe that elections are won in this House, or by party political broadcasts, or by critical articles in the newspapers. On the whole, they are won by ordinary men and women deciding who the next Government should be on issues that have little to do with party politics as we discuss them in this House.

In order to confirm that, I looked up the economic statistics for the past 20 years to see what had happened in the seven elections that I have fought. I discovered that disposable income must be higher than it was in the

previous quarter; that the savings ratio must be falling, because people are more confident about the future and are spending more than they did in the previous quarter; that consumer expenditure must be rising because of the same feeling of confidence; and that interest rates must be falling. Any Government during the past seven elections who got all four factors right have always won—and any Government who have got even one of them wrong have always lost. I offer that information to the right hon. and learned Gentleman for what comfort there is to be gained from it.

Three of those factors are already in place, and we need confirmation in the next two months to ensure that the fourth is in place, too. Judging by the statistics for the past seven elections, I would say that we can safely go to the country in November or October, or we may have an even better chance next year.

The economy is clearly looking up, and not before time. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East made his usual critical speech but was rather less clear about his own policies. He did not deny—perhaps he will give us further details—that the Labour party will spend a great deal of money—we estimate £35 billion. We have not heard the exact figures, but it is certain that he proposes to increase taxation—he admits as much.

It is also certain, that if the Labour party ever formed a Government, it would have to borrow a great deal of money, not merely because of what it proposes to spend but because of it, renationalisation programme, particularly for the water authorities. This is the area of which the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) is in charge. Apart from the costs of compensating shareholders—£6 billion or £7 billion—a Labour Government would have to take into account the borrowing requirement that will arise because of the capital expenditure on which the water authorities are already engaged, amounting to about £20 billion over the next 10 years.

That represents an enormous increase in the public sector borrowing requirement. It will inevitably have a hard impact on the Government's standing in the gilt-edged market and the Labour party has not foreseen that.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Francis Maude): Does my hon. Friend agree that the House should be given a further opportunity to hear from the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) how he proposes to deal with the important point that my hon. Friend has highlighted?

Sir Peter Hordern: I should be delighted to give way to the right hon. and learned Gentleman to hear what he has to say. We have not yet had a proper chance to discuss this matter. It is stupidity itself to take on a capital expenditure programme such as that to which all the water authorities are committed and to count it as a public sector borrowing requirement. That would shatter confidence.

Some people think that the trade figures are bound to deteriorate as soon as the economy picks up again. That is to ignore two factors. First, it is most unlikely that there will be a repetition of the recent scale of borrowing and the domestic consumer expenditure on which it is based. People in this country have had a severe jolt from the amount of borrowing and the costs of the interest payments on it. I doubt whether the scale of domestic consumer expenditure of the past few years will be repeated.

Secondly, I note that the volume of exports is higher than that of imports for the first time since 1987, and that we have a surplus in trade in manufactured goods, and that we have a surplus with the European Community. I cannot recollect how long it is—it must be a long time—since all three factors have occurred at once. I do not believe that there is any reason why that new trend should not continue. I say that not because I think that there has been a dramatic improvement in productivity at home but because of the changed conditions in the European Community particularly in Germany and the large increase in demand that has come from that country.

The figures are much better than they look. There is a large positive balancing item of £1·5 billion in the latest national accounts, and that is in the first quarter alone. That balancing item is almost always positive. Therefore, the balance of payments is characterised by strong portfolio and direct investment abroad, from which we are continuing to gain direct benefit.

The Leader of the Opposition and the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East criticise us for wasting the money from North sea oil. The truth is that the entire value of North sea oil has been more than replaced by our investments in the United States and other countries, from which we shall continue to derive a positive income for as far ahead as we can see. Even the strong investment overseas by British concerns and by British portfolio investment has been exceeded by the massive investment inflow into this country amounting to some £19 billion last year—more than double what it was three years ago.

I see no reason why the Japanese and Americans should not continue to invest large sums of money in our country. Japanese investment in our motor industry will lead to substantial exports to the European Community. That is already happening: the figures for last month show a large increase in our motor exports to the European Community, and there is a great deal more to come when the large investments of the Japanese and other firms take effect.

We are beginning to see export-led growth, plus growing incomes from remitted profits and dividends from abroad. Therefore, it is necessary for the market in Europe to grow.

The important result from the G7 meeting last week was the commitment that all the leaders gave to a successful conclusion of the Uruguay round. I know that that may not have caught the headlines in the same way as other things, but I believe that that commitment is more important for the future of world trade and our own economic benefit than anything else that came out of the G7 meeting. If that means, as I believe it does, a fundamental change in the common agricultural policy, it is all the better for it.

I know that there is a great deal of common feeling on both sides of the House about the need to reform the CAP. However, I notice that the Leader of the Opposition said that we must see to it that our textiles are better protected through the multi-fibre arrangement and that that industry should not be put at risk by the east Europeans. If we are to achieve economic growth, we must allow east European countries to trade freely, without barriers, with the

[Sir Peter Hordern]

European Community. That is essential. They must be allowed to earn their way to prosperity, creating a market for our goods in return and an opportunity to reduce costs here.

We concentrate too much of our attention on political integration in western Europe. We must reduce the trade barriers, not just in the European Community but throughout Europe. If we want to make the most of the opportunities available, we must continue to reduce inflation. We can no longer—if we ever could—depend upon a domestic consumer boom. We must depend upon the growing European market. I believe that by the end of the year we will have a lower rate of inflation than Germany. Therefore, we must gear ourselves to exploit that market.

Our manufacturers must be sure that the value of their stocks will be maintained. That is the importance of continuing our policy of reducing inflation. People will not invest here for any length of time unless they are confident that the value of stocks will remain at least constant and that the value of the investment will be maintained. If we can reduce inflation, that investment will surely follow. Economic growth fuelled by domestic expenditure based on borrowing cannot last. That is a lesson that we have learnt during the past few years. Growth based on sustainable domestic expenditure and overseas orders is a different proposition, and that is what we are now seeing.

The Government have received much advice lately to the effect that we are uncompetitive and should devalue. I do not know how many economists wrote to *The Times* recently—there were many of them, although not as many as the 364 who wrote some time ago—but I disagree with them. What they have said about the need to devalue the currency is not true. For a long time in our country, economic growth was the main priority. It was meant to safeguard employment and sterling was allowed to fall. Inevitably that meant that firms became uncompetitive and paid their people too much money. Their prices became uncompetitive and eventually action had to be taken when unemployment was worse than it had been in the first place. We must get away from that cycle of disasters.

I am glad that the conquest of inflation is the main priority. If we couple that with stable exchange rates, higher prices and higher costs will not be accommodated. We are already seeing the benefit of that policy. The price of cars is being reduced. When did we last see that happen? It should have happened years ago. We must consider the attraction of stable prices, long-term investment and greater success in our export markets. That will lead to greater domestic confidence.

In the past 20 years or so, short-termism has been a product of inflation. The sooner we can eradicate that, the better. Our standard of living depends on our ability to compete. It depends on attracting investment from our own resources and from abroad and on opening new markets in eastern Europe. It depends on low tax at home and a stable regime that does not meddle. Those are the characteristics of the Government which I hope will long persist. It is the very opposite of the Labour party's policies. That is why I commend my right hon. and hon. Friends on their policies. Long may they continue with them with success.

6.37 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I am glad to have an opportunity to congratulate the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle) on his maiden speech. His comments about the late Eric Heffer found an echo in all parts of the House. I had the privilege of co-operating with Eric Heffer on a book about Christianity and faith in politics, in which he made clear, as he did on a number of occasions, the depth of his own convictions and faith. We all admired the courage with which he stood up for what he believed, regardless of who that may have brought him into conflict with. I compliment the hon. Member for Walton on the lively and robust delivery of his speech, which will stand him in good stead in future speeches in the House.

The by-election campaign will live long in the hon. Gentleman's memory as well as in mine and others. It was an unusual by-election. The hon. Gentleman fought a hard fight and won, but from reading the newspapers one would have thought that he was in danger of being defeated by the candidate from the Militant Tendency. The hon. Gentleman knew, as we did, that that was not so. The only danger was posed by the Liberal Democrat candidate who secured a high percentage of the vote. There was never the slightest chance of the Militant candidate defeating the hon. Gentleman. Indeed, Militant candidates in parliamentary elections have never had any prospects.

The sad fact is that Liverpool was landed with a Militant council not by people voting for Militant candidates but by people voting Labour. They were not told by the Labour party that they should not vote for people who had managed to acquire the Labour party label but who did not agree with the party's views. I know that the hon. Member for Walton has fought many hard battles within the Liverpool Labour party against the Militant Tendency. Those battles continue, but Militant's ability to run rings around the Labour party in Liverpool has left a sorry legacy in that city.

The hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) talked about what wins elections and about a formula of economic indicators that has to be right before elections can be won. One of the four items he listed in that formula was interest rates. He said that low interest rates have to be secured for a Government to win an election. He said that for the last seven elections Governments have sought to get the indicators right. The one with which they succeeded every time was interest rates because that was the one that they had within their control. Interest rates were reduced before every general election in the hope of winning those elections. Governments did not succeed in delivering on some of the other issues that the hon. Gentleman mentioned. I hope that he shares my concern that it is too easy for Governments to manipulate interest rates to pursue electoral strategies rather than to pursue the battle against inflation. There is a danger that Governments of any colour will manipulate interest rates in order to win elections.

One of the reasons—I think that the hon. Gentleman will agree—why I argue that there should be a more independent body to deal with monetary policy is that political considerations loom too large in the views of Governments. He was right to point out that those considerations are significant factors in the battle to win elections.

At this stage of the debate it is easier to step back a little from the black versus white, long-running election battle which opened the proceedings. If one listens to the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), everything in the economy appears wholly black, but if one listens to the Chancellor, everything in the economy is wholly white; and we know that neither can be the case.

The British economy has some significant strengths on which it can build. We have considerable resources of energy; we have established expertise in many areas; we have a free market system and long experience of running such a system; we are members of and therefore have access to the richest free trade area in the world; we have the protection and discipline of the exchange rate mechanism and the prospect of extending it into a single currency and monetary union; and we also have the advantage of the English language—the most widely used language in business, although it sometimes seems to become a handicap when it discourages business men from learning other people's languages in which to do business more successfully.

However, there are weaknesses to be set on the other side of that balance sheet. We have a recession on a considerable scale which is not ending within anything like the time for which the Government hoped. Indeed, the Chancellor sounds increasingly like the small boy who has been told to wait for Father Christmas. As a child, I was used to being told to wait for Father Christmas for something that I wanted in October or November; but to be told in June or July to wait for Father Christmas for any prospect of the recession ending is a sign of the extent to which the Chancellor got his figures wrong and of how serious the recession is.

We also have high unemployment—2·3 million—and there is a strong prospect of its rising to 3 million. It is recognised even by the Government that our economy is beset by significant skill shortages. Inflation problems are still with us, and it is not true to say—as the Chancellor did—that every indicator of inflation is on a downward trend. Underlying inflation increased from 6·6 per cent. to 6·9 per cent. in June. Inflation is a more serious problem than the Government like to admit.

I recognise that it is a Government policy objective to get inflation down, and I support the fact that they are making it a primary objective. However, I do not think that it necessarily helps in pursuing that objective to pretend that one is doing better than one is or to say—as the Prime Minister said not so long ago—that we have inflation "by the throat". It is a rather tougher opponent than that, and the battle will be long and hard.

We also have what are recognised by international standards as low rates of investment. There is also a feeling of resentment in Britain between industry on the one hand and Governments and the City on the other. That feeling is based on industry's view that neither the Government nor the City seems to understand it. That criticism is not directed only at one Government—it is a long-standing feeling in industry—but as long as that is so, it must be tackled.

Some of the problems are the result of economic mismanagement. Much of the depth of the recession can be attributed to the scale of the credit boom which was allowed to develop. Others are attributable to a lack of long-term thinking and to a worrying unwillingness to face some of the fundamental economic decisions. The Chancellor levelled that criticism at the Labour party, but it can also be levelled at the Government. The Government are unable to make a decision about the single biggest issue that will face the British economy—whether we are to have a single currency, and whether we shall form part of a monetary union.

I do not think that there is any difference between the Government and me about whether that issue will have a major impact on the economy. Most Ministers—whatever their varying views—agree that it is a very important decision, but the Government say that they cannot make it. They say that it must be a decision for future Parliaments to take or for another Government at another time. That is a slight move onwards from the position taken by the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) who, whatever the formula, kept undermining it by saying, "No, no, no; never, never, never." However, such an attitude is not a sign of a Government who understand clearly where they are taking the country.

There are differences about what we are saying about the economy and what the Labour party is saying. They are evident from the fact that we tabled an amendment to the motion, although we agree with significant parts of it. One of the differences is that I do not believe that one can say every day of the week that interest rates must be 1 per cent. lower than they currently are, which is the position that the Labour party seems to have adopted at every stage. Interest rates are now very much tied to our position in the exchange rate mechanism. Two groups of people wish to challenge that.

The first group is the Labour party. Despite its acceptance of the exchange rate mechanism, it seems to believe that we could pull down interest rates by a significantly larger amount without affecting our position in the exchange rate mechanism, thereby achieving a devaluation. The second group is a group of Conservative Back Benchers who openly say that we should never have joined the exchange rate mechanism and who would welcome a devaluation.

I disagree with both groups. The exchange rate mechanism is a defence against inflation and it is important to maintain our position in it. The advantages of devaluation are almost always very short-term. If we are to ensure that interest rates and interest rate policy are used as a defence against inflation, it is important that decisions are taken by a body that makes price stability its priority. That is why we argue for a more independent central bank.

Is not it intriguing that over the past couple of days the Government have suddenly discovered the merits of central bank independence and that they are at pains to stress what value there is in the central bank being an independent body? Of course, they are considering its role in relation to banking supervision rather than in relation to monetary policy. They want to make it clear how distant they are from the bank and how little they influence its activities in matters of banking supervision. Independence is sorely needed in connection with monetary policy where a clear commitment to and responsibility for price stability is a much better basis for policy than the various pressures which land on Governments.

Another apparent difference between my party and the Labour party is the extent to which we have been prepared to set out policies to tackle unemployment. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East—in answer, I

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think, to an intervention—referred to Labour's temporary work programme. I searched for some time for more details of that programme and I found the origin of it in Labour's alternative budget, where it was costed net at £340 million. I do not think that any further details have been published since. It was a scheme based on—I think—three days of work, one day of training, and one day of job seeking. It might be a useful scheme, but it would be fairly limited in its impact on unemployment of the scale that we now have.

We argue that at this stage of a recession it is legitimate for Governments to target public expenditure in ways that bring a long-term benefit and which will help to ease the unemployment problem, especially if the Government do so when there are substantial capital funds tied up in local government in the form of housing receipts which local government has received over the years. Therefore, we set out a much larger programme which has a gross cost of more than £2 billion but, of course, that does not take account of the considerable amount that can be netted off because of the cost of unemployment benefits. We believe that expenditure now on repairs to housing, schools and hospitals and on energy conservation measures—especially the improvement of insulation in houses—would not be inflationary, but would lead to a long-term benefit for a significant easing of unemployment.

Any Government who want to pursue a rigorous anti-inflation policy and who know that unemployment will result, must take steps to deal with that consequent unemployment. Any Government who believe—as my party believes—in a free market economy must not ignore their responsibilities towards those who become unemployed in severe movements of the economic cycle. All over the south of England, in areas previously unfamiliar with high unemployment in most people's lifetime, there is now severe unemployment to which we in the north are more accustomed. We believe that that problem calls for much more urgent attention from the Government, and we have spelt that out in our amendment to the motion.

6.49 pm

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): The recession has been deeper and longer than most of us expected; it is a matter for regret that the Opposition seem to have enjoyed every month of it.

I shall say a few words about the effect of the recession on small businesses. In the past 18 months to two years they have faced three major problems. First, the cost of borrowing has hit those with high overdrafts very hard. However, many small businesses are not heavily borrowed; many have no borrowings at all. It is not the level to which rates rose but the length of time for which they were high that caused the real pain.

The second and probably the most important problem that small businesses face is the lack of demand. Business in many areas is still as flat as a pancake and most small businesses are reconciled to the fact that there is likely to be little or no recovery this year. We all welcome the June figures for retail sales, but they are still below last year's figures and there is little sign of improvement in the housing or car markets.

The Government's success in bringing down inflation is widely welcomed, as is the reduction in interest rates, but over the next two or three months small businesses will be looking for even greater reductions from the Chancellor—between 1 and 2 per cent., it is hoped. From an economic point of view that is entirely feasible, because of the success of the Government's policies. Despite the recent cut in interest rates, all the economic indicators suggest more cuts. We are still in deep recession. The housing market is flat; the figures for personal spending are low; inflation continues to fall. As inflation falls, if interest rates do not fall, too, real interest rates will rise. It would be perverse for real interest rates to rise during a recession.

As we heard today, the growth in the money supply is only 3 per cent. Despite a little rise, it is still well within the Government's range. The expansion in bank credit is at a low level and wage settlements in general are falling.

Business has a legitimate grievance about wages. As in the past, the Government have expected private business to take the strain. As a result of the Government's supply side measures, the labour market is much more flexible, so wage increases in the private sector are dropping rapidly. Many small and medium-sized businesses cannot afford to award a wage increase at all, and many others are giving increases below the rate of inflation. Only a few are paying above the rate of inflation. That is a great contrast with what is happening with public sector wage settlements. Most are well above the current rate of inflation. The police are getting 8·5 per cent.; local government workers, taking into account the reduction in hours, are getting over 8 per cent.; nurses and teachers are likely to get settlements way above the rate of inflation.

It is always the same when the Government are trying to reduce inflation and achieve pay restraint. The market enables the private sector to deliver lower wage increases, but the public sector does not deliver.

The third problem facing small businesses has been getting their accounts paid. Large companies, local authorities and even Government Departments are often the major culprits. Further interest rate cuts will ease all those problems and reduce the cost of business overdrafts and mortgages. The public will have more disposable income in their pockets, and that will be reflected in demand.

I shall emphasise several worrying aspects of the British economy and point out how effective the Government's policies will be—indeed, are being—in comparison with the alternative policies offered by the Opposition. We have to accept that we have a balance of payments problem. The recent figures represent a great improvement, but we are in the depths of recession, so we would expect there to be an improvement. We must not get carried away by one month's figures.

One of the major causes of the continuing balance of payments problem is that in the past 10 or 15 years the United Kingdom has changed from being a major car exporter to a major car importer. That has made a difference of £6 billion a year to our balance of payments. We must examine the cause of the decline in the motor industry. The responsibility lies with the previous Labour Government, who increased union powers resulting in overmanning, restrictive practices, unofficial strikes, lower productivity and poor quality.

The Government have sown the seeds of a resurgence. We have reformed industrial relations, abolished the closed shop, and with our low tax policies have made this country the most attractive in Europe for investment.

Indeed, there has been major investment in the motor industry, especially by the Japanese. Plants built by Nissan, Toyota and Honda are increasing production and will continue to do so. As a result, our car exports are expanding fast. If we lose the next election and the Labour party gets back into government and carries out a policy of increasing union power and introducing a statutory minimum wage, undoubtedly that will make the United Kingdom less attractive for foreign investment.

The Labour party is always saying that it will spend more on everything. Overseas aid is one area in which it would spend more and that would drop right through and increase our balance of payments deficit.

Fiscal balance is another area of concern. One of the Government's greatest achievements has been restoring financial rectitude. Having inherited a massive public debt and public sector borrowing requirement from the Labour Government they took control. They got a grip on public spending, and from 1984-85 until last year public spending as a proportion of gross domestic product declined by 7 per cent. Far from having a large budget deficit, we had moved into significant budget surplus. The Government have repaid no less than £26 billion of the national debt and at the same time made significant reductions in levels of direct taxation.

However, I am afraid that, in the past two years, that tight control of public expenditure has been eased and it has risen in real terms. The budget surplus has disappeared and we are now forecast to be in deficit for at least three years. Current spending is running above the estimates, and I forecast that this year's budget deficit will be well above the £8 billion forecast in the Budget. Expenditure is likely to have risen as a percentage of GDP for the first time in a decade. The prospect of a balanced budget, with further tax cuts, is disappearing rapidly over the horizon.

That is why this year's public expenditure round will be critical. In an election year, civil servants in spending Ministries, local government and pressure groups all over the country have a field day. Everyone wants more and more cash and they bank on the Government not daring to say no. I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends in government to stand firm. An extra £2 billion on health will be lost; an extra 1p on the standard rate of income tax would have a considerable effect on the Government's long-term credibility—as, indeed, would an equivalent reduction. If Government expenditure is to be kept down the Government must be tough on public sector wage increases. Every effort must be made to keep increases down to the level of inflation.

I shall consider for a moment what fiscal policy would be like under a Labour Government.

Mr. Ted Leadbitter (Hartlepool): Before the hon. Gentleman does that, does he not accept any blame for the rate of inflation, for increasing levels of unemployment or for the decline in investment in manufacturing industry? Does he ignore, reject and rebut the House of Lords report on science and technology published recently, in which the majority of his colleagues in another place said that the Government had no policy for industry, that there would be no British-owned, British-based industry in this country and that there was no policy for the national interest? Does he reject those ideas? Does he accept no responsibility?

Mr. Townend: After that speech, I certainly do not accept any responsibility and in any case I am not a member of the Government. What I will say, however—I am noted for being somewhat honest in the House—is that I think that the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) got it wrong and that the biggest mistake that my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) made was that she did not remove him 18 months before he resigned.

What would happen under a Labour Government? The Opposition have made it crystal clear that theirs is the party of high public spending. The Labour party's record in government shows that it always increases spending. After every Labour Government's term in office, the standard of taxation is higher and the national debt larger. However much Opposition Members may protest to the contrary, the Labour party stands condemned not only by its record but by its public statements. Whenever a Labour spokesman appears on television—speaking on any issue—he always gives the same answer: "The Government have not spent enough or allocated enough resources. We must throw more cash at the problem." It does not matter whether the problem is education, health, schools, social security or overseas aid. Even with BCCI, Labour Members are calling for Government money. Last week, the Labour transport spokesman, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) went to the scene of a rail accident in Glasgow and blamed that, too, on the lack of resources.

It is spend, spend, spend all the time. Is it any wonder that, when all Labour's promises are costed, the figure arrived at is £35 billion? I was interested to hear the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) refer to Midland Montagu, a leading City firm, because, according to Midland Montagu, the cost of Labour party's policies is more likely to be £50 billion than £35 billion.

The third cause for complaint is rising unemployment. The Government's policies are starting to work. In the past three months, the rate of increase of unemployment has declined. However, we must not look forward to the past. Low interest rates and low inflation will preserve jobs and the Government's supply side measures—their freeing up of the labour market—are having a beneficial effect.

Let me give one example from my own constituency and the area surrounding it. The abolition of the dock labour scheme was bitterly opposed by the Labour party, and no one opposed it more strongly than the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, even though that indefensible and uneconomic scheme had resulted in my home city falling from third port in the country to 12th. That scheme was abolished only some 18 months ago. In the first year, the trade through the port increased by no less than 30 per cent. The container terminal that had been idle because of the manning levels demanded by the Transport and General Workers Union is now working. A major shipping line has come back to Hull and, this week, the Alexandra dock, which had been shut for nine years, has reopened. All that is the result of the supply side policies of the Government.

Training is the Labour party 's answer to unemployment and, to judge by Labour Members' speeches, its priority. We all accept the need for good and meaningful training, but in my view it cannot be the first priority. We are short of skilled people in many areas, but it is not possible to train people if they do not have a good basic education. In many areas of the country, education has been abysmal—and not for lack of resources. Since the

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Government have been in power, the teacher-pupil ratio has improved significantly and the amount spent per pupil in real terms—real money, not funny money—has increased considerably. Some of the local education authorities with the worst results—most of them, I have to say, Labour-controlled—are spending more per child on teachers and are getting more Government grant than other areas.

The decline in educational standards is due to the activities of so-called progressive left-wingers who dominate the educational establishment and the teacher training colleges. Many schools have stopped teaching reading by the phonetic method and have stopped teaching tables. Spelling is virtually non-existent among certain groups of school leavers. The general level of English in many areas has declined, and I understand that some university physics departments have to spend the first year training students in mathematics, which they should have learnt at school.

The "progressives" opposed and destroyed the grammar schools, streaming and structured education and were at the forefront in the abolition of the cane. Many even opposed the whole concept of examinations. They used their power over the curriculum to change the views of our country's history and to bring race politics into our school. Parents were regarded as a nuisance; their views were not considered. What the educational establishment said had to be accepted as gospel.

As a result of falling standards, the Government have taken action. That is why they introduced the national curriculum and testing. True to form, however, the educational establishment has undermined the Government's policy—a policy demanded by parents and employers—and has subverted the common curriculum. The educational establishment has been against tests—simple pen and pencil tests such as those which we did at school, in spelling, tables, arithmetic and reading. When I was at school, we had end-of-term examinations twice a year and it caused no problem to the administration.

I am delighted not only that the Government have now grasped the problem, but that we now have a Secretary of State who will force the policy through and remove those people from the educational establishment so that the country gets the education that it deserves. That will do more than anything else to solve our future economic problems and unemployment.

Although the Government have wavered—I have been one of those who have criticised them—I feel that they are on the right lines. Their fiscal policy is responsible. Inflation is falling and recovery is on the way. The Government's supply side policies are working and will encourage job and wealth creation. Above all, their education policies are relevant and necessary. Look at the Labour party's policies. They are the policies of yesterday and are irresponsible and imprudent. Labour's answer to every problem is to throw money at it—spend, spend, spend and tax, tax, tax. That old record and those policies of yesterday are no longer practical or relevant. The Labour party really is going for broke.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I remind the House that there is a 10-minute limit on speeches between now and 8.50 pm

7.7 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): As you have just reminded me, Madam Deputy Speaker, I will be caught by this damned 10-minute rule. I should like to spend half a minute of my precious time protesting about it—not because of its application in this case, because that is what has been agreed by the House, but because, having spent part of my parliamentary time on the Front Bench and a considerably longer period on the Back Benches, I think that it is great folly for Back-Bench Members to think that the 10-minute rule is good for them. It is not; it merely plays into the hands of those on the Front Benches, who have more time to speak—and no one can put a full case against a Government such as this in 10 minutes. On my calculations, Madam Deputy Speaker, that protest took only half a minute.

I should have liked another half minute—a bit longer—to pay full tribute to the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle) and to recall the many occasions on which we listened to his predecessor, who, for many years, was one of my closest friends. I joined the Labour party in Walton a good time before my hon. Friend was born, so I have a special feeling about it. I am sure that all of us listened with great interest and care to what he had to say and wish him a long, prosperous, successful life in the House.

I say that especially because, like me, my hon. Friend speaks for an area of the country that has been sadly afflicted by the policies of this Government over the past 10 years. Particularly amid all the euphoric and ridiculous accounts of what is happening that we have heard from the Government Front Bench, it is right that the country and the House should be reminded of the realities of the situation.

I refer first to the prophecy of 3 million unemployed—part, I suppose, of what the Chancellor would call the "price worth paying". Even if it does not come to 3 million—and I am sad to say that it looks as though it is likely to—the loss to the nation even in the 2·5 million figure, is appalling.

I was interested in the unemployment figure of 3 million. An unemployment figure of 11 or 12 per cent. has been referred to. In my area, in Liverpool and elsewhere in areas that are afflicted by this unemployment disease, we have endured that high rate of unemployment for some time. Indeed, on occasions, the unemployment figure has risen much higher than that.

Having listened to Conservative Members today, I do not think that they know what is happening. I am bitterly ashamed about what is happening in the main streets of my constituency in places like Tredegar, Abertillery and other places familiar to my colleagues. While the valley towns in Wales are suffering, the same can be said throughout the country. Shops are closing on a huge scale and that is partly due to the business rate.

A plague is sweeping the country. People are protesting about that plague and those protesters are not simply supporters of the Labour party. They include representatives of the shopkeepers around the country who are being forced out of business by a combination of events and by the scale of this recession. I believe that this

recession is as bad as that from 1979 to 1981. Indeed, in some places it is even worse. The Government's claim that there are signs of recovery is the greatest mistake that they have made.

There will be no recovery until there are much better long-term measures to deal with the problems and among those measures must be a reassertion of a proper regional policy. Places such as Liverpool and my constituency have, since 1979 and 1980, lost almost all their levers of assistance in regional policy. The Government told us that they would provide something better, but they took from us most of our advantages under the rate support grant and the various regional policies. As a result, the recession in our areas was deeper and that means that it will be even more difficult to get out of it. However, the Government have not listened to our protests, partly because they have few representatives from our areas.

We face heavy unemployment. One of the worst aspects of the rise in unemployment has been the way in which the Government have manipulated the figures. *The Guardian* suggested that one of the best proposals for the citizens charter would be to restore some respect to the Government's statistics. I suppose that the evil can be traced back to when the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) got his grubby fingers on the official unemployment statistics. Since then, we have had no faith in the unemployment figures. That complaint has come from Labour supporters and from many other quarters. Even the present prophesied unemployment figure of 3 million underestimates the real level of unemployment.

The Government's figures about poverty also give a false impression about what is happening. The figures quoted by the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) in her famous resignation speech—or whatever it was—when she attempted to show what had happened in the country, were completely misleading, as has been shown subsequently. The real figures of poverty, which show what we are suffering in south Wales, in Liverpool and in the other so-called backward areas, are much worse. That is another area in which there should be a proper restitution of confidence in the Government's figures.

If the Government contest what I am saying, there is a simple remedy: they could appoint a committee—they have appointed committees to do other things—to examine the unemployment and poverty figures, which are two essential requirements to understand what is happening in the different parts of the country that have been most badly afflicted.

The Government could invite Sir Claus Moser, a most eminent statistician who complained some years ago about the way in which the Government manipulated the figures, to examine what is happening. I am sure that we could drive his charges home when we consider what is happening with regard to poverty in the country today. The problems today are on a much bigger scale than for many years. Under the citizens charter, the Government should establish an independent inquiry into the way in which the unemployment and poverty figures have been misapplied and misused. That would help the future of this country and would enable us to understand better the real case that the Government must answer.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, in his famous statement, said that unemployment was a price well worth paying. I am not sure when he said that whether he knew that the unemployment figure was heading for 3 million. Is that figure a price well worth paying? Presumably it is. It appears that nothing matters other than his way of solving the problem. I believe that the country will choose a very different way to solve the terrible problem and legacy left by this Government.

7.16 pm

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) spoke passionately about unemployment. He was right to remind the House that, whatever the aggregate figures for unemployment, every individual case is distressing and trying. However, he did not refer to the fact that since 1979, when the Conservative Government came to office, 1 million more people are now in employment. There is still unemployment and it exists now in areas in the south, such as my constituency of Chichester, which hitherto have enjoyed relatively high employment. However, the aggregate total of employment has risen considerably under Conservative policies of free enterprise rather than under the socialist policy of subsidy.

We must also consider the international context and remember that we are not alone in this recession. It is happening elsewhere. We sometimes talk about the recession as a functiion of Government policies and domestic conservative attitudes. That is not so. Unemployment is higher in France, Spain, Italy, Ireland, Australia and Canada than it is here. We should consider these matters in relative terms.

I pay tribute to the Government and to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and his Treasury team for their decision almost a year ago to join the exchange rate mechanism. That decision, taken in the eye-teeth of political opposition from both sides of the House, was right—and I believe belated—and it has been vindicated by events.

Since we joined the ERM, interest rates have fallen 3·5 per cent. and the worst alarmist fears of those who said that interest rates would have to be kept higher or that our exchange rate would have to fall have not been realised. Those who said last November that we joined at the wrong rate and that we could not maintain our parity within the exchange rate mechanism were wrong. Just as they were wrong, and have been proved wrong, so the Government and the Treasury team were right to have made that decision then not only because of the reduction in interest rates since then but, in particular, because of the courage that they showed in the early months in not giving in to pressure to readjust downward the exchange rate within the mechanism or unduly to maintain interest rates too high.

It is very encouraging that the exchange rate is currently roughly DM2·95. It is right in the middle of the parity grid. I hope that the Bank of England and the Treasury are informally tracking the narrow band within the exchange rate mechanism rather than formally joining it at this point. If they are able informally to track the narrow band, it will give enormous confidence to the money markets. For example, when Italy moved from the wider band to the narrow band there was a major reduction in interest rates because it was seen as a sign of confidence that the currency could be maintained at that parity. Not only was there a reduction in interest rates but there was a massive

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inflow of funds into Italy—almost an embarrassing inflow of funds—which put upward pressure on the exchange value of its currency.

If we can informally for the time being—perhaps as a first stage in further steps towards economic and monetary union—stay within the narrow band while not formally admitting that we are doing that, but doing it in practice, there will be real dividends for British industry, the economy, and those whom we represent in this House.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Nelson: If my hon. Friend will permit me, I shall not give way, as I have only a couple more minutes left and I wish to make another important point.

The priority of my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Treasury of reducing inflation is absolutely right. It is essential not only in constituencies such as mine in the south, where many businesses that have sprung up over the past few years are finding times very tough, but in the industrial heartlands of our country. For far too many years there has been insufficient investment, not by Governments with taxpayers' funds but by industry and shareholders, in grass-roots business in this country.

That has happened because of a series of related events. Because Governments have pursued policies that have led to or resulted in high inflation, our level of interest rates has had to be extremely high. Because we have not been a member of the exchange rate mechanism, interest rates have had to be much higher than they would otherwise have been. The result is that, if one has money to invest, there is a much better rate of return on investment in a bond or a fixed-interest instrument than in an equity or risk instrument.

There is, however, a much more important consequence for companies with major liquid funds. It is much easier to invest in other companies, because they show a bigger rate of return, than it is to invest in new plant and equipment. If one invests incestuously by taking over a company—say, on a price/earnings ratio of about 10—the percentage rate of return or dividend from that investment is very much higher than anything that one could get from a normal plant investment because of the low rate of return on capital employed in this country. As a result, the only people who have really invested in new plant on a major scale have been the great international companies, particularly from Japan, whose companies are much more highly rated on their stock exchanges and have much higher rates of return on their capital employed.

A big test may come—I pray that it will not—if Lord Hanson announces a bid for ICI. There is a money mountain test. Are the great British plcs with a flood of money in their coffers, incestuously to invest their money in other British companies by takeovers, or are they to do what they should do for the future well-being of our economy, which is to invest in new plant and equipment for their existing industries? That test may come. If it does not come for ICI and Hanson, it will certainly come for other British companies. If we are to lay down the grassroots of a thriving industrial economy for the future—one which will sustain our expectations of public expenditure—it is absolutely essential that British companies as well as foreign companies have the financial incentive to invest at home. They will have that incentive only if we have a Government of prudence and responsibility, determined to restrain public expenditure and, above all, to limit the rate of inflation.

When electors have the choice, I hope that they will take into account the implications for their jobs, communities, companies and investments of the alternative policies, which offer, on the one hand, a steady movement towards lower interest rates and lower inflation and, on the other hand, the downright spendthrift policies of the Labour party which have not moved on in 10 years—uncosted policies which this Government, thankfully, have been responsible enough to try to cost and from which it is now clear that the cost to every taxpayer in the country would be massive. Nobody would escape the financial consequences of the Labour party pursuing even a modicum of the commitments that it has already set out.

Our interests and those of the country lie in backing the successful policies, which are bearing fruit, of reducing interest rates and inflation and thereby ensuring that we can once more try to build the base of an economy, rebuild our industries, built on sound financial returns on capital employed, built on international competitiveness and leading to real prosperity for our people, instead of the fear of money being squandered and overspent, as it has been year after year when we have had the misfortune of a Labour Government. I pray and hope that we shall never have one again.

7.25 pm

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): I wish to declare an interest. Conservative Members frequently quote the number of my hon. Friends who are sponsored by trade unions. In future, they will be able to add my name to the list, for I am to be sponsored by the pottery workers union, the Ceramic and Allied Trades Union. I am proud to be sponsored by the pottery workers because, like many trade unions, they speak to the employers, and the employers speak to them. They listen to each other and they work together to solve the problems of the pottery industry and to maintain its fine traditions.

They need to talk to each other, because the Government do not listen to the voice of industry. They do not hear the damning words of employers as the Government's economic policies drive us deeper and deeper into recession and bankruptcies increase. The Government listen only to the few crumbs of comfort fed to them by the Confederation of British Industry, and they keep repeating them like plucked parrots swinging on their precarious perches in the hope that they can convince themselves and the nation that they have their economic policies right. Some hope.

The Ceramic and Allied Trades Union has a 95 per cent. membership of the pottery industry. That is about 28,000 people. One third of them are on short time and that is a result of the Government's economic policies. Falling sales, just in the production of bathrooms and kitchenware, have meant a loss of 500 jobs in north Staffordshire alone, and there are increasing redundancies. That is a result of the Government's policies.

I shall use the time available to me tonight to highlight how the Government's economic policies have affected industry, in particular a significant sector within the construction industry—ceramic manufacture and supply.

That sector represents a major interest in Newcastle-under-Lyme and throughout north Staffordshire. I shall highlight also how the force of the Government's planned recession is threatening long-term prospects—indeed, the existence—of that long-established and very important industrial sector.

The latest Building Employers Confederation survey shows that the recession in the construction industry is now firmly entrenched. The survey's main findings confirm that the steep downtrend in output continues, that new business inquiries are low, and that there is little confidence about future work loads. The Government's policy of encouraging the industry to invest in technological change and better management, after the recession of the early 1980s, has resulted in a big increase in spare capacity with the resultant rise in production costs. Further expected cuts in the work force could lead to a loss of vital skills.

Nearly three quarters of firms in the employers' survey reported a fall in output. Large companies which deal with high-value, long-term contracts, continue to report shrinking work loads. The Building Employers Confederation has stated that 50,000 new houses are still unsold. Phillips and Drew also estimates that more than 110,000 properties are empty due to repossessions or to builders being unable to sell.

The repairs and maintenance sector appears to have been particularly hard hit. Falling company profits have affected industrial and commercial property repairs and maintenance, while rising unemployment and depressed real disposable personal incomes have reduced housing repair and maintenance work. All those factors have led to a downturn in production not only for sanitary ware, but for table ware which is so important to the economic life of north Staffordshire. Staffordshire pottery is renowned the world over for its quality. About half of what is produced is exported. The industry thus relies heavily on reasonable interest rates and sensible management of the economy, which is something that this Government have failed to provide.

Brick producers report stockpiles of 1·5 million bricks. Their work forces have lost 3,000 jobs since September 1989. Prospects for the construction industry depend on the prospect of growth for the whole economy—and there is no sign of that.

Unemployment in this country is rising faster than anywhere else in Europe. Because of the Government's policies, someone is losing a job every 10 seconds of every day. Business failures are at a record level. The total number of business failures in the first half of this year was 23,000 many of which occurred in the construction industry. Because of the Government's economic policies, one business is failing every three minutes of every working day.

The construction employers' survey shows that three fifths of firms expect to reduce their work forces in the current quarter. The hardship in the roofing industry presents a similar picture of redundancies and reduced production. Two roof tile production plants have been closed, yet stocks remain at least 20 per cent. too high. Employers in the seven member companies of the Clay Roofing Tile Council report losing 235 employees in the year to June 1991—that is 25 per cent. of the jobs and a personal tragedy for each employee and his or her family. Capacity is standing at 55 per cent. It is hard to imagine those companies being able to re-establish themselves or to reassemble an experienced work force.

The Government do not appear to be aware of the seriousness of the situation. This country has enough building materials to satisfy a whole year's requirements. We have a housing stock that it will take until 1993 to clear. Housing starts, both public and private, are at their lowest level since the late 1940s. It is not a problem that can be blamed on market forces; it is about confidence within the industry, favourable levels of interest rates and steady and consistent growth.

The Government advised industry to make investments to pull the economy round. Many industries did so, including those involved in building and construction, but fluctuating interest rates have placed a question mark over the wisdom of investing. If good returns cannot be guaranteed, who will be prepared to make further investment? We need a stable economy to encourage steady and consistent growth—not a growth or a demise brought about by extremes.

In the past, local authority house building has provided consistent work for many building firms. The Conservative Government's anti-local authority policies and their refusal to allow councils to replace sold-off housing stock with new housing is short-sighted. The massive problem of homelessness and the lack of homes for rental, as well as for the rehousing of those whose homes have been repossessed, could start to be solved if local authorities were allowed to use the money that they now hold from the sale of council houses to build new houses for rent. That would help not only those who are desperate for homes, but the building industry, too.

That is what an incoming Labour Government will do. We also believe that the real long-term solution is to improve the competitiveness of British industry as a whole; to improve economic growth with sustainable and reasonable interest rates, with a long-term energy policy so that fuel costs can be planned, with an integrated transport policy to allow delivery dates to be kept, and with a Department of Trade and Industry that is treated as an important and vital part of our future industrial planning. We in the Labour party know that Governments cannot solve all the problems of industry, but, at the very least, individual industries should be listened to.

It is important that the Government listen to the ceramic manufacturers, to the supply section of the construction industry and to their trade unions because they have much to say, as do all those who are involved in the construction industry. It is the Government's duty to listen and to ensure a future for all those who are employed in an industry which is of such crucial importance to our country's development in all senses of the word.

7.34 pm

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): It is abundantly clear to any hon. Member who spends much time in his or her constituency or elsewhere that there are severe problems out there in industry. That is shown in every possible way and is manifested not only through unemployment but in bankruptcies and in many other ways.

We have heard some strange assertions from Opposition Members. The hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) asked my right hon. Friend the

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Chancellor, "Did the recession end on 1 July?" or words to that effect. It is patently ludicrous to believe that one can identify the particular date on which a recession ends, any more than one could identify the particular date when it began.

Not very long ago, I spent a day on a small industrial estate in the small town of Soham in my constituency, visiting a number of businesses. The first told me that everything had been absolutely fine until that week, when it had suffered its first dramatic drop in orders. That was not very long ago and the firm had got through the winter and those difficult times. The second firm that I visited said that it was not much affected. The third firm said that it had been hit early in 1990, but that it had got over it and that things were already picking up again.

It is obvious that we cannot pretend to identify the exact time when a recession starts or ends. One reason for that is the lead time that is involved in all statistics. We must recognise that a statistic is already out of date when it is published. When the economy was overheating, that fact was clear from anecdotal evidence, but it did not show in the statistics until much later. When we went into the recession, that was clear out there, but it did not show through in the statistics until much later. Equally, the same will apply to the recovery. Only today the Building Societies Association has reported on the levels of lending in June. That report is already out of date; the June lending relates to purchasing decisions that were made by individuals in May or even in April, but, because of the time taken to complete the purchases, the first payments were made in June.

There are optimistic signs. The savings ratio is still climbing fast. That is long overdue and extremely welcome. It means that, when the expenditure does come, it will be based on and backed by savings, which is much better in the long-term interest. The housing market is showing signs of improvement, although it is slow and dependent on the part of the country. Nevertheless, it is definitely improving. Consumer confidence is also improving. The Gallup survey for Goldman Sachs shows that the consumer confidence index has risen consistently since its low point in the second quarter of last year. Housing finances were at a low point in the fourth quarter of last year, but the figures are now rising considerably. In the fourth quarter of last year, 42 per cent. of people believed that their own position would improve in the next 12 months. That proportion has now increased and half the population now believe that.

I have one or two positive suggestions for my right hon. and hon. Friends. Two are minor, but they would help. The first relates to very small businesses, which are obviously suffering. When one goes into receivership, many others follow in a domino effect. One contributory factor is that the receiver's fees take virtually every penny of the assets of the small business. That means that its creditors end up with nothing, despite the fact that its assets might have been sufficient to provide a repayment of 50p, 60p, 70p or 80p in the pound. I wonder whether we can find a way to reduce the burden of the receivership on a small business which has failed because, if we do not, it will take many more small businesses with it when it goes down.

My second point relates to the business rate. I do not want to go into all the complexities, but I believe that there is a system called the rental index which is a property market figure. If the rental index were applied to all business rateable values, current rents would be reflected, as would the current economic position. At a time of downturn, when rents drop, rates would also drop, although the national non-domestic rates system would remain.

My third and most significant suggestion, which has already been advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend), is to introduce tax reductions. That would be the quickest way in which to stimulate consumer activity.

I do not intend to give only my own views. Various reports have been quoted today, but I should like to draw attention to the 1991 manifesto of the British Institute of Management, which lists what it considers to be requirements for effective management of the economy: first,

"the control of inflation should be at the core of Government strategy";

secondly,

"Government policy should aim to encourage and reward enterprise in all sectors and at all income levels";

thirdly,

"the shift towards indirect taxation should continue."

Those targets are familiar to all Conservative Members, but they are less familiar to Opposition Members. The real threat to the economy's recovery comes, of course, from the rapidly receding threat of a Labour Government, and the risk of implementation of the policies that Labour promotes.

Let us examine the cost of renationalising the various bodies that we have privatised. Merely to take a controlling interest of 51 per cent. would cost £13·6 billion. If we add £5·5 billion for the ending of any privatisation proceeds that might have been budgeted for, we find that two thirds of the national health service budget in any one year would have to be spent on implementing what can only be described as doctrinaire policies. That is more than we spend on Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland put together. I wonder whether the Opposition Members who speak for Scotland so regularly understand the implications of that.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): Including the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith).

Mr. Paice: Indeed.

Even if no attempt was made to spend that money in one year—even if the expenditure were spread over four years of Labour government, although God forbid that it should last that long—it would still amount to more than £5 billion a year. That is more than twice the so-called gift to the wealthy conferred by the 1988 Budget, which cut the top rate of tax from 60 to 40 per cent. Labour says, however, that it will increase the top rate to no more than 50 per cent. The figures simply do not add up.

Perhaps the most evil of all Labour's policies is the proposed 9 per cent. surcharge on savings. What will that do for investment? What will it do for all those who are trying to save for the future? Clearly, Labour is still wedded to the belief that the only honest money is earned by blood, sweat and toil—that the man who risks his money for a return is not worth as much as the man who earns his living by sweating and expending energy. But

both are equally important to Britain's future. A distinction cannot be drawn between the man who earns his return by risking all that he has and the man who earns his by means of physical effort. Risk is as good as sweat.

The 9 per cent. surcharge is clear evidence that Labour still feels a basic antipathy to wealth and all its trappings. The envy and jealousy that were so obvious and commonplace in earlier decades are still there, just below the surface. They are there in Labour's policies, and if, God forbid, we were to have a Labour Government, they would be there in the practical application of those policies.

This Government's policies are right. No Government have never made a mistake, but when this Government make mistakes at least they learn from them and take the right action to put things right as soon as possible. That is what we have done in the past, and that is what we are still doing. Our action is working, and I continue to support it.

7.43 pm

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): After three quarters of uninterrupted decline in output, the shape of the current recession is now clear. It does not, however, correspond to that frequently portrayed by the press. It is not a service-driven recession, as is sometimes suggested. It is true that total service output has declined, which it did not do in the recession following 1979, but at the core of this recession is a massive decline in industrial output, Government spending, investment and exports. Any programme for recovery must therefore address those issues.

The first significant feature of the post-1990 recession is the sharpness of its onset. The initial decline in production has been more rapid than the decline following either 1979 or 1973, when the two previous most severe post-war recessions took place.

Let us start by assessing the level of gross domestic product for three quarters after each cycle peak. GDP declined by 0·6 per cent. following 1973, by 1·7 per cent. following 1979 and by 2·7 per cent. following 1990.

The decline of total consumer expenditure in the current recession is average in comparison with that seen in previous major post-war recessions. Indeed, in the third quarter of the recession—the first quarter of 1991—there was a recovery in consumer spending. The June retail figures suggest that that has continued into the second quarter of 1991.

During the three quarters since the onset of recession in the second quarter of 1990, consumer expenditure has fallen by 1·7 per cent. That is somewhat sharper than the fall that followed 1979, when consumer spending fell by 1·4 per cent. over three quarters, but not as severe as the fall that followed 1973, which was 2·3 per cent. over the first three quarters. The decline in consumer expenditure in the current recession is therefore significant; but recovery commenced early and the decline cannot be used to explain the particular severity of the onset of that recession.

The decisive feature of the onset of the 1979 recession was a massive and prolonged running down of stocks. After a rise in the first quarter of the general recession, stocks fell uninterruptedly for five quarters. By the third quarter of the 1979 recession, physical addition to stocks had fallen from plus £385 million to minus £711 million, a decline of £1·1 billion in 1985 prices.

The decline in stocks in the current recession is far less severe. A significant decline in stocks pre-dated the onset of the 1990 recession: the peak level of stock formation was achieved in the last quarter of 1988. Since the overall recession began, however, no significant further decline has taken place. The value of physical addition to stocks was minus £407 million in 1985 prices in the second quarter of 1990, and minus £579 million in 1985 prices in the first quarter of 1991. Destocking, therefore, is not a particular cause of the severity of the 1990 recession.

In addition to an average decline in consumer spending and a stock cycle that is much less severe than the one that followed 1979, less pressure in the current business cycle is being placed on domestic production by an increase in imports than in either 1973 or 1979. Between the second quarter of 1990 and the first quarter of 1991, imports fell by 4·5 per cent. That compares with a rise of 1·1 per cent. in the same period following the onset of the 1973 recession, and a 3·4 per cent. rise following the beginning of the 1979 recession. A major import surge is therefore not a cause of the decline in domestic production.

The first cause of the severity of the onset of the 1990 recession lies in the stagnation of Government spending, compared with the level in any previous post-war recession. Since the onset of the recession in the second quarter of 1990, local government expenditure has risen by 2 per cent. That has been more than offset, however, by a 3·9 per cent. fall in central Government spending. The result is a net 1·6 per cent. fall in total final Government expenditure since the onset of the recession.

That decline in final Government expenditure is unprecedented in post-war recessions. In both the 1973 and the 1979 recessions, Government expenditure rose by 1 per cent. during the first three quarters. By being the first post-war Prime Minister to cut Government spending during a recession, the current Prime Minister is actually being more Thatcherite than his predecessor. Cutting Government expenditure in a recession tends to worsen it significantly.

The second and most important cause of the rapid decline in GDP since the second quarter of 1990 is the collapse in fixed investment. The peak level of fixed investment in that business cycle was achieved in the first quarter of 1989, before the onset of the general recession.

There was, however, only a marginal decline, 2·8 per cent., before the second quarter of 1990 and the onset of the general recession. Since the second quarter of 1990, however, gross fixed capital formation has fallen by 8·5 per cent. That is an unprecedented collapse in fixed investment at the onset of a post-war recession. Fixed investment fell by only 0·2 per cent. in the three quarters following the second quarter of 1979 and by 3·1 per cent. following the third quarter of 1973. Therefore, we are experiencing by far the most rapid collapse in fixed investment at the beginning of a recession in British post-war history. The decline in fixed investment, more than anything else, explains the severity of the onset of the recession. The decline in fixed investment since the second quarter of 1990 accounts for 2 per cent. of GDP or three quarters of the total decline.

The final factor explaining the severity of the recession is the decline in exports, which is more severe than in previous recessions. During the 1973 recession, exports of goods and services rose by 6·7 per cent. in the three quarters following the onset of the recession, reflecting the need to raise exports to meet the increased price of oil

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imports. My right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) will remember the great efforts made to achieve that. In the first three months of the recession in 1979 exports of goods and services fell by only 1·2 per cent. In the first three quarters of 1990's recession, however, exports of goods and services have fallen by 2·7 per cent., showing the incapacity of the economy to make the shift to exports to compensate for stagnant domestic demand. Although recent evidence shows some recovery in visible exports, service exports continue to be in severe crisis, offsetting the improvement in visible trade.

The shape of the recession is clear. It is driven by an unprecedented decline in Government spending, above all by a collapse in fixed investment, and by a decline in exports. It is led by a decline in industrial output, not services. Therefore, any programme for recovery must address those points. A recovery from this recession requires a reversal of the decline of Government expenditure, a programme of increased public spending and a reversal of the decline in fixed investment. That will overlap with the expansion of Government expenditure, as much of the investment required is infrastructural in character and must be supplied by the state. Finally, there must be an end to maintaining an overvalued exchange rate within the exchange rate mechanism, which prevents the development of the export market.

Those methods, particularly the expansion of Government spending and a substantial rise in fixed investments, cannot be undertaken if there is a fear of expanding the public sector in the economy. On the contrary, counteracting the fall in state spending and overcoming the inability of the private sector to provide sufficient investment requires an expansion of the public sector.

Against any measure, the Government's methods are wrong on every count. The Government are worsening the recession. They defend an exchange rate which, by any calculation, is damaging to our export markets. I support my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) who called for a devaluation of the pound within the ERM. We need to make certain that the devaluation undervalues the pound so that afterwards the pound can only rise. That would allow us a major reduction in interest rates, perhaps as much as 3 per cent., allowing us a real boost in exports to get the export-led growth that we want. That is the way out of the recession, contrary to everything that the Government propose.

7.53 pm

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): That was the true voice of the Labour party. I fear that the analysis is fatally flawed, because it is based on erroneous information. According to the Red Book, public expenditure is higher this year than last year and will be higher in real terms next year. Equally, exports are forecast to rise by 2·5 per cent. this year and we now know——

Mr. Livingstone: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Smith: I have 10 minutes, as the hon. Gentleman did.

Exports of manufactured goods have risen by 18 per cent. over the past two years, which is an outstanding record.

I want to talk about inflation and the inflationary culture of the United Kingdom. We have lived with this problem for 10, 20 or 30 years. We can all think of examples of pay and prices when we started out. Some 25 years ago my pay was £350 a year. I was a little chap and the price of a pint was 1s. 10d. We can remember those nonsense figures which show the problems that we have. Earnings have increased tenfold in 20 years. We still have a strongly inflationary culture.

Chancellors of the Exchequer have referred to the problem in successive Budgets. One said:

"in the last twelve months, the danger of chronic cost inflation . . . has reappeared. There is reason to fear that the cost-inflationary process will speed up further. That, I feel, is our principal menace at present, and one which it is impossible to exaggerate. Whether or not this danger develops will depend not only on the policies of the Government, but also on decisions by leaders on both sides of industry with regard to wages, profit margins and prices."—[*Official Report*, 17 April 1961: Vol. 638 c. 798-9.]

That was Mr. Selwyn Lloyd. Before that we had had two years of price stability and the problem that he was addressing was 2 per cent. inflation. That demonstrates just how out of hand the problem has become since.

Fourteen or 15 years on from that Budget, successive Governments tried to deal with inflation by a series of incomes policies. None succeeded—not surprisingly, as they all tackled the symptoms, not the causes. In 1976, the Red Book, commenting on prices, stated:

"by June the increase over the previous 12 months had risen to 26 per cent. At the same time average earnings were around 28 per cent. up on the previous year."

That was under a Labour Government 15 years ago. Their response was yet another incomes policy in which everybody was given £6 a week, regardless of what their pay was. That was backed up by the Remuneration, Charges and Grants Act 1975. Needless to say, that policy, too, failed completely.

It is not surprising that the following year the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) talked in his Budget about the problems of pay rises, devaluation and more pay rises. Every time we devalued we threw away the opportunity to be competitive, so the suggestion of the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) that we should devalue again is a wholly failed solution to our problems and should not be considered.

After that, more emphasis was placed on monetary policy, first, by the right hon. Member for Leeds, East, who introduced monetary targets in 1976 at the instigation of the IMF and then, with more enthusiasm, by the Conservative Government in 1979. In some ways, that policy, too, has come to the end of its useful life, perhaps because in the late 1980s there was so much financial deregulation that the targets were no longer meaningful. The Treasury has, rightly, abandoned having a target for M3 and today we have a target only for M0.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) said, last October's decision to join the ERM was undoubtedly an historic one. It is right that we should now adopt what might be described as an external discipline to ensure, first, that we get inflation down and, secondly, that having got it down we keep it down.

On 14 July in *The Sunday Telegraph*, Gavyn Davies pointed to the success of the Government's policy over the past 10 months. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor said, who would have forecast 10 months ago that inflation would halve and interest rates would come down four points while, at the same time, sterling remained

steady within the ERM during that period? That is the scale of the achievement. It is a great achievement that inflation should be down, interest rates should be down and at the same time our trade performance has improved. Exports increased during that period even though the ERM's critics said that we had gone in at too high a rate. Above all, people in industry want stability, because a stable exchange rate enables business to determine the prices at which it has to sell, and life is made a good deal easier. Such a stable exchange rate applies throughout the largest market that is available to us—the European Community free trade area.

As soon as it makes sense, we should move to the narrow bands of the ERM, because there are gains to be had from the Government's economic policies. A strong monetary policy and membership of the ERM are buttressed by a tough fiscal policy. As we approach another spending round, I shall be preaching to the converted when I say to the Chief Secretary that it is essential to maintain firm control of public spending in 1992-93. That is the Chief Secretary's job, but he must pursuade his colleagues in spending Departments to continue with the policy that has proved so successful over the past 12 years.

In that context I was glad to hear about the announcement by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry of an agreement between Sir Bryan Carsberg, the director of Oftel, and British Telecom on licence modifications. Those modifications were necessary because of an obstacle to the privatisation of the remainder of BT shares. That has been sorted out to the advantage of BT's competitor, a small telecommunications company, which will now have free access to the BT systems.

We should compare that achievement with Labour's promises, in so far as we can discern them. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) has never called for a tighter monetary policy. Even in 1987-88 when the Government reduced interest rates in response to black Monday, a move which we can now see was wrong, the right hon. and learned Gentleman wanted them cut even more.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): The hon. Gentleman supported that.

Mr. Smith: I supported him, but I got it wrong. I am sure that the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) also supported the right hon. and learned Gentleman.

After black Monday, most people thought that such a crash in the financial markets was bound to have some consequences for the real economy. We now know that the real economy was in the middle of a boom, and that the decision to cut interest rates was wrong. Whatever the interest rate, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East always wants to cut it. His policy would undermine the pound in the ERM and if we had the misfortune of a Labour Government the ERM policy would quickly collapse. There would be cuts in interest rates, a run on sterling and formal devaluation, and the whole policy would be rapidly discredited.

Labour promises increased public spending in almost every area. Although Labour's Treasury team tries to keep the lid on that and argues that the only commitments are to pensions and child benefit, we know that that is not true. The Opposition have said in this debate that they want more investment in education and training. Where will that money come from? There is already a growing public sector borrowing requirement and the Government are committed to higher public spending. A Labour Government would have to do without the proceeds of privatisation. Labour's policy would be a disaster, and that is why I support the Chancellor's economic policy.

8.3 pm

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): The effrontery of Conservative Members, and especially of the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith), is unbelievable. The Government's economic policy is in tatters. Conservative Members may smile, but unemployment is rising faster in this country than in any other country in Europe. It increased by about 70,000 last month. Even using the Chancellor's own figures, investment will fall by 10 per cent. on last year. Output is also falling. Where is this great success story that we keep hearing about? The Government are adept at passing the buck from one person to another, as we saw over the BCCI failure.

Mr. Tim Smith: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman could tell us about manufacturing industry.

Mr. Hoyle: The hon. Member for Beaconsfield is an expert on the City, but he is certainly not an expert on manufacturing industry. I suspect that he has never been in a factory, so I shall concentrate on a matter that he knows a little about, the collapse of BCCI.

The Governor of the Bank of England will be the fall guy, but responsibility rests with the Government and especially with the Prime Minister, who in January 1990 was Chancellor of the Exchequer. At that time, it was drawn to his attention that two executives had been laundering in Florida money that had come from drugs. On that occasion and on two others, the then Chancellor's attention was drawn to such matters and one would have thought that he would take a greater interest in what was happening in the bank. But none was taken until the crash. Many small investors have been ruined because of lack of action by two Chancellors of the Exchequer, one of whom is now the Prime Minister. They should be condemned for that.

Mr. Haynes: The hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) is a City adviser.

Mr. Hoyle: That is right and, of course, he is not alone in that: the Prime Minister used to be a financial adviser, as was the Chancellor. We have a Government of the City, for the City, but they are certainly not for the people of this country.

The hon. Member for Beaconsfield invited me to turn my attention to manufacturing industry. Why have the Government been so silent about the Hanson bid for ICI? ICI employs 56,000 people, 50 per cent. of its output is exported and it spends 4·5 per cent. of its output on research and development. It could be taken over by a company that spends a total of £34 million, which is 0·5 per cent. of its total output, on research and development. It has taken over other companies and stopped their research and development and, in the case of Ever Ready Batteries, it sold off marketing.

Hanson threatens the most successful manufacturing company in this country, but what do the Government say about that? They say nothing. Compared with the

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Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the Prime Minister has charisma, so it is hardly surprising that we hear nothing about that takeover bid. No other European country would stand by and see its most successful manufacturing company threatened in that way.

A few days ago, the Chancellor praised the motor industry and spoke about its export achievements. However, that industry now faces a downturn in every part of Europe except Germany. The downturn in Spain and France is about 16 per cent., which is beaten only by the downturn in this country because the home market has collapsed by 25 per cent. The sales in the motor industry in June were the lowest since 1970. Where is the success story in that? The motor industry is being crippled by the Chancellor's actions. The fact that the Government have introduced a car sales tax of 10 per cent. and increased VAT has depressed the home market, and more people will lose their jobs unless some action is taken.

The sooner we have an election the better, because the Government are inept, indolent and incompetent. As long as they remain in power, far from the economy recovering, it will grow worse. I not only echo what my constituents in Warrington say but speak for the whole country. The hon. Member for Beaconsfield seems to be amused when we talk about people being unemployed and output falling. Unfortunately for him, that is happening not only in the north and the midlands but in the south of the country. When the time comes, many Conservatives will deservedly lose their seats. Therefore, the sooner we have a change in Government, the better it will be for the country and for industry generally.

8.11 pm

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): We have just heard a classically depressing speech from the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle). The problem throughout the debate has been that Opposition Members have concentrated on the problems of the economy without proposing any solutions, so they have been negative in their approach.

One would not credit the opening speech of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), who was not prepared to go into detail about the heavy burdens that a Labour Government would put on British industry. He gave no details of the problems that they would cause to the exchange rate, because the Labour party will not accept the proper discipline of the exchange rate mechanism. Nor did he mention the problems that a Labour Government would cause in terms of public expenditure because of the £35 billion-worth of pledges that the Labour party has made. If Opposition Members dispute that figure, I should be grateful if they would provide proper costings of their proposals.

A Labour Government would create problems for British industry through their complete and unquestioning acceptance of anything that comes out of the European Community's social action programme. They would create problems for the economy because they are prepared to spend taxpayers' money on renationalising industries without thinking about the cost to the current public expenditure budget and the problems that such a policy would create for the companies that would be brought back into the Government net because of the restraints on capital expenditure of the external financing limit. I wish that they would deal with that matter and come clean on it. Constituents throughout the country would be extremely worried if utilities that are now in the private sector and benefiting from access to the private market suddenly found that they were subject to the Chief Secretary and the external financing limit.

A Labour Government would grind British industry down, destroy the prospect of an economic recovery and, through the operation of a minimum wage policy to which the Labour party is so beholden, worsen the social and employment prospects of those most exposed—semi-skilled or unskilled young people and people in the older age range who are seeking jobs. The Opposition have proposed no solutions. Indeed, all their proposals are likely to make the economy worse. I hope that the British public realises exactly what is being offered in the false prospectus of the Labour party so that, in the coming months, we can make it absolutely clear that the Government's sound, sensible policies are the only proper way forward for this country.

It was typical of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East that nowhere in his speech did he note the full implications of the worldwide pattern of recovery for this country. There have been some significant and positive statements as a result of the G7 talks. They have shown that the economies of the leading industrial countries of the world are recovering, which will undoubtedly help the recovery in this country. The credit crunch that was widely feared in the USA has not been as severe as first expected. Furthermore, in several nations, both within the Community and, for example, Japan, there has now been a fall in interest rates, which will benefit this country, too.

Domestically, an important factor is at work. It will take time, but it is, nevertheless, important. It is the use of the automatic stabilisers. By allowing them to take effect, the Government have eased conditions and created the prospect of economic growth. As my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) has just said, that effect will be assisted in terms of the public expenditure round by the impact of BT's settlement with the regulators. That is a signal triumph for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, because he backed the regulators, which means that the customer will benefit. At the same time, however, it clears the way for further BT privatisation, the net proceeds of which will be useful for reducing the public sector borrowing requirement for this year.

Other factors should also encourage us. Low stocks in industry will mean that any pick-up should work straight through to production. The figures that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor gave in his opening speech on monetary supply now appear, in terms of M0, to be moving up to above the middle of the range that has been set by the Treasury. I believe that the latest figure is 3·25 per cent., which shows that monetary policy is beginning to create the circumstances in which growth could resume during the second half of the year. Other factors, such as the fall of the pound against the dollar and the modest pick-up in retail sales prices, will undoubtedly assist.

The moral is that the Government are right to have kept calm and been consistent in following through the policy set by membership of the exchange rate mechanism. I have raised that question many times before in the House and am a fervent advocate of the discipline set by the ERM. I can only give the Government credit for their

consistent policy of waiting for the right moment to reduce interest rates, doing it gradually, giving industry the confidence that the direction and trend of interest rates is downwards, but not giving in to the siren voices of Opposition Members, who wanted to rush to a fall in interest rates. That would have led to a dramatic rise in interest rates in the latter part of this year, when an international lack of confidence in the Government and sterling would have resulted. The Government, therefore, have pursued not only the right policy but one that is more likely to lead to a greater fall in interest rates for any fall in the rate of inflation, as international confidence in the pound continues.

Naturally, I am aware that businesses are experiencing difficulties, but the way to help them is, first, to reduce inflation and, with it, interest rates on a much more stable and permanent basis. Secondly, we should not try to reflate the economy in a panic. Rather, we should take targeted measures that would assist businesses to respond better to the signs of economic recovery that is now occurring.

We should not underestimate the measures in the Finance Bill, which were foreshadowed in the Budget. They include specific assistance to industry such as the reduction in corporation tax, an easier payments system, easier methods of VAT collection and less harassment by the Inland Revenue. All those measures will assist businesses. Once their confidence returns, they will begin to realise that the benefits that the Government have introduced in the Finance Bill will have a dramatic impact.

In that sense, although hon. Members may find it depressing talking to business men who as yet see no evidence of the upturn, there is no doubt that if, as I have tried to show, the framework of that recovery is already upon us, we will quickly find that industrial confidence will turn round. By the time the House reconvenes in the autumn, we may see a more upbeat response from British industry and, therefore, much more positive support for the Government's overall philosophy.

Even those who are concerned about the current situation of the British economy should not ignore the dramatic impact of the reforms that the Conservative Government have introduced successfully of the economy since 1979 for investors outside Britain. The flow of investment into Britain from OECD members who are outside the EC has been quite dramatic. In response to an oral question of mine on 27 June, my right hon. and learned Friend the Chief Secretary said:

"Between 1984 and 1988 the United Kingdom received about one third of all inward direct investment to the EC . . . Inward investment in 1988 was £10 billion. In 1990 it was £19 billion."—[*Official Report*, 27 June 1991; Vol. 193, c. 1131.]

Much of that has gone to the regions, and in that sense it has helped jobs that would otherwise not have existed.

Inward investment depends on the continuation of the Government's policies. It depends on policies which are ultimately in the long-term interests of British industry and on our maintaining a positive role within the economic and monetary union in negotiations that are now taking place. The Government are right to be cautious in their actions. When the House reconvenes in the autumn we will see a much more positive economic picture.

8.21 pm

Mr. Ted Leadbitter (Hartlepool): The hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) said that it was important to reduce inflation in order to help industry. My retort to that is simple: the Conservative party should have stopped inflation rising.

The temptation today has been to give historical tutorials, going back even to primitive man if that were allowed, in order to escape the responsibility for what has happened in recent times. In an intervention I asked the hon. Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) whether the Government were prepared to accept responsibility for anything. I asked him if he would rebut his friends in the other place who, in a majority, in a report from the Select Committee on Science and Technology in May this year, made it abundantly clear and in precise terms that if the Government carried on in the way that they were Britain would have no home-owned manufacturing base. The report also said that the Government had no policy for industry and no industrial policy in the national interest. That was the considered view of a Committee that sat for a considerable time listening to witnesses from industry, the CBI and so on.

Yet the Government have no sense of shame whatever. We have not seen that since 1979. We have had the Westland scandal and all sorts of other scandals, but one never sees members of the Government blushing at any time. They have no sense of embarrassment. Yet the Government's amendment to the Opposition motion says that the House

"congratulates Her Majesty's Government on its pursuit of sound economic policies".

I can only assume that they have not caught them yet.

It is fascinating that when the Opposition seek to depict in the House of Commons the present situation it is difficult to get hon. Members, certainly on the Government Benches, to apply their minds to it. They try to tell us that we would not be successful in dealing with Britain's industrial problems. What neck—as a famous Prime Minister once said in the House of Commons—when there were 23,000 bankruptcies in the first half of this year. By my reckoning, 23,000 is an awful lot.

Moreover, most proprietary companies, certainly most small companies, and a substantial number of large companies—the latter with a capacity to outlast a recession over a three or four-year cycle but nevertheless finding their profit margins falling—are frightened of the bank manager telling them that their cash flow or their cash supply is in difficulty and that the bank will have to foreclose on them. There are a number of employers in those categories who cannot make any planning projections, let alone forward investment or projections of any kind in such circumstances.

Therefore, we must ask why the Government have the audacity to table such an amendment when we know, in the words of another Prime Minister, that they are frit. If the economy is in as good a state as the amendment suggests, if it is meant to be taken at its face value, I should have thought that the Government would be anxious to go to the country. I should have thought that in June, which is just behind us, we would have had an election.

If the policies that the Government are now proclaiming were successful, the Conservative party would not be frightened of the electors' vote. No one is ever frightened of the electors' vote if the economy is right and

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the social structure is healthy, with the education and health services working to the benefit of people rather than in pursuit of profits. It is interesting that the Government's citizens charter talks about reducing waiting lists to two years. What a fantastic admission to make. It is like a confessional.

The Government's failure to go to the country in June is a signal that they are scared stiff of how the electorate will vote. How can the Government and Conservative Back Benchers think that they have any credibility in the country when they can get rid of a Prime Minister with 204 votes and get another one with 185? How on earth dare they go to the electorate?

I shall be retiring at the next general election. After some 28 years here, I think that I have heard it all before. This is a wonderful place, but I have found something strange: it is much easier to pursue a lie in the House of Commons than to expose the truth. It is fantastic that Members of Parliament are not good at admitting the truth. There are some fundamental reasons for that, but it is an interesting facet for older Members to deploy when we seek to wheedle out what the Government are up to.

The ramshackle training systems are principally meant to box up the figures—figures that have been tampered with 30 times—and real unemployment is nearer 4 million than 3 million. Some people are earning incomes that are so low that I wonder how they manage. A lady came to my surgery who was looking after her mother. Her slice of the total household income was £23. That was all that she was allowed to possess—not the price of a decent pair of shoes.

I listen to Members of Parliament prattling on about their incomes and to certain people in industry who are so blatantly greedy and grasping that even in the recession they cannot keep their hands out of the utility till. Chairmen of industries have received 100 per cent. salary increases—greedy, grasping, indecent people—and we expect the voters to support a Government who pretend that they did not know that that would happen. Yet Conservative Members play the merry devil about workers getting salary increases a point above inflation.

I could have spoken for a long time, but time is against me.

8.30 pm

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter). I am sorry I shall not be able to look forward to that pleasure after the next election. I shall attempt to follow his precept and to throw a little light on the truth.

There is an issue that has been of growing concern to Conservative Members, industry and the country in the past few months. It should also be of growing concern to Labour Members. As a result of today's debate, it has taken on a new dimension of seriousness. I speak of the statutory minimum wage. It was clear from the performance of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) that the Labour party is wedded to a policy the consequences of which it has not begun to understand.

That was brought home graphically by the fact that, in introducing his remarks on the subject, the right hon. and learned Gentleman made two fundamental mistakes. One was a mistake of fact and the other a mistake of understanding. The mistake of fact was to say that all other members of the European Community have a statutory minimum wage. That is not true. Germany does not have a statutory minimum wage. That is an elementary but important mistake of fact. It is of more concern that the leadership of the Labour party has embarked on the policy without having carried out elementary research on the position in other members of the Community, with which we must compete.

The second mistake, which could have been a slip of the tongue were it not for the fact that the right hon. and learned Gentleman drew specific conclusions from it, was to quote from an OECD report about France, which has a minimum statutory wage. I think that I quote correctly, and verbatim, the words of the right hon. and learned Gentleman, who said that the statutory minimum wage's impact on the elasticity of demand for labour in France was zero. I am afraid that that rather showed that the right hon. and learned Gentleman had not understood the purport of the words, or that he was unaware of the meaning of the concept of elasticity. Elasticity is a measure of the rate of change of demand for a commodity in response to any change in price. It is a measure of the slope of the demand curve, not a measure of volume.

It is a dangerous illusion to suppose that the price of any commodity, including labour and wages, can be increased without, ipso facto, reducing demand for it. The idea that one can have one's cake and eat it is wrong. If a statutory minimum price were introduced for motor cars, as sure as night follows day the demand for motor cars would be reduced. We can argue about the extent to which that demand would be reduced, but let there be no illusion; demand would be reduced.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East is either naive or did not do enough home work. I am sorry that a Labour Front-Bench spokesman should try to pretend that a statutory minimum wage could be introduced without increasing unemployment and reducing the demand for labour.

The second point that I hope that the Labour party, even at the 11th hour, will address—it is obvious that it has not thought it through—is that a statutory minimum wage will reduce the demand for labour and remove the employment of those whose wages are less than the statutory minimum wage. In addition, as the trade unions, who are so well represented by Labour Members, insist on pay differentials, demand for higher wages will be created throughout the economy. That will lead to higher inflation, higher unemployment or a mixture of the two. Unless the Labour party wishes to wed itself to a policy that will cause higher inflation and higher unemployment, it should think carefully and seriously about the crazy idea of a statutory minimum wage before taking it any further.

That is not the end of the story. There is a third point that I hope that Labour Members will consider. The inept policy of a statutory minimum wage will reduce employment and output—the output of people who will no longer be employed in the economy—but will it help those at the bottom of the wage and salary scale, whom it was presumably designed to assist? The answer is that it will not. Even if employers are induced to increase the lowest wages, pari passu family credit and housing benefit will be reduced for those people. Considerable economic and human costs will be incurred, which will not benefit those whom the policy was intended to advantage.

If that is not a crazy policy, I do not know what is. The Labour party has not begun to think through the consequences of the statutory minimum wage, to which it appears to be wedded. So much the better for us if it fights the next election with a manifesto that is so fundamentally flawed that it contains such nonsense, but it will not be to the advantage of the country if, by any mishap, it were to come to power. I therefore beg it, at the 11th hour, to rethink that crazy policy, which can only bring even greater discredit on it than its other economic policies.

8.39 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): Conservative Members, including the hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies), have said that the Labour party has no solution to this country's economic problems. The Conservative party, which has been in office for 12 years, has the gall to say that it has the solutions to the economic mess. Everyone agrees that the country is in a deep recession, but Conservative Members have failed to say who has been responsible for it. It cannot be the Opposition—it must be the Government. If the Government have failed to come up with the answer in 12 years, I cannot believe that the British public will put confidence in them and re-elect them.

It is no good attempting to pull the wool over the public's eyes by saying that there are improvements around the corner and that things would be much worse under another Government. I am not an economist and I cannot come up with some magic answers, but the problem must be solved. The Government attempted to solve it by just one means—high interest rates. Even primary school children understand that inflation must be controlled and know what will happen to the economy if it is not, but what matters is how it is controlled.

The Chancellor may have been flippant when he said that unemployment created by high interest rates was a price worth paying. That is his judgment. I want to highlight what high unemployment means. Many hon. Members representing constituencies in the south-east of the country have no experience of what it means, although some are beginning to know. Some hon. Members who until recently have shown little interest are beginning to panic.

I remember the posters during the 1979 election showing dole queues, with the words "Labour isn't working". Unemployment then was slightly more than half what it is today. Does that show 12 years of Government success in dealing with unemployment? It certainly does not. The problem will not be solved by one side of the House saying, "We saw those details in the Red Book last year," or talking about what someone else said last week. After 12 years, the Government are not equipped to solve the problem.

I know what unemployment means. Since 1984, constituencies such as mine have experienced a rapid rise in unemployment because of the rundown in the coal industry. No efforts have been made by the Government or anyone else to find alternative employment for those workers. There is a threat that the few remaining pits will be wiped out. Youngsters cannot find employment and are desperate for work, which means that idle hands make mischief. The crime rate, most of it petty crime, is rapidly increasing in my area and mostly unemployed youngsters are involved. I do not condone that. The West Yorkshire police force is more than 200 policemen and civilian staff short of establishment levels. The crime rate, which was at record levels last year, is increasing. Those are the results of unemployment and of central Government control of local government finance.

Many long-established small businesses are rapidly going to the wall. Recently, a gentleman and his wife came to see me at my surgery. They told me about a small, 60 or 70-year-old business which once employed 14 men now employing only three and that they did not expect that it would continue. A few months ago, I wanted a small drive at my home tarmacked, so I rang a small firm that had been established for may years and was surprised when I was told that the men would be there in the morning. Nine men turned up to do a job that did not cost more than £1,000. The contractor told me that if they had not done that job the men would have been laid off within two or three days. Needless to say, they have since been laid off.

All that is happening because of the policy of controlling inflation through unemployment. It is all very well saying that there is sunshine around the corner and that many businesses will pick up when the upturn comes, but that is not much consolation to firms that have gone out of business because of the Government's policy.

A week last Monday, I went to meet the Princess Royal who was opening extensions at Pontefract racecourse. I spoke to two or three people whom I always knew to be strong Conservatives and they told me about their worries. One man who ran a reasonably sized business was worried about the increase in VAT. He said that last year in his firm, the "tax collectors" had taken £17·5 million in VAT for the Government. He said, sadly, that the Conservatives will lose the next election and that they deserve to do so.

Another man, from the brewing industry, told me that he would never vote Conservative again because his business had been wrecked——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has had his 10 minutes. I am sorry to have to ask him to resume his seat.

8.49 pm

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): There are moments when one recognises that we have a severe recession. It would be wrong to pretend otherwise. My background is that of a small retailer. We retailers are aware that we have borne the brunt of this recession, which has eaten into domestic demand in a way that I have never seen before.

It seems to me that the management of the economy comes down in the end to judgment—judgment at critical moments about the management of supply and demand and of the money supply. I regret some things from the past 10 years. When I was first elected, the idea of a floating exchange rate was central to our policies. I still hold that that is the best way to manage an economy, but I have seen the judgment change in my party, and I know that those who exercise that judgment will hold themselves accountable for its consequences.

In the past four years or so, at certain critical moments, such as black Monday, the Government's responses were the responses that I too would have made. Some of them may have been wrong, but I supported them. After black Monday, I thought it appropriate to be more generous with the money supply. The intention behind that liberality was clearly good. The Government decided that

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they wanted to maintain industry and output and support the economy. On balance, perhaps the Government were too lax.

I listened carefully to the shadow spokesman on the economy, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), and I noticed that in his judgment we should have been even laxer. Perhaps we are too rigorous in my party. A great friend and colleague of mine, my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen), often berates the Government for the way in which they approach these matters, but I am sure that he would have berated the management of the economy by the Opposition, had they been in power, even more. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East, as I say, thought it right to be even more lax. But every consequence since black Monday would have been even worse if the right hon. and learned Gentleman had been in the driving seat.

However much I may believe that the rate of our entry to the ERM was wrong, and however wrong in principle it may have been, I cannot agree with the argument of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East that interest rates should be depressed faster. As a retailer, I would give a cheer for that, but the intellectual argument flounders because interest rates are now a reflection of membership of the ERM. Lowering interest rates affects the external value of the currency. Since that is now the guiding principle of the Government's economic management, we cannot lower interest rates at the same time as maintaining the central rate of sterling against the deutschmark. That is what worries me. Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman saying, covertly, that he would devalue? Is that Opposition policy? I do not understand how one can reconcile lowering interest rates more quickly while maintaining sterling in the central band of the ERM.

From the earliest days of our membership of the ERM the Government have straightforwardly made their position plain, but I have not heard an exposition by the Opposition of the consequences of membership and of the disciplines implicit in it. I have to ask myself in a reasonable way whether I would veer towards the Opposition or towards the Government in matters affecting the administration of economic policy. Unusually for me, perhaps, I believe that the Government have set out their arguments the more clearly and to the advantage of the broad management of the economy.

This has been a dire recession, in which the consequences have moved outwards from the south-east right through the economy. We sometimes lose sight of the fact that the Opposition do not believe in economic cycles in industrial societies, but nothing has ever convinced me against the idea of a cyclical approach to life. A farmer recognises that crops are poor in bad weather and plentiful in good times. Similarly, economies go through good and bad times. We are at the bottom of a deep recession, but there are clear signs of improvement. Interest rates are declining in Japan and the United States, thereby removing one of the threats to our interest rate management. As world interest rates come down, so do ours.

If I could change Government policy, I would take Britain out of the ERM because I do not believe in a fixed exchange rate on which all else is predicated to the extent that we narrow our economic endeavours to merely supporting the exchange rate. That is quite wrong, but it is the central intent of the Government. I also, however, recognise the consequences that flow from the Government's judgment and from lower interest rates. Interest rates are central to the economy at this stage of the management of the cycle.

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): Does my hon. Friend agree that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) misrepresented what happened in the 1980s? He mischaracterised the decade as two recessions linked by a false boom. That so-called false boom was actually eight years of record-breaking growth, which represented a unique upturn in the economic cycle. Anyone with a pride in this country should take pleasure in that—unlike the right hon. and learned Gentleman and the Labour party.

Mr. Shepherd: With the greatest respect, great progress was made during the 1980s, but there were also mistakes. Increasing the money supply had dire consequences. There are certain internal faults in our economy. There is the belief, often commented upon by Germans, Americans and others, that there is a get-rich-quick view in British business; the belief that one does not invest for the long term. That has been confronted by the Opposition in the past. There is the membership of Lloyd's, where it is thought that money flies to people, and there is the aggrandisement of wealth by British companies and industry, without the long building-up process.

Unfortunately, the flood of money into the economy and the fact that we were too lax had consequences. We saw the rise in property prices. I have always believed that one of the basic indicators of any economy is the way in which house prices rise. They flew out of the window. Anyone who bought a house in London at the end of the 1970s—that includes myself—for about £50,000 saw its value multiply 10 times. That is not real money, and we know it: it is a reflection of the increased money supply. That is why I judged harshly the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East when he was urging yet further increases in the money supply.

We are suffering the consequences of an over-generous response. That is why I do not think that there has been one upward curve over the past 10 years. I have seen the anxieties and difficulties that follow when the balance of the argument is wrong.

Mr. Whitney: That is the point that I was making. My hon. Friend and the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) should not disregard the eight years of record growth. I am sure that my hon. Friend does not disregard it, since it was outstanding. There were mistakes and, quite uniquely in the political history of the country, the Government recognised that mistaken assessments were made in terms of releasing the money supply. However, the Labour party at the time did not say that the Government were reducing interest rates too far or too quickly; it said, as it always does, that interest rates should be 1 per cent. lower than the current level. That is the standard view of the Labour party.

Mr. Shepherd: The cheer of politics is that we hold Governments accountable and, as parliamentarians, we try to demonstrate why Governments may be wrong.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Witney) to the extent that the 1980s saw great structural changes, some of which were beneficial. The underlying improvements that have been beneficial and will be beneficial should the Opposition form a Government seem to be common cause among the two Front Benches. We are concentrating our efforts on the supply side, and there are reforms in place for training and education. We all accept that there is a great deal of work still to do, and the Government are leading the way. We recognise that there have been advances and some setbacks. The attitude of many of our producers is now much firmer and more competitive. That can be seen in the improvement in our export trade, which we hope will be sustainable. That was an interesting feature of this week's figures.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East believes in the lowering of interest rates in the face of the ERM mechanism. I cannot understand that unless he is calling covertly for devaluation.

9.1 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): This is the last full-scale economic debate before the summer recess and, for all we know, it may be the last before the general election. It gives us a chance to glance back over the 12 long years of the Government's term in office. When they came to power, they inherited inflation at the European average. Today, it is above the European average. They inherited a balance of payments that had dipped marginally into deficit—about £500 million—although manufacturing trade still had a surplus of almost £3 billion. Today, in the depths of recession, the deficit is still registered in billions. The Government inherited the fruits of investment under a Labour Government which resulted in substantial revenues from North sea oil. They inherited unemployment at just over 1 million and it was still falling.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) mentioned, one of the most effective slogans of the election campaign that brought the Conservatives to power was the Saatchi and Saatchi-inspired, "Labour isn't working". That slogan placed the responsibility for the levels of unemployment directly at the door of the then Government. Today, with about one vacancy for every 20 unemployed, unemployment is double the level this Government inherited and rising fast. Most commentators predict that it will touch 3 million and some predict that it will go even higher. Whose responsibility is it now? To listen to Ministers, one would almost think that it was the responsibility of the next Labour Government.

The one skill that the Government have honed to a fine degree in their 12 full years is that of passing the buck, in the same way as children pass the parcel. And what a buck it is. The inheritance of the next Government will be an economy which, at best, is just emerging from recession. It is the second recession of the Government's 12 years in power and it is shaping up to be as bad and as deep as, and even more long-lasting than, their first.

Recovery must come at some stage, but the House will know that the Association of British Chambers of Commerce—much quoted in this debate—predicted this week that there would be no recovery until next year and that the manufacturing industry—the source of our tradeable wealth—will not be in recovery until that summer. Many hon. Members will have seen the forecast by Phillips and Drew entitled "An L of a Recession", which states that the signs are that the economy has hit bottom, but that it has every intention of staying there.

The Association of British Chambers of Commerce also said:

> "Orders, deliveries, employment, investment and the number of firms working at full capacity are continuing to fall."

The head of the corporate department of KPMG Peat Marwick, the accountancy firm, said that there was no evidence yet of an upturn in the economy. He continued:

> "I think we're going to scrape along the bottom for quite a considerable period of time."

Last week, this country hosted the conference of the Group of Seven countries. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) said, we are the bottom of the league of the G7 countries in growth, in investment and in job creation. Our economy is predicted to be the bottom of the G7 league for growth for four consecutive years. That is a record. That has never happened in any country before. Unemployment hit the highest monthly increase in March, and although the figures for subsequent months have, mercifully, been lower, those figures for April, May and June were higher than for any of those months in the past 40 years. That is a record, and, in the case of unemployment, it is a record achieved even after changes in the way in which the figures are collected and after the totals had been reduced 30 times.

Manufacturing output was predicted to be down 5 per cent. On the latest figures, it is heading towards being 7 per cent. down since April 1990. What of the true engine of recovery—not consumer spending, as the Chancellor says, but investment? Manufacturing investment has fallen 16 per cent. in the past year to below the levels of investment the Government inherited in 1979 and, indeed, back to the levels last seen in the 1960s. Not only can we not rebuild, but we cannot sustain a modern economy with such levels of investment, and all of that is the consequence of the Government's gross economic mismanagement.

President Truman was reported to have had a note on his desk saying, "The buck stops here." Where does the buck stop with the Government? It does not appear to stop with the Prime Minister, with the Chancellor or with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury who is, no doubt, too busy working on some of his excellent jokes to take receipt of any buck. We can be certain of one thing—in this Government, the buck never stops in the Cabinet of the day, no matter who is in it.

We all remember the claim about the economic miracle and, certainly, the Government's achievements in putting Britain firmly at the bottom of so many leagues—those for growth, investment and job creation—have been remarkable by any standards. Why did we end up at the bottom of the league after 12 years of unprecedented revenues from the North sea, unprecedented revenues from privatisation of assets and 12 years of uninterrupted power?

The House will recall that in previous debates—indeed, it has been mentioned today by the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd)—the Government have admitted to just one mistake. That mistake was the cut in interest rates in the aftermath of the stock market crash in October 1978, and it was made not only by this Government, but by all our main competitors. The

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Government have never been able—and they have never tried—to explain why, if that was such a mistake and if it was their only one, the effects in this country have been so much worse than those in any other country.

Let us consider the inflation figures. The headline rate of inflation in this country is 5·8 per cent. compared with 4·5 per cent. when we cut interest rates in 1987. In Germany, the rate is 3 per cent. and in France, 3·3 per cent. —neither as good as in 1987, but not as high as ours. Growth in France is about the same as in 1987, and in Germany it is double what it was in 1987. In Italy it is down but still growing at 1·7 per cent. That is as good a rate as this Government averaged in 12 years in office, whereas the growth here has fallen by 2 per cent.

Mr. Whitney *rose*——

Mrs. Beckett: I shall give way in a moment.

On the balance of payments, Germany, with its enormous economic adjustments, is still in surplus on its balance of payments and France is in much the same position as it was. Italy is somewhat worse, but, even in the depths of recession, our balance of payments is worse than it was in 1987. In November 1987, when the Government made the one mistake to which they will cough, we did not have the highest interest rates in Europe. We have now, even after the cuts of recent months.

Mr. Whitney: Just for once, can we be clear what the hon. Lady and her party are saying? The Government have said that it was a mistake to reduce interest rates in early 1988. Does the hon. Lady say that it was not a mistake, or that when all her hon. Friends said that interest rates should be further reduced, that was a mistake? What is her position now?

Mrs. Beckett: This will be a lesson in possessing one's soul in patience: I am coming to that point.

Mr. Whitney: Opposition spokesmen always say that.

Mrs. Beckett: In my case, it is always true.

We do not argue that the 1987 cut in interest rates was the Government's main mistake. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East and the rest of the Labour party argued at the time that this would be the consequence of the course of action that the Government were then planning but had not yet carried out. They made other later mistakes, from the £6 billion in income tax cuts for the wealthy in 1988, through the inflationary own goals of 1989-90 to their one-club policy of high interest rates.

If the Government feel that they dare not admit to more than one mistake, the interest rate cut in 1987 was not the one to choose. Their big mistake was made in 1987 all right, and it flowered into full glory in 1988. It was the biggest mistake that a Government can make—they believed that they were invincible and damned near infallible. That was the key. Drunk with the self-satisfaction of their third election victory, they thought that no matter what they did and what mistakes they made they were bound to get away with it. They stopped listening to anyone. They fell prey to the eighth deadly sin —culpable conceit.

We have only to recall the words of the Prime Minister in 1988, when he was Chief Secretary to the Treasury:

"During the 1960s we praised and envied the German economic miracle. In the 1980s the position has been precisely reversed."—[*Official Report*, 26 April 1988; Vol. 132, c. 214.]

Only a Government who thought that they could get away with murder would combine in the same year massive cuts in income tax for the richest people in the country with massive cuts in benefits for children, pensioners, the unemployed and people with disabilities.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Maples): Come on.

Mrs. Beckett: I assure the Minister that there were at least £600 million to £800 million of cuts in benefits. If he does not know that, I suggest that he looks up the facts.

Only a Government who thought that they could get away with murder would introduce the poll tax or defend the interest rate increases needed to block their inflationary own goals with the words, "If it isn't hurting, it isn't working". Only a Government who thought that they could get away with murder would shove up VAT to pay for cuts in the poll tax and expect people to be grateful for their generosity.

Only a Government who thought that they would never be defeated and were certain to be elected for a fourth term would have dared to embark on the folly, incompetence and disastrous waste of the policies that have led us into the recession.

I am often asked by people outside the House—many of them former supporters of the Government—whether the Government still believe what they say. Perhaps they still do; in the House they give that impression. But whether they have lost self-confidence or not, they have lost the confidence and respect of millions of people. They deserve to lose it, because they are a Government who cheat.

The number of people unemployed rises dramatically, so they stop counting hundreds of thousands of them. The number of people on hospital waiting lists increases, so they will stop publishing the lists. They condemn huge salary increases for the bosses of privatised utilities, but they do not mention that they agreed to those increases in advance, while saying, "Don't tell the public." They cut income tax in 1988 and made us pay for it in our mortgages in 1989, 1990 and 1991. They have cut the poll tax and are making us pay for it through increased VAT. It is all sleight of hand, all excuses, all special effects. It is certainly no accident that it was under this Government that we first heard the phrase "economical with the truth".

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): Will the hon. Lady say whether it is the Labour party's policy to go back to collecting the unemployment statistics on precisely the same basis on which they were collected in 1979?

Mrs. Beckett: We certainly believe that unemployment statistics should be collected on a consistent basis across the Community, which they are not at the moment.

Mr. Burns: Ah!

Mrs. Beckett: I should be happy to see them go back to being collected on the original basis, but we need a fresh assessment of the precise way in which they are collected to put collection on a fair and sound basis, and as we are apparently moving towards greater integration——

Mr. Burns: Answer.

Mrs. Beckett: I can say to the hon. Gentleman specifically that I should be quite happy to see the statistics collected on the old basis, although it may be that we need a basis precisely comparable with that used in the rest of Europe. For all the hon. Gentleman's clever points, there are just as many people unemployed, and the whole point is that they do not show up in the Government's figures. They are out of work every day for just as long; the Government's method of collecting the statistics makes no difference to them.

The Chancellor was at it again today. He said that every serious measure of inflation was on downward trend. The trend may be down, but who would have recalled, from the Chancellor's words, that the figures which he said until recently were the most reliable and the most effective—the core figures; the underlying rate of inflation—were actually up in the last month by both the measures recently advocated by the Treasury?

The Government claim that there has been no underfunding in the national health service and that their reforms will solve all the outstanding problems. In that case, why are the staff in opted-out hospitals threatened with dismissal if they talk about what they know? And how, by the way, does that square with the citizens charter? I have not quite come to terms with that. The Government claim that there is no underfunding in education and that the pursuit of high standards comes from structural changes, including schools opting out of the local authority and the provision of city technology colleges. If funding is irrelevant, why do opted-out schools and city technology colleges get far more funding than the rest of our schools?

It is also cheating when the Government imply that, when inflation comes down further, as we all know it will, and when we get a recovery, our problems will be well-nigh over. An article in *The Independent* of 23 July said that the position would soon look much stronger, but it continued:

"we should not assume that the real economy will look equally secure."

Similarly, Professor McWilliams of the CBI warned us the other day that, over the period since 1988,

"the recession will cost the United Kingdom in terms of economic growth forgone about twice as much as it gained from 1985 to 1988 from excess growth."

Professor McWilliams reportedly continued:

"this downswing has set the economy back by a number of years".

The Government spend their time in excuses and deceits. They have nothing to offer for the future but more of the same. The Chief Secretary said, in an incredibly complacent speech on 15 May this year:

"we can be proud of our record on public spending and taxation . . . It has been a major achievement to have brought public spending down to about 40 per cent. of national output in the 1980s. We remain committed to that approach."—[*Official Report*, 15 May 1991; Vol. 191, c. 286-89.]

The Chancellor said again today that the Government have no intention of changing course.

We can expect more of the same, which means more income tax cuts—down, they say, to 20p in the pound—more opted-out hospitals, more opted-out schools, more privatised monopolies with more fat salaries for those who run them and more bills for the public. We can expect more of the same mistakes that got us where we are today. Among our competitors in the EC, in the OECD, in the G7, Governments are struggling to find resources to fund investment in manufacturing and sustained investment in education and training. They are struggling to find sustained investment in research and development and in the transport infrastructure. That does not necessarily require vast sums when things are tight, but it needs a steady, planned and sustained programme in a stable environment.

Sir Peter Hordern: The hon. Lady has criticised the Government for not funding the health service and the education service properly, she has expressed her admiration for the Europeans for their consistent expenditure on transport and infrastructure and she has expressed her desire to increase the proportion of GNP borne by public expenditure. How will she pay for all that?

Mrs. Beckett: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that an Opposition can be taken seriously only if they put forward detailed, planned and costed programmes on public expenditure?

Sir Peter Hordern: Yes.

Mrs. Beckett: I am delighted to hear that. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman re-reads the Conservative party election manifesto of 1979. The nearest thing that he will find in that manifesto to a detailed commitment on public spending are the words:

"Those who look . . . for . . . detailed commitments on every subject will look in vain."

When discussing the progress of our economy and that of the German economy, the Foreign Secretary said in the spring of 1990 that the Germans succeed by

"doing the things and taking the steps that we failed to do."

That was very accurate, but it is not what his colleagues have said in the House. The programme of needed investment takes years. Under this wasteful Government, we have not even started that programme.

The Government are still cutting Government support for industry and training. Even in the depths of a recession that is exacerbated by skills shortages, the Government are cutting support for training. The Government are still saying more of the same. They do not say that simply in the House when we criticise their record; they say it up and down the country—to the despair of their audiences—to industry, businesses, commerce, education and the health service. The Government tell everyone that they will just repeat the mistakes of the past. They will not listen to any arguments to the effect that that is not the way to build for the future.

In the real world, it is part of the Government's job to help create the balance, foster stability and give confidence for the investment that our country so desperately needs. We face harsh and difficult choices. We need a Government who will tell the country the truth about the nature of those choices. The Opposition are telling the country where our choice lies. We will lift the ceiling on national insurance contributions. We will introduce a new top rate of tax of 50p in the pound—well above the level at which the present top rate applies. We will do that to fund increases for pensioners and increases in child benefit which are both desperately needed.

Dame Peggy Fenner (Medway): How far will that go?

Mrs. Beckett: I will tell the hon. Member for Medway (Dame P. Fenner) precisely how far it will go: £5 for every pensioner; £8 for every couple and £9·55 in child benefit for every child. All of that is desperately needed after 12 years of this Government.

[Mrs. Beckett]

Beyond that, we will not choose to waste billions of pounds trying to sustain an unsustainable, unworkable poll tax. We will use the resources from growth which gradually become available to invest in our future, and all the resources that become available will be invested in our future.

A few moments ago I quoted the Chief Secretary to the Treasury referring to the Government's record. He said then loud and clear what he has been saying ever since. This Government will use some of those resources for further cuts in income tax. They talk about prioritising, but they prioritise tax cuts over public spending. In the *Daily Express* of 26 April the Prime Minister said it again. He said:

"Our primary objective is to reduce taxation at the lower end . . . we have an objective of moving to a 20p level of taxation."

We are making it plain that, although we do not believe that there should be an increase in the standard rate of tax, that rate cannot be cut while our need for public investment is large and growing. We want people to know that that is what we are saying so that they can choose.

The Government are saying something very different. Just as they did in 1988, the Government are giving the country not only the wrong signals but desperately, devastatingly misleading signals. In their desperate attempts to win the next election at any cost, the Government are telling the country that the sacrifice is almost over, that the problems are almost over, and that recovery is around the corner—and if not that corner, the one after, or perhaps, the one after that.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Beckett: I am sorry, but I do not have time.

The Government are trying to tell the country that it can have it all—that it can have investment in the future and income tax cuts as well and that there is no price to pay. That is an attractive message. We all like a bargain. It is another little miracle. The trouble is that those who are offering us that miracle have already sold us one. One in 12 home owners are two months or more behind with their mortgage payments—790,000 mortgage payers are in arrears—almost 48,000 homes are repossessed, 900 companies a week are going bust, according to Dun and Bradstreet, and small businesses are bearing the brunt.

According to the Engineering Employers Federation, the recession is actually reducing the United Kingdom's manufacturing capacity. *The Engineer* tells us that, of the senior managers and engineers whom it surveyed, 90 per cent. believe that the recession is doing serious and lasting damage to our industrial base. Figures from KMPG Peat Marwick show that almost as many companies went into receivership in the first six months of this year as in the whole of last year. The construction analyst for Credit Lyonnais Laing said:

"Conditions now are the worst I have seen in 29 years."

There was a price for that miracle. Without the windfall of North sea oil to cushion spending, there simply is not enough money to fund investment and to fund income tax cuts.

If they claim to be able to do both, the Government will have to cheat somewhere; they will have to squeeze somewhere; they will have to cut somewhere. The Institute of Directors, in its recent report on continuing tax reform and continuing cuts in income and capital taxes, was honest enough to tell us its view of the inevitable, inexorable consequences. In its judgment, the Government should cut capital taxes more and should cut income taxes more. The institute said that even if the Government increase VAT—and, after all, it is the policy that the Government are advocating—they will have to cut out —phase out—the state pension scheme, phase out the health service, phase out our education service and phase out unemployment benefits, and replace them in every case by private insurance. *[Interruption.]* It is no good the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) complaining. It is an Institute of Directors report. If he has not read it, I suggest that he do so. The institute says that it would be necessary to have a fallback scheme for the destitute. That is its word, not mine.

The Institute of Directors believes that that is the course which the Government should follow, and the tax changes that it advocates are the course which the Government are following, but the institute has the guts and the courage of its convictions to spell out what it means. The truth is that one cannot have it all. One either eats the seed corn or plants it.

The Government are offering us another miracle. By denying the nature of the choice facing the country, they are trying to offer us a reconditioned miracle—one with too many miles on the clock. It is time to invest in a new model instead—time for a new Government.

9.29 pm

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. David Mellor): I have drawn a number of conclusions from today's debate, the most prominent of which is that we all need a holiday. Among the other points that occur to me immediately is to say to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle) how glad we all were to hear his maiden speech and to wish him well in his time in the House. He replaces a very large figure—the late Eric Heffer, who was a well-known Member. I am sure that all hon. Members will join in wishing the hon. Member for Walton well in his work here.

I want to concentrate on three points. The first is our record, the second is our prospects, and the third is Labour's alternative——

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): Don't spend too much time on the Government's record.

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman advises me not to spend too much time on our record. Indeed, it speaks for itself, so a few well-chosen words will deal with it. However, I shall be obliged to deal with Labour's alternative at rather greater length as we have not heard very much about it from the Labour party.

The motion is a travesty of the G7 statistics and record because, according to *The Economist*, between 1965 and 1980 the United Kingdom had the second lowest growth rate, not only among the G7 countries, but of any developed economy in the world. We were down there with Senegal and Benin—even Bangladesh grew more quickly. Those may not be the commanding heights of success in Labour's last two periods in office from which the Labour party should now criticise the temporary problems that we have been facing recently. Opposition Members know that in the 1970s we were bottom of the G7——

Mr. John Smith: Those countries had a faster rate of growth.

Mr. Mellor: No, not a faster rate of growth than us —*[Interruption.]* Oh, no, we have been through this before. Non-oil GDP growth from 1974 to—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oil."] We are always told that oil— *[Interruption.]* The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) says, "Ugh!" He should speak to my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department of Education and Science where that may be more readily understood as a form of sign language.

We are told that oil was a windfall benefit that the Government should not count. We had 1.2 per cent. growth in non-oil GDP between 1974 and 1979 compared with 1·9 per cent. growth between 1979 and 1990— *[Interruption.]* The right hon. and learned Gentleman should look this up. He should not mutter and mumble.

Mrs. Beckett: As a matter of fact, I have looked it up because the right hon. and learned Gentleman used this statistic in our last debate on this matter. He will recall saying then that one must look at the precise period. He did not want to count the first two years of this Government because he said that it was all our fault. I have looked precisely at the figures for the period of office of the last Labour Government. The figures that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has quoted are the annual ones, whereas 1974 and 1979 were split years. If he looks at the figures precisely, he will see that from the first quarter of the Labour Government coming into power until their last quarter, and that from the first quarter of the Conservative Government coming to power to this quarter today, the figures are precisely the same.

Mr. Mellor: I find that extremely surprising. It sounds an unusually spurious statistic even by the standards of the Opposition, but it is on the record and we will have a look at it.

What is also on the record is that in the 1970s we were bottom of the G7 league for GDP growth. In the 1980s, we grew more quickly than Germany, France or Italy. That is not only the first decade since the first world war that we have grown more quickly than Germany and France; it is actually the first decade in which we have grown faster than Germany in peacetime ever.

We have been laying the ground for a continuing strong performance. In the 1970s, business investment in the United Kingdom was the second slowest growing in the G7. In the 1980s, it was the second fastest—behind only Japan. As the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) called those figures into question, may I advise her that the average annual growth in business investment in the period from 1974 to 1979 was 0·3 per cent., whereas in the period 1979 to 1990 it was 3·8 per cent.?

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): Who wrote that?

Mr. Mellor: I am asked, "Who wrote it?" It was someone who knew some statistics that were accurate and tell a story of two different periods of government—[HON. MEMBERS: "You."] I was being too modest to refer to myself in that context, but if it is forced upon me, I will happily take responsibility for it. In the 1970s, we were at the bottom of the league for manufacturing productivity growth; in the 1980s, we were at the top. So much for G7 comparisons relating to the lifetime of the present Government.

My right hon. Friend has already drawn attention to current prospects. Inflation has fallen by more than 5 per cent., to 5¾ per cent., and is set to fall still further in the coming months. Interest rates have fallen by four percentage points since we joined the exchange rate mechanism. Those achievements lay the foundations for the resumption of growth in the second half of this year.

This afternoon we heard criticisms of our inflation record, and the problems of unemployment were brought into that. How readily Opposition Members forget the painful lessons of office. Was it not the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) who said that inflation was the mother and father of unemployment? That is why the battle against inflation is one that we must win and cannot afford to lose.

Another encouraging sign is the growth in exports. In the second quarter of this year, export volumes rose by 3·5 per cent. to their highest ever level. We hear a good deal about manufacturing, and rightly so. Manufacturing exports rose by 4·5 per cent., while car exports rose by no less than 10 per cent. in that quarter alone, and have grown by a dramatic 45 per cent. in the last year.

The improvement in our trade balance and our current account is very clear. In the second quarter, the deficit was £0·9 billion; in the first quarter, it was £2·6 billion. Twelve months ago, it was £5·1 billion. Nothing could be clearer than that downward trend, which is based on a strong export performance.

Opposition Members suggest that there is nothing to look forward to. They have levelled the same wearisome charge throughout most of the past decade. It was good to hear the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), but he reminded me of the last time that the country had recessionary problems. That was when he was Leader of the Opposition. Almost exactly 10 years ago, on 27 July 1981, the right hon. Gentleman said——

Mr. Allen: He was not responsible for that.

Mr. Mellor: He is certainly responsible for the words that I am about to quote. The hon. Gentleman is frightfully uppity tonight. I do not know what has got into him: perhaps it is spring springing a bit late, or perhaps he is looking forward to playing with his bucket and spade.

The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent said:

"There will be no upturn without a U-turn, and a U-turn of gigantic proportions. Unless such a change of direction occurs we shall have the prospect of the 1980s differing from the 1930s in that there will be even larger numbers of people out of work, greater potential dangers of a resort to violence and a rate of inflation infinitely higher."—[*Official Report*, 27 July 1981; Vol. 9, c. 825.]

The right hon. Gentleman's observations presaged eight years of growth at more than 3 per cent. per annum. If there is one thing worse than being eternally into doom and gloom, it is being eternally into doom and gloom and eternally wrong about it.

Let us look at the record of the past 10 years. Living standards are a key indicator. Real take-home pay for those on average earnings will be more than 36 per cent. higher this year than it was in 1978-79. That represents a staggering success; it means another £70 a week, in real terms, for the average family. Under Labour, for nearly six years there was an increase of barely 1 per cent. That is the difference.

[Mr. Mellor]

The improvement in living standards reflects several allied successes. The first is higher economic growth, with which we have already dealt; the second is the attraction of more investment. At constant prices, business investment was £55 billion in 1990, whereas it was only £37 billion in 1979. That is a massive quantum leap, predicated on the Government's success—notably in 1984—in changing the whole basis of business taxation. As a result of that, we have attracted increased investment not only from within the United Kingdom, but from overseas; we attract infinitely more inward investment from Japan and the United States than any other EC country. Inward investment in 1990-91 was at record levels, with more than 350 new projects. The Japanese Ministry of Finance has just disclosed that Japanese investment in Britain was up 30 per cent. in the year to March 1991, despite an overall fall in Japanese investment throughout the world. That is a sign that, whatever the lack of confidence in the Government on the Opposition Benches, there is no lack of confidence in the Government among the overseas investment community that is building further prosperity in this country.

The irony, which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer pointed out, is this: if, indeed, in the past 12 years we have been confronted with such a legacy of failure, why has the Labour party stood its rhetoric on its head and repudiated so much of what it said about the economy in 1983? Now it fitfully and unconvincingly preaches what we practise. If all our policies have failed, why does the Labour party do that? It does not add up. Indeed, most of what the Labour party says about the economy does not add up.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East trailed his coat a bit by quoting two City analysts on whom he wished to rely for selective criticisms of the Government's policy. I should like to return to both companies to see whether the right hon. and learned Gentleman is quite so attentive to some of their other comments. The right hon. and learned Gentleman sighs heavily, rolls his eyes and looks at the ceiling. Perhaps he knows what is coming.

Phillips and Drew's analysis of the minimum wage—is the right hon. and learned Gentleman familiar with that? It—envisages 1·2 million jobs lost by year four with a fall in growth and an increase in inflation. Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman as attached to that prediction as he is to the one which is critical of us? Then there is Nomura. It states that Labour will be forced to raise interest rates by 2 per cent. to stave off devaluation.

Mr. John Smith *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Mellor: The right hon. and learned Gentleman may shake his head and say that that will not happen, but he cannot say that that is not what Nomura says because it is what it says.

Nomura also predicts a fall in GDP, an increase in unemployment, and a substantial increase in inflation. Highly relevant to our debate is its comment:

"Labour will have to either abandon fiscal prudence or adopt much more radical approaches to raising revenue."

Perhaps the right hon. and learned Gentleman, whose attachment to Nomura is so well established, will tell us what radical approaches to raising revenue he has in mind. We certainly did not hear a lot about that this afternoon, but perhaps the time will come.

What we heard a lot of, however, was whingeing—the whingers of Walworth road were at it with a vengeance. There was not a word of recognition of the good indicators. Indeed, Labour has a simple philosophy: any good news is derided, any bad news is welcomed. I suspect that, when inflation is down to 4 per cent., Labour will complain that it is unfair to people on index-linked pensions.

One wonders why the Labour party does it. What is good for Britain is bad for Labour. That is the basic message, which is another way of saying that what is right for Labour is wrong for Britain. Accentuate the negative, eliminate the positive, so the song might go. I cannot help feeling that people find that unattractive and unconvincing.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): This is poor stuff.

Mr. Mellor: If the best that the hon. Gentleman can do is to say that this is poor stuff, as he undoubtedly said to all his pupils in years gone by, he must find a better answer.

It may be regrettable when that attitude is adopted merely by Labour spokesmen in criticism, but it becomes reprehensible when, in their enthusiasm to talk Britain down, they distort what others have to say.

I wonder who has been looking at the correspondence columns of the *Financial Times* of today. A letter from Mr. John Banham, director general of the CBI, says:

"Roy Hattersley incorrectly attributes to me ... the statement that Britain is not suffering from a recession but from 'a slump'. I said no such thing. ... The key to getting things turned around is a restoration of business and consumer confidence. ... Confidence is fragile enough without Roy Hattersley putting words into my mouth."

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Mellor: If the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) agrees not to shout at me from a sedentary position for the rest of my speech, I shall give way. Do I have a deal?—*[Interruption.]* While the hon. Gentleman is thinking about it, I shall go on. Will the hon. Gentleman continue to shout at me, or will he have his say and shut up? I do not think that I have the undertaking that I sought.

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I adjudicate on the deals?

Mr. Morgan: Will the Minister confirm that, in the paragraph that he left out, which came immediately after the bit that he put in, Mr. Banham went on to illustrate that when Mr. Redhead suggested to him that Britain was in a slump and not a recession, he did not dissent from that proposition?

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman can read the letter. I shall hand it over to him. Mr. Banham said no such thing and the only referece to a slump was in Brian Redhead's question. The whole point of the letter, which the hon. Gentleman seems to have missed because he was too busy muttering imprecations, is that Mr. Banham was saying categorically on the record in the *Financial Times* that he did not like people saying that he had said that Britain was

in a slump when he had not. He said that that was talking Britain down and destroying fragile confidence, and that the Labour party should not do it.

If the advice of Mr. Banham is of interest to the Labour party, I should like to quote some more of his advice. Just last month, Mr. Banham announced that he would be extending his period of office until after the next election. He said that it would be useful for the CBI to be able to defer its final choice until the outcome of the election was known. If hon. Members want to know why he said that, he is quoted in *The Times* as saying:

"I think if there is a Conservative government what you need is a problem solver because under the Conservatives"

—

[Interruption.]—wait for it; be careful—

"'there is a ready market for contributing ideas, and no market for generalised whingeing on request. Under a Labour government I think you want someone who can explain, to politicians in particular, why the theories simply are not going to work in practice in the world of business.' Under past Labour governments the director general's main task was one of damage limitation, he said: 'That requires a very different kind of person.'"

It is interesting that, when Labour talks down what is happening in this country, it is not confidence that is talking but fear. Labour Members are afraid that the election victory that they have been dreaming of will be snatched away by a recovery. They are afraid that our policies are working and that their alternatives merely repeat the mistakes of the past and are better not dwelt on in detail.

Let us consider the nonsense of yesterday's press conference on the citizens charter. The Leader of the Opposition says that the citizens charter does not matter tuppence, but he turned up with seven members of the shadow Cabinet to prove it. If it is such rubbish, why does he need to turn up with more heavies than Madonna? Surely he is up to doing the job himself. What was the point of the less-than-magnificent seven, or the seven dwarfs, according to one's point of view? *The Times* may have been right when it said:

"with the heavyweight line up suggesting anxiety among the leadership that the Prime Minister may have discovered a vote winner."

Why is Labour so afraid of getting value for money from the public services? I suspect that it is because the public sector unions do not like it.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East treated us to a peroration of stunning and bare-faced imprecision. I have great regard for the right hon. and learned Gentleman, and I know that he is quite capable of being extremely precise. One must assume that his total refusal to descend to the particulars of Labour policy was by design and not by accident. At some point, we will all need to be given the details and I suspect that Labour will not get through an election campaign without the details being revealed.

Let us examine the detail of the minimum wage policy. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East launched into a virulent defence of that policy, but methinks he doth protest too much at several material parts of that policy. He spoke about critical letters that were received by the Chancellor and about some of the replies, and he satirised the Chancellor's polite introduction when my right hon. Friend said that he valued the advice of business men.

How much does the right hon. and learned Gentleman value the advice of some of his brothers and comrades about the minimum wage? How much does he value the advice of Mr. Gavin Laird of the Amalgamated Engineering Union who said:

"It's never worked in the past, there's no logic for it. It doesn't work in any other country and it certainly will not work in Great Britain."

How much does the right hon. and learned Gentleman value the advice of Mr. Joe Haines, hardly a Conservative, who said:

"The minimum wage proposals won't work, and if they do they won't help."

How much does he value the advice of his hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), who a year or two ago wrote:

"The employment consequences . . . will be little short of disastrous."

Does he respect the views of the *Sunday People*, which is hardly a Conservative newspaper? It stated:

"Labour's plan for a national minimum wage is not the answer. It would only cause more unemployment and deny jobs to those who need them."

Mr. Haynes: The right hon. and learned Gentleman promised that he would give way and I am grateful to him for doing so. There are certainly some bright sparks in the Treasury. First, it was said that a minimum wage would result in 1·2 million people becoming unemployed. The Secretary of State and the Prime Minister spoke about 2 million. They cannot even get the figures right. What will be the true figure? People out there are waiting for a minimum wage and after the next election they will get it.

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman will be greatly missed in the next Parliament. The figure of 1·2 million was the estimate of our friends at Phillips and Drew, not ours.

The right hon. Member for Leeds, East once said, "When you are in a hole, you should stop digging." The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East was digging like mad on the minimum wage and was digging away last week in an interview with the *Morning Star* when he said:

"We will listen to employers"—

the next bit is worth noting—

"but I can assure you we have no intention of phasing in reform over stages."

Does that mean straight to 66 per cent. at a stroke? Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman embarrassed by the fact that the only newspaper giving editorial support to the minimum wage policy is the *Morning Star*? I thought that Labour had lived through that phase.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman may be digging away, but the Leader of the Opposition is having second thoughts. The *Daily Mail* last week, apropos his speech to the Transport and General Workers Union a week or so ago, said:

"His staff had gone out of their way to insist that Mr. Kinnock would take the issue head-on at Blackpool by claiming he would be 'proud' to fight the General Election on the issue . . . Until Tuesday night, Mr. Kinnock seemed to have been convinced that it was a winner for Labour. But whatever was in his first draft it appears to have been deliberately dropped."

What a muddle; what a mess. It is a muddle and a mess because the only consequence of the minimum wage is a loss of jobs. The Labour party should have more noble ambitions than pulling people down by their boot straps.

On interest rates, all we had today was the usual repetition of "Monklands law"—1 per cent. reduction and nothing else. Credit controls did not make their usual appearance, but during a party political broadcast the

[Mr. Mellor]

right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East recently reiterated his conviction that they are right. He has yet to tell us how he would prevent people going overseas to borrow money and why it is fair that credit controls should bear down on the poorer section of the community who cannot buzz off to France, Germany or Switzerland to borrow the money.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman has also failed to tell us how he would justify credit controls in the personal sector when 85 per cent. of personal borrowing is on mortgages. That is an issue which once again will not go away. I can do no better than repeat what the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) said about credit controls:

"The Labour party idea that you can have credit controls is rubbish. There is no way you can control credit except by controlling the price of credit and the price of credit is the bank rate."

Apart from saying that the Government's costings are silly, the Labour party has produced no answer to our carefully costed publication on Labour's programme showing that £35 billion would be the full year cost.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): Rubbish.

Mr. Mellor: Saying, "Rubbish," is not an argument and an argument will have to be provided. One can assume that the only reason that the Labour party has failed to answer the charge is that it is thinking up new ones to levy. There has been no satisfactory answer. It is not only Conservative Members who are getting on to that point. What about Professor Rowthorn, not a well-known Conservative, who when asked—[HON. MEMBERS: "Never heard of him."] Well, hon. Members are about to. When asked on "Panorama" whether he thought Labour's spending plans added up, he said:

"Frankly, I think they don't add up. If you take their whole list of spending plans and you say where's the money for this list going to come from, I think the answer is I have no idea."

It is Dolly Parton economics—an incredible figure that would collapse without hidden support. It is about time that the hidden support ceased to be hidden. If only £4 billion has been costed, with the pain that has already had to be expressed about the tax consequences of raising that, where will the £30 billion come from? Every adjective in the book has been used—top, first, central, key—to establish these priorities. Those are plainly words of commitment, and everything cannot be a priority; that all have won and all must have prizes, showing that Lewis Carroll is alive and well and writing speeches for the Leader of the Opposition.

There is brazenness in the fact that, since we published our analysis, fresh policy documents about which further details will be supplied on another occasion have been issued, making clear further commitments. The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) went to Oldham where he may have assumed the record would not reach, but the *Oldham Evening Chronicle* has been passed to me showing that, with a recklessness that came from being away from London, he said:

"A Labour Government would pour money into the NHS."

That would be interesting.

Even in the presence of the hon. Lady who formulated "Beckett's law" herself, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) pledged more spending. The *Derby Evening Telegraph*, in an article headed

"Shadow Minister's pledge on railways",

said:

"Shadow Transport Secretary John Prescott has pledged to electrify the Midlands main line if a Labour Government wins the next general election."

Did the hon. Lady leap to the rostrum and say, "The man's mad. He should be certified. I am not going to do it. Beckett's law says that we have only two priorities." Of course she did not. She sat there and smiled, knowing that it was not right.

The Labour party's economic policy reminds me of the last will and testament of Rabelais, who said:

"I owe much. I have nothing. The rest I leave to the poor."

Mr. Derek Foster (Bishop Auckland) *rose in his place and claimed to move*, That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 199, Noes 311.

Division No. 225] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bellotti, David
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carr, Michael
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Duffy, Sir A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eadie, Alexander
Edwards, Huw
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Galloway, George
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*

Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Warsing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ken Eastham and
Mr. Thomas McAvoy.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Sir Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles

Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Sir Robert
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and Mr. John M. Taylor.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

Mr. Speaker *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House congratulates Her Majesty's Government on its pursuit of sound economic policies; notes that those policies have led to a large fall in inflation; notes also that as inflationary pressures have eased, interest rates have been cut substantially, while the £ sterling has maintained its position in the ERM; and calls on the Government to continue with its prudent policies, which will lead to a resumption of sustained growth.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if you can help me. This is a difficult time of year and many colleagues are thinking of the days ahead. We are usually well served by people in the House, but I wonder if you can ensure that we had the full time for that Division, because the numbers voting against the Government were so derisory. Could it have been that the doors were locked too early so that Labour Members could not vote, or could it be that they did not turn up to support their own motion?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a point of order for me. I have received no report on that matter.

DANGEROUS DOGS BILL (ALLOCATION OF TIME)

Ordered,

That the Order of the House [10th June] be supplemented as follows:—

Lords Amendments

1. The proceedings on Consideration of Lords Amendments shall be completed at this day's sitting and, if not previously brought to a conclusion, shall be brought to a conclusion two hours after the commencement of the proceedings on this Order.

2.—(1) For the purpose of bringing any proceedings to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph 1 above—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Quesiton which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided and, if that Question is for the amendment of a Lords Amendment, shall then put forthwith the Question on any further Amendment of the said Lords Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown and on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in the said Lords Amendment, or, as the case may be, in the said Lords Amendment as amended;

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining Lords Amendments as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown to a Lords Amendment and then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in their Amendment, or, as the case may be, in their Amendment as amended;

(ii) put forthwith the Question on any Motion moved by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in a Lords Amendment;

(iii) put forthwith with respect to the Amendments designated by Mr. Speaker which have not been disposed of the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said Amendments; and

(iv) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Amendments;

(c) as soon as the House has agreed or disagreed with the Lords in any of their Amendments Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith a separate Question on any other Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown relevant to that Lords Amendment.

Stages subsequent to first Consideration of Lords Amendments

3. Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the consideration forthwith of any further Message from the Lords on the Bill.

4. The proceedings on any further Message from the Lords shall, if not previously brought to a conclusion, be brought to a conclusion one hour after the commencement of those proceedings.

5. For the purpose of bringing those proceedings to a conclusion—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided, and shall then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown which is related to the Question already proposed from the Chair;

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining items in the Lords Message as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown on any item:

(ii) in the case of each remaining item designated by Mr. Speaker, put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in their Proposal; and

(iii) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Proposals.

Supplemental

6.—(1) Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons.

(2) Such a Committee shall report before the conclusion of the sitting at which it is appointed.

7.—(1) In this paragraph "the proceedings" means proceedings on Consideration of Lords Amendments or on any further Message from the Lords on the Bill, on the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reaons and the Report of such as Committee.

(2) Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(3) No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, the proceedings shall be made except by a Minister of the Crown, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

(4) If the proceedings are interrupted by a Motion for the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on the Motion shall be added to the period at the end of which the proceedings are to be brought to a conclusion.—*[Mrs. Rumbold.]*

Orders of the Day

Dangerous Dogs Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Lords amendments Nos. 1 and 2 agreed to.

Clause 1

DOGS BRED FOR FIGHTING

Lords amendment: No. 3, in page 2, line 9, leave out ("destroy them, or").

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mrs. Rumbold.]*

10.17 pm

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): I want to thank the other place and the Government for their role in accepting this amendment. I do not want to delay the House, but this is a serious point. The tragedy is that, because of the way in which earlier proceedings were guillotined, we were not able to discuss this. It would have been wrong for some people who have to have their dogs put down to be able to obtain compansation. There is no doubt that some of them would have been tempted to get hold of the nearest bit of scaffolding and bang the dog over the head. They would then be entitled to compensation. At least the amendment stops that happening and ensures that dogs have to be put down humanely by veterinary surgeons or others so qualified. We are glad to support the amendment.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): I am glad that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) made that point. This is a good idea and we are happy to accept it simply because we would not wish an owner to destroy a dog by inhumane means and then be able to claim compensation and the cost of the dog's destruction. It would not have been practical to determine in every case whether an owner had destroyed his dog humanely. It seems right that only owners who arrange for a veterinary surgeon or other responsible organisation to put an animal down should be able to claim compensation.

Question put and agreed to.—[Special Entry.]

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 8

SHORT TITLE, INTERPRETATION, COMMENCEMENT AND EXTENT

Lords amendment: No. 24, in page 6, line 31, at end insert

("and includes the common parts of a building containing two or more separate dwellings.")

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mrs. Rumbold.]*

Mr. Corbett: The Minister will remember that in our earlier debate on this part of the Bill some of us mentioned the problem that exists in tower blocks in big cities involving people who keep menacing dogs. Sometimes those dogs are used for menacing and threatening purposes. I know of cases in my constituency where, regrettably, people with such dogs are thoroughly bad neighbours in that they might make a lot of late-night noise, not necessarily because of parties. It seems that they have different sleeping habits from the rest of the population. Whereas it is usually possible to knock on a neighbour's door to ask if he would mind turning down the noise because one has to get a bus to work at 7.30 am —or words to that effect, depending on one's temper and on the time of night—that approach becomes absolutely impossible. One knows that the door will be opened by a dreadful monster with an even worse monster on four feet with him, panting. That is wholly unfair.

There are two types of dog. The first lives in the flats and can be used in a menacing manner or is itself a menace on the immediate landings of the block of flats. The second type is the dog that is used to using the public places—public in the sense that they are used by the residents of the flats. That is the point, because those places are not public in the sense that all members of the public are entitled to have access to them. I am glad that the city of Birmingham —and, I believe, other cities—are getting support from tenants to introduce concierge schemes, which are very well thought out. They involve some extra rent but trained security people are on duty. An analysis has been carried out of the hours when vandals are most active and the level of staffing is geared to deal with that. The public cannot merely enter those blocks of flats. Great efforts are being made in more and more blocks to keep some people out.

I should like the Minister to assure us that that issue is covered and that the instances where the dog either gets in or is perhaps brought in by a visitor, with the same results, will also be covered. I am sure that other hon. Members have had a similar experience. It is a real problem for many people living on top of one another in such conditions.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): I have no wish to detain the House, but there must be more multi-storey flats in my constituency than in any other constituency in the United Kingdom. I have seen some beautiful multi-storey flats destroyed because thoughtless neighbours let dogs foul the lifts, and people are frightened to use them. I described in our earlier debates how some stupid neighbours call the lift, put the dog in and hope that someone takes the dog out on the ground floor. That makes me think that some dogs must be cleverer than their owners. I have seen the environment of a lot of multi-storey flats destroyed because people keep large dogs there. So I hope that the Minister can assure me that the provision will cover Scotland, too.

Mrs. Rumbold: The legislation was sparked off partly by the debate in the House in which the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) took part. Indeed, now people who allow their dogs, even dogs bred for fighting, to roam throughout the night the corridors of blocks of flats which have entryphones, will be caught by the amendment, and will be responsible for those criminal actions, as will the dog owners referred to by the hon. Gentleman, who visit blocks of flats which, although enlosed, are opened by entryphone or other form of access. I hope that, with those assurances, the House will accept the amendment.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I am sorry that I did not catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, before

the Minister rose. Will the Minister be kind enough to tell us whether the wording was devised by her Department? The concept of a public place
"where it is not permitted to be"
seems to raise as many questions as it answers. "Permitted" by whom? When cases come to court, will the wording be sufficiently precise to meet the point that the whole House is trying to meet? I know that it is a late stage in the passage of the Bill to deal with that important issue. As the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) rightly said, the word "permitted" suggests a byelaw or other rubric operating in the area. I am far from satisfied that we have got the drafting right.

Mrs. Rumbold: I think that I can offer the hon. Gentleman the assurance that he wants. As I said earlier, the amendment was introduced at the Committee stage and was examined thereafter both by our advisers and by the House of Lords. Without the amendment, the criminal offences in the Bill which apply in public places could not apply in the communal areas of blocks of flats. For that reason, because there was a lacuna in the drafting, it was important to make it clear that such areas are public places where people sometimes let dogs roam. If there were nothing in the legislation to catch such people the measure would not be effective. The amendment is an extension of the definition of a public place.

Question put and agreed to.

Remaining Lords amendments agreed to.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

BUILDING SOCIETIES

That the draft Building Societies Act 1986 (Modifications) Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 1st July, be approved.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

SOCIAL SECURITY

That the draft Social Security (Severe Disablement Allowance) Amendment Regulations 1991, which were laid before this House on 4th July, be approved.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

SOCIAL SECURITY

That the draft Disability Living Allowance Advisory Board Regulations 1991, which were laid before this House on 11th July, be approved.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

PUBLIC HEALTH

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning) (No. 4) Order 1991 (S.I., 1991, No. 1533), dated 5th July 1991, a copy of which was laid before this House on 8th July, be approved.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

PUBLIC HEALTH

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning) (No. 5) Order 1991 (S.I., 1991, No. 1608), dated 12th July 1991, a copy of which was laid before this House on 15th July, be approved.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

Question agreed to.

European Community Documents

MEDICINAL PRODUCTS (LEGAL PROTECTION)

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 6033/090 and the supplementary explanatory memorandum submitted by the Department of Trade and Industry on 5th June 1991, relating to supplementary protection certificates for medicinal products; and supports the Government's intention to ensure that a proper balance is achieved between the various interests involved before any agreement is reached, but considers that the European Commission's proposal is a good basis for achieving this.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

10.32 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I promise not to detain the House for more than a few seconds, but I am a little concerned about the contents of the motion.

On 17 June, the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) and I complained about the way in which *Hansard* had reported the motion passed by European Standing Committee B in respect of the European Community document in question.

I seek your advice, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because the present motion does not reflect accurately the motion that was passed by European Standing Committee B on 12 June. In that respect, I believe that it is inaccurate and —at least until I hear your advice, Mr. Deputy Speaker —I do not believe that it should be passed by the House. The motion agreed by the Committee referred to the need to protect the United Kingdom economy and the national health service, and to the interests of patients. Those interests are excluded from the wording of the motion on the Order Paper.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me notice that he intended to raise the matter. He is perfectly correct to say that the motion before the House—No. 9 on the Order Paper—is not couched in the same terms as the resolution on the document agreed by the Standing Committee. I am assured that that is not a mistake. What is proposed is in order. There are two courses open to the hon. Gentleman: he can vote against the motion tonight, or he can submit any complaint that he may have about the wording of the motion to the Procedure Committee, which is currently examining this very matter.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees).

ECOLOGICAL LABELLING (NO. 2)

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4717/91 and the supplementary explanatory

memorandum submitted by the Department of the Environment on 20th June 1991, relating to an environmental labelling scheme; endorses the Government's support for a voluntary scheme which would award labels on the basis of a cradle to grave assessment of products and set high standards of environmental protection; and supports the Governments's view that the scheme should be neither highly centralised nor complex to administer.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

PETITIONS

Princess of Wales Hospital, Bridgend

10.33 pm

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): May I crave your indulgence, Mr. Deputy Speaker, before I present the petition? These are perhaps the closing minutes of our proceedings—at least until tomorrow's day of Adjournment debates—and I may not be afforded a further opportunity to wish you, Sir, a happy, healthy and enjoyable recess. I have always had more admiration for you than for perhaps anyone else who has presided over our proceedings—from the Chair—because of your tolerance. I wish you a happy and enjoyable recess, and those wishes should be extended to all the staff of the House who work extremely hard for all hon. Members.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Before the hon. Gentleman presents his petition, may I say how very much I appreciate his kind words. I am sure that all the staff of the House who serve us so well are equally appreciative.

Mr. Powell: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The petition is from residents of the catchment area of the Princess of Wales hospital, Bridgend, which includes the Ogmore, Bridgend, Aberavon, Pontypridd and Rhondda constituencies and covers some 250,000 people. It expresses grave concern that the population will not be afforded the necessary health care unless there is action to ensure that the necessary funding of promised future development is available on the capital expenditure plans of the area health authority. The excellent consultants and staff employed at the present hospital share this grave concern and the petition is signed by more than 5,000 people.

That petition from the residents of Ogwr is presented to the Honourable Commons of The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled

The Humble Petition of the Residents of Ogwr Showeth:—

That it is proposed by the Mid-Glamorgan Health Authority to remove Phase II of the Princess of Wales Hospital from the 10 year capital programme despite assurances that Phase II would start when or soon after Phase I was completed in 1985 and that we the undersigned, protest vigorously at the failure of the Health Authority to complete the Princess of Wales Hospital to the detriment of patients and staff who are currently contending with the difficulties of providing care on split hospital sites.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House do urge the Secretary of State for Wales to meet Mid Glamorgan Health Authority to discuss jointly the means by which Phase II of the Princess of Wales Hospital can be restored for the 10 year capital programme and work start on plans in 1991/92 as was intended this time last year.

And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.

The petition was signed by Muriel Williams of 6 Ogwy street, Nantymoel, and by more than 5,000 others.

To lie upon the Table.

Gipsy Caravan Site, Langlebury

10.36 pm

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know what a pleasure it is for me to present this petition to the House this evening. The petition is addressed to

the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

It states:

The Humble Petition of the residents of, and those having recreational, educational or commercial interests in, Langlebury and the surrounding area.

Sheweth

That it is proposed to provide a 15-pitch gypsy caravan site on Land at Langlebury Lane, Langlebury, Hertfordshire, and that we, the undersigned, vigorously protest against this proposal for the following reasons.

The reasons are that the land concerned is green belt land. The two councils involved, bearing in mind that the Caravan Sites Act was passed in 1968, have taken 23 years to reach a decision and the residents of Langlebury believe that the site is being imposed, without proper consideration or evaluation. Therefore, it seems wrong and undemocratic to permit the unsuitable development to be pursued on the basis of deeming planning consent and allegedly unsafe information supplied to the Department of the Environment without holding an independent inquiry.

The petition continues:

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House will urge the Secretary of State for Environment to restrain Hertfordshire County Council from proceeding with the aforementioned proposal unless and until:

1. The disputed statements made by Hertfordshire County Council regarding the following crucial points have been independently and impartially verified:

(a) The load-bearing capacity and settlement rate of the landfill on the alternative Tolpits Lane site with respect to its suitability to support gypsy site structures.

(b) The present attitude of the Tolpits Lane site with respect to the risk of flooding.

(c) the relative distances of the Tolpits Lane and Langlebury Lane sites from the nearest authentic social, medical and shopping facilities.

(d) The number of vehicles which have to mount the Langlebury Lane pavement (in school term time) because much of the roadway is too narrow for wide vehicles to pass.

(e) It is proved that the Langlebury Lane site falls within the 'urban' fringe category required by Hertfordshire County Council's own guidelines for siting gypsy camps.

2. An impartial and independent scrutiny of the above information, once verified, still leads to the conclusion that the agricultural land at Langlebury Lane is more suitable than the spare land at Tolpits Lane for development of a permanent gypsy site.

And your Petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Princess of Wales Hospital, Bridgend

10.39 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): I underline the wishes of my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the staff for a happy recess.

Like my hon. Friend, I am introducing a petition from the residents of Ogwr. As my hon. Friend mentioned, the constituency of Bridgend is in the catchment area of the Princess of Wales hospital. My petition has 5,000 signatures attached to it and it is a result of an initiative of the community health council. The petition contains the signatures of elected representatives of the Labour and Conservative parties, other parties, and of people of no political party in the Ogwr area. I have much pleasure in presenting the petition, which states:

To the Honourable Commons of The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament Assembled.

The Humble Petition of the Residents of Ogwr Showeth:—

That it is proposed by the Mid Glamorgan Health Authority to remove Phase II of the Princess of Wales Hospital from the ten year capital programme despite assurances that Phase II would start when or soon after Phase I was completed in 1985 and that we the undersigned, protest vigorously at the failure of the Health Authority to complete the Princess of Wales Hospital to the detriment of patients and staff who are currently contending with the difficulties of providing care on split hospital sites.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House do urge the Secretary of State for Wales to meet Mid Glamorgan Health Authority to discuss jointly the means by which Phase II of the Princess of Wales Hospital can be restored to the ten year capital programme and work start on plans in 1991/2 as was intended this time last year.

And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.

The first name on the petition is that of Curwen Roberts of Coedmor, Cefn Cribwr, in the village in my constituency where I live.

To lie upon the Table.

A27 (Worthing)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

10.42 pm

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): I am very glad to have this opportunity of referring to the development of the A27 in the Worthing area and particularly the situation with regard to the preferred route which is being announced by the Government, a route which has been described by my constituents as a throughpass, not a bypass, and to put to the Minister the overwhelming case for having a real bypass. We have just had presented to the House several petitions. A petition of no fewer than 24,000 signatures was subscribed to by my constituents, arguing that the town should have a real bypass. That reflected the strength of public opinion on the issue.

The Minister and I are more fortunate this evening than we were when I raised the matter with his predecessor two years ago. On that occasion, we sat in the House all night considering the Consolidated Fund Bill before the matter came up at about 7.45 in the morning. I am glad to see the Minister in his place. On the previous occasion I pointed out that I had raised the matter with no fewer than 15 Ministers over the years. My hon. Friend the Minister must regard himself as the 16th.

I must say two things. First, I wonder whether I should provide a video to the relevant Ministers so that we could play back the arguments to them. Secondly, the constant succession of Ministers on the issue makes it very difficult to sustain the argument at a ministerial level. There is some danger of a "Yes, Minister" approach being adopted. The Minister has constantly changed but the bureaucrats, who throughout have been in favour of the preferred route, which I personally regard as highly objectionable, have managed to sustain their argument. One of my hon. Friend's many predecessors did, however, agree that a full traffic, environmental and economic assessment should be carried out before the public inquiry. I very much welcome that. It has been agreed that it will cover both the preferred route and the alternative route of a bypass. Perhaps my hon. Friend can tell me the likely timetable for the public inquiry.

A monitoring group has been set up, composed largely of members of the borough council, to consider the assessment of the alternative routes in conjunction with the Department. However, the members of the monitoring group have recently expressed their concern to me at the fact that, at a meeting on 16 July, they had considerable difficulty getting any information from the Department of Transport about exactly what was going on. There were rumours that additional land had been blighted and that blight notices had been issued, but no public statement to that effect has been made. Despite the complete confidentiality with which the monitoring group has been operating, it was denied any information.

There are rumours that a much more elaborate scheme on the preferred route is now being developed by Acer Consultants, who are charged with the responsibility of developing the detailed plans. Those rumours are now well founded. It seems that the expense of such a development on the preferred route will be very much greater than that which was originally envisaged. I believe that, in any case, the economics may be in favour of a bypass. That is increasingly apparent from the traffic surveys that have been conducted. If that is so, my hon. Friend needs to spell out exactly what is now in mind, because it may be quite different from the plan for the preferred route that was outlined at the time of the original consultation exercise when my constituents were asked to express a view on the various alternatives. I hope that that can be borne in mind. I must stress that some doubts have recently been cast on the validity of that consultation. It is suggested that some of the junction improvements at Patching were already in the programme and that some of the alternatives that were put out for public consultation were not really available.

But be that as it may, as my hon. Friend well knows, because he has been sympathetic in receiving my representations on these matters, I am concerned about the situation that has developed in relation to the preferred route. Once the preferred route is announced, a number of people become affected, including those whose properties are not actually on the line of the preferred route and who are not, therefore, entitled under legislation to the blight notices that would enable them to sell if they wished to do so.

Clearly, however, the value of their property is seriously affected. It has become virtually impossible for them to sell because the announcement of the preferred route is well known. They suffer from a great many other inconveniences. It is true that legislation that the House has considered this Session will do something to help those who have blighted properties, but I have been concerned at the difficulty that many of my constituents—not those off the route, because they will be in a hopeless position for many years, but those on the route—have encountered in terms of getting adequate compensation. I have had much correspondence with successive Ministers on that point. There have been considerable problems with valuations.

However, what is really worrying about the A27 issue is that my constituents are increasingly convinced that they are being harassed to sell their properties so that most of them will have done so before the public inquiry. That has happened in several ways. Some of the letters state, "Although you have applied for a blight notice, you still have not come up with a specific proposal and must realise that the valuation that we have given you may not continue to be applicable," and so on. Such letters are clearly designed to encourage people to sell, whereas they are entitled to a blight notice and to remain in their homes until such time as they wish to exercise that blight notice.

Other people feel that the way in which the matter has been handled is designed to get them out of their homes. When, some 10 years ago, the Department bought the properties—the decision was subsequently reversed, and they were resold—no such problems arose. Some of the current difficulties have arisen because of unsuitable tenants. Properties have been let at uneconomic rents; that, too, did not happen before and I understand that it is no longer happening, but it has led to serious problems. People have felt very intimidated when disturbances have been created outside their homes and in some cases the police have been called in. I have visited the constituents who have been affected by these problems and they are clearly causing concern.

The Department used to manage the properties itself, but recently it has contracted the work to the North British Housing Association. Most of the cases involving unsatisfactory tenants have been under the auspices of the association, although in some instances the borough council was originally in charge. The association's

management of the properties appears not to have been adequate in other respects: some of the properties have been badly damaged. In one instance there was widespread flooding for a long time, as a result of which the adjoining house—they are semi-detached—has also been damaged. Clearly, the managers have been negligent.

My impression is that the pressure is on people to receive a blight notice, sell out and leave their homes, although they may wish to remain because they feel that in due course a sensible decision will be reached, a bypass will be built and there will be no need for them to leave.

Car repairs and enormous heaps of rubbish present further problems; I shall not go into the details, as my hon. Friend is familiar with them. Moreover, some houses that should have been looked after—they are, after all, the taxpayers' property now—have been boarded up. The general level of maintenance has declined, which has adversely affected both those living on the line of route who have decided to remain although they have received blight notices, and those in the adjoining area who have not even been given the option of receiving such a notice.

The situation has caused serious emotional problems. It also suggests that the money spent by the Government in purchasing the properties, and on repairing them when they have not been properly maintained, is imposing an unnecessary burden on the taxpayer. The experiment of employing outside organisations to look after the properties—for I gather that it is an experiment—has resulted in considerable suffering for individual constituents.

The basic feeling is that the aim is to clear the decks in advance of the public inquiry. If it is true that the preferred-route option will be much more expensive than previous options and that the cost to the Treasury will be much greater than was originally thought, the arguments for a proper bypass are surely overwhelming. It is not just a question of the traffic going from east to west. It is also a question of the traffic from the north going west or east and of the traffic from the east and west going north. That traffic need not come near the town. If the preferred route is sustained, it will continue to come to the main roundabout and go through a built-up area.

The Government's declared policy for many years has been to take traffic away from built-up areas and to provide bypasses. Everywhere along the south coast apart from Worthing has a proper bypass. Even small towns and villages have one. It is the only place where, instead of a bypass, we get a throughpass, which goes through a built-up area and many of the amenities. That is a serious matter, particularly for a town that relies considerably on tourism.

I pay tribute to the sympathetic approach of my hon. Friend in dealing with some of the personal problems that I have mentioned. I hope that he will carefully consider whether the time has now come to reconsider the preferred route. At the least, there must be a full assessment of the preferred route and the bypass route—the right one should go north of the Cissbury ring, not south of it—so that the public inquiry has a clear choice between the two routes.

One must see the position on the ground, both to understand the case for the bypass and to appreciate the immediate problems facing my constituents. I have raised this matter on several previous occasions and I am glad to have the opportunity of doing so now. The plight of individual constituents on or near the route concerned has deteriorated substantially. I hope that we shall now make real progress in getting away from the preferred route and on to a bypass. If my hon. Friend would spare time to come in person, it could be a clear sign of the Government's concern to ameliorate the problems of traffic through Worthing in the short term for individuals and in the long term for my constituents.

10.57 pm

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Christopher Chope): It has become an almost regular annual event for my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) to raise in the House the concerns which he and many of his constituents have about the proposed improvement to the A27 between Worthing and Lancing.

It was on 21 July 1989 that my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley), the then Minister for Roads and Traffic, announced the preferred route and in so doing stated that the task of selecting the right scheme for improving this section of the A27 had been extremely difficult. He recognised that the decision to choose a route through part of north Worthing would cause great concern to many people. My hon. Friend's prognosis has been more than borne out by subsequent events. In the debate on the summer Adjournment on 23 July last year, my right hon. Friend drew attention to some of the key issues which were then uppermost in the minds of his constituents.

Tonight, just over one year later, my right hon. Friend has drawn attention to the revisions to the detail of the preferred route which have resulted in some additional houses being blighted; to the problems which there have been with the management by the North British Housing Association of the properties which have been acquired on the route of the proposed road; and to the problems resulting from the length of time which has been taken to bring this scheme from the preferred route announcement to the stage where draft orders are published. I should try to deal with each of those issues in turn, but first let me say that I am looking forward to visiting my right hon. Friend's constituency to examine this further on the ground. I hope to visit shortly.

I will not trouble the House with the complex history of this scheme, which predates the announcement in July 1989 of the preferred route. Before making that announcement, four possible options were examined in detail. The routes were identified as the yellow or outer Findon route, the blue or Findon Gap route, the green or inner route with Lancing bypass, and the purple or inner route with an on-line at Lancing. The outer Findon route was rejected because it would involve a very long detour through the downs and would not attract sufficient traffic out of Worthing to justify the environmental impact on the downs and the estimated costs of construction. The purple route was rejected as having the severest impact upon people's homes. It would have involved the demolition of more than 200 properties and would also have been very expensive.

My right hon. Friend, together with Worthing borough council, has always been in favour of a full bypass option around Worthing to relieve homes in north Worthing. It is his view that, with suitable environmental protection measures such as the provision of tunnels, the bypass to the north would not have had an unacceptable impact upon the downs. The blue route option, however, which my right hon. Friend prefers, would still leave heavy traffic

[Mr. Christopher Chope]

flows on the existing road, so that conditions of people living alongside it would not be significantly improved and there would be a serious impact upon the south downs area of outstanding natural beauty which could not be sufficiently ameliorated to justify the loss of amenity involved.

For that reason, the green route was adopted as the preferred route, although I recognise that by adopting that route the Government could not achieve their normal preference for a full bypass solution. A full bypass, however, is not always the best solution and there are many examples up and down the country where a full bypass has to be rejected after making a balanced judgment on the different conflicting issues.

We recognise that the green route is strongly opposed, although it also fair to say that those who sent written responses to the Department following consultation were almost evenly split between those who favoured the green route—some 51 per cent.—and those who supported other alternatives. But because of the opposition, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has already announced that a public inquiry will be held to consider all the issues involved, including the various alternative options. To facilitate that process, the consultants who have been appointed to undertake the detailed design of the scheme, Acer Consultants Ltd., are currently in the process of undertaking a full traffic, environmental and economic analysis of both the green and the blue routes.

A ground investigation, due to begin on 29 July, will also cover both routes. West Sussex county council, Worthing borough council and Adur and Arun district councils are represented on a monitoring group to oversee the preparation of these assessments. The aim of that local authority monitoring group is to reach agreement on matters of fact, such as traffic data, so that the inquiry inspector can concentrate on considering the arguments for and against the preferred option, compared with alternatives that may be put forward.

Work on the detailed design of the preferred route is currently under way with a view to publishing draft orders for the scheme in the spring next year. The traffic, environmental and economic assessment of both the blue and the green routes will be published at the same time. The public inquiry will take place about six months later, which I hope will allow sufficient time for all the parties concerned to study and comment on the assessment results.

Mr. Higgins: In my hon. Friend's earlier remarks, he referred to revision of the plan for the preferred route. There have been widespread rumours that that proposal has been radically changed, but the public have no knowledge of that change. If it is radically changed, that would alter the position of the earlier consultation, which was carried out on the basis of a relatively—although still appalling—junction at the point where the A24 and the A27 meet. If that is changed on a larger scale, as seems to be indicated by the fact that more properties that have become blighted now have to be purchased, the whole consultation must be reconsidered.

Mr. Chope: I intend to deal with my hon. Friend's point, but first may I finish dealing with the issue relating to the public inquiry.

If, in the meantime, the assessment results were to indicate a better route than our preferred green option, I assure my right hon. Friend that the Department would reconsider its position before a public inquiry. Obviously, that would be the prudent and sensible thing to do.

Detailed design work on the scheme is currently under way and, in that connection, Acer Consultants have refined the scheme that was put forward by the previous consultants, Howard Humphries. In doing so, a small number of additional properties have been identified as possibly being affected by the scheme. I assure my right hon. Friend that the preferred route has not been changed, but that minor adjustments have been made to it as detailed design work has continued. The centre line of the preferred route has remained the same, but detailed design work made it clear that the route would impinge upon properties that it had been thought it would not affect.

Although it is not possible to give a final number of properties likely to be required for the scheme, it seems that about 127 could be affected. However, that is by no means certain and in any event not all 127, or whatever the final number, will have to be demolished. The Department is willing to acquire properties even when only part of the holding may be affected by the route. That is the background to the recent letters that the Department sent to some eight property owners—and this is probably the basis of the rumours to which my right hon. Friend referred—who had originally made blight applications which were rejected. They have now received letters from the Department inviting them to submit fresh blight applications because it is quite clear on closer consideration that their properties may be blighted as a result of this route.

I emphasise that that is not being done by the Department to try to harass those occupants into giving their properties to the Department. It is to try to be fair to them. I emphasise, as did my right hon. Friend, that a blight application can be accepted without any commitment on the part of the vendor to sell the property to the Department before the result of the public inquiry.

I strongly emphasise that there is no prejudging of the issue. Some people say that their properties are blighted and that they cannot be expected to live with the uncertainty until the outcome of the public inquiry. In the interim, they seek some redress. Others quite understandably say that they have been living in these houses for many years and have no intention of giving them up. Whether the properties are blighted or not, the occupants hope that when the inspector has considered all the evidence he will conclude that the Department's preferred route is wrong and that the route promoted by my right hon. Friend or a similar one should ultimately be accepted.

My right hon. Friend drew attention to the failings of the North British Housing Association in the management of some of the properties for which it is responsible along the line of the proposed road. The background to that is that, as a result of a scrutiny by the Department, it was thought that it would be more efficient for the management of properties acquired by the Department pending the detailed consideration of road schemes by an inquiry, to be in the hands of a housing association or some other specialist agent rather than in the hands of the Department. The Department sensibly responded to that scrutiny by inviting tenders for the management of our properties in various areas, including those in Worthing.

I have shared with my right hon. Friend my concerns on this matter, and I am pleased to say that there has been a significant improvement in the performance of the North British Housing Association. During the past three to four months, it has reduced the wholly unacceptable backlog of empty properties awaiting tenants. At present, of the 90 properties in the Department's ownership, only nine are empty. Two of those are being relet, three are in the process of being brought back into a habitable state before letting, and four have been acquired only very recently. The Department has also accepted blight notices in respect of a further 13 properties, although we do not think that all those will actually have to be acquired by the Department in the immediate future.

My right hon. Friend will be pleased to hear that, without the need to proceed through the courts, the housing association has already obtained vacant possession of two of the three properties in which we had identified serious breaches of our tenancy agreements which had given rise to complaints from neighbouring residents—an issue that my right hon. Friend has raised with me at more than one meeting.

A court hearing in respect of the remaining property has been fixed for 14 August. When reletting property or placing new tenants, the housing association has been asked to pay particular attention to the selection of suitable families to avoid this type of problem in the future.

The North British Housing Association was given three months from 1 June to 1 September this year in which to demonstrate that it could improve its performance beyond that which it had achieved before. There is already some evidence of an improvement, but as my right hon. Friend has made clear in this debate, it is not possible yet to describe the situation as ideal. I assure my right hon. Friend that the performance of the North British Housing Association will be critically examined at the end of that three-month review period on 1 September. In the meantime, the housing association has indicated its willingness, in conjunction with the Department, to meet representatives of local opinion to discuss matters of common concern, and I understand that that offer remains open.

Everyone is agreed that the A27 between Worthing and Lancing is in desperate need of improvement. Many other parts of the A27 and A259 have been or are already being improved as part of the Government strategy to provide a high-quality route between Southampton and Dover. I fully understand the frustration caused by the delay in progressing the scheme. But I hope that in this short debate I have been able to allay the concerns of my right hon. Friend and his constituents about the objectivity with which this issue is being addressed so that when the public inquiry comes, the inspector is as far as possible able to draw conclusions from an agreed set of facts. In the meantime, I look forward to meeting my right hon. Friend in his constituency very shortly and to discussing any other issues arising in more detail.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at ten minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 25 July 1991

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITIONS

Excise Duty (Motor Cycles)

9.34 am

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): I should like to present a petition on behalf of some of my constituents who consider that the rise in vehicle excise duty on motor cycles is unjust.

To lie upon the Table.

Baltic States

9.35 am

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): I have been afforded the honour by the Lithuanian Association in Great Britain to present a petition on its behalf and on behalf of the people of the oppressed Baltic states asking that the House take account of their plight. The petition reads:

The humble petition of people residing in the United Kingdom, sheweth Mikhail Gorbachev is coming to the G7 conference at his own insistence and will beg for economic aid. The G7 countries should not give unconditional assistance to this man who presides over a government which continues to deny the basic right of self-determination to millions of oppressed people.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House takes steps to urge the British Government that no aid, other than humanitarian, should be given to the Soviet Union until those countries forcibly incorporated into the Soviet Empire are allowed unconditionally to decide their own destiny.

To lie upon the Table.

Vietnamese Boat People

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

9.36 am

Sir Peter Blaker (Blackpool, South): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise this important topic. Our debate will be followed with close attention by the people of Hong Kong to whom this matter is of great concern. I pay tribute to the members of the Executive and Legislative Councils of Hong Kong and to the Hong Kong Commissioner and his staff who have been extremely helpful to many right hon. and hon. Members in keeping them informed on this and on other subjects.

We refer to those who are the subject of this debate as boat people because originally in the 1970s they arrived by boat. They came mostly from South Vietnam, many of them were of Chinese race and, since South Vietnam had recently been defeated in war by North Vietnam, it was natural for them to cross the South China sea rather than travel via Vietnam on the land route.

We remember the harrowing scenes on our television screens of small unseaworthy boats, and the stories of attacks by sharks and pirates and the sinking of boats in storms. Such stories naturally and rightly evoked the sympathy of the world for the Vietnamese boat people. Since then, the situation has changed, and those who have been coming to Hong Kong in recent years have tended to come by land, many of them travelling all the way round almost as far as Hong Kong along the south China coast and then picking up a boat at the Pearl river. They arrive in Hong Kong as if they were boat people who had travelled all the way from Vietnam, which in most instances in recent years has not been the case. Nevertheless, because of our memory of the harrowing scenes of the 1970s, the boat people, as we continue to call them, still attract a great deal of sympathy and feeling among many people in many parts of the world.

The numbers of such people have varied from time to time. The largest number to arrive in one year was 66,000, and they came in the first seven months of 1979. In 1988, some 18,500 arrived, and in 1989 the figure was 34,500. I am speaking of those who came to Hong Kong. More than 14,000 have arrived this year. A few weeks ago, as many as 180 a day were arriving in Hong Kong. I am glad to say that that figure has now dropped, although it is still running at 56 a day—a substantial number. Ever since the 1970s, every year, significant numbers have arrived.

All this time, Hong Kong has, to its credit, followed the policy of first asylum. No Vietnamese migrant, whether arriving by boat direct from south Vietnam or from some other place, has been turned away. Partly because of that splendid record, 97 per cent. of the people who leave Vietnam clandestinely come to Hong Kong. We have to remember that Hong Kong is a crowded place. There are 5·8 million people living in an area only twice the size of the Isle of Wight. That is a density of 5,385 people per square kilometre, compared to our density of 230. Therefore, the refugees are even more of a burden for Hong Kong than they would be for a less populated country.

Up to about 1988, all people leaving Vietnam in these circumstances were treated by the world as refugees. However, shortly before 1988, the practice of some of the resettlement countries began to change, and they began to

[Sir Peter Blaker]

differentiate between those who were genuine refugees—those who came in the 1970s and early 1980s probably were refugees escaping from persecution or the fear of it—and those who were leaving for economic reasons.

As a result, resettlement from Hong Kong dropped off dramatically. In 1980, 37,000 were resettled from Hong Kong to other recipient countries, but in 1987 only just over 2,000. This change obliged Hong Kong also to change. Therefore, in June 1988, it adopted a policy of screening the Vietnamese arrivals. The screening is monitored by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and its aim is to differentiate between those who are genuine refugees, who are placed in open camps, and those who are economic migrants, who are put into detention centres. Screening has shown that over 80 per cent. of those who arrive are economic migrants.

All this imposes a heavy burden on Hong Kong. As of 22 July—three days ago—there were 5,736 refugees in Hong Kong. Those who had been screened out as non-refugees numbered 18,194 and those awaiting screening and the results of screening numbered 37,770—a total of 61,700 people. If the same numbers were applied to the United Kingdom, given the difference in our population, 600,000 people would be here either as refugees or as people in detention. That would be regarded by the people of this country with horror. Our whole population would say, "This is intolerable. Something has to be done about it." Not surprisingly, that is the attitude of the people of Hong Kong who, for so many years, have put up with this burden. The cost has been substantial. Most of it has been borne by Hong Kong, although some has been borne by the United Kingdom.

In 1989, as a result of this change of policy and the introduction of screening, a conference of 75 countries was held in Geneva. It evolved a comprehensive programme of action, which has four parts: first, continuation of the policy of first asylum; secondly, the practice of screening; thirdly, resettlement in other countries for those who are genuine refugees; and, fourthly, repatriation to their countries of origin for those who are non-refugees. The first three parts of the programme have been successful; the fourth has not. Since March 1989, only 7,700 Vietnamese have voluntarily returned to Vietnam from Hong Kong. In that time, 53,400 have arrived and 5,100 have been born in the camps, so the situation has been getting worse.

It is universally accepted that people who move from one country to another for economic reasons should be repatriated to their country of origin. It happens everywhere else except in this case. It happens in this country. If somebody arrives from south Asia or the Caribbean without permission, not as a refugee and not seeking asylum but for economic reasons, that person is turned back. Hong Kong turned back 30,000 Chinese illegal immigrants last year. This is one of the sore points for the people in Hong Kong. Their own compatriots—cousins, uncles, perhaps even brothers—are sent back across the border, whereas the Vietnamese are accepted. There is no particular friendship between the Chinese and Vietnamese races.

The position of the United States is wholly illogical. It agreed to the comprehensive programme of action, as did Vietnam, but it is impeding putting that programme into practice. At the same time, it turns back, without any ceremony, boat people from Haiti, and the regime in Haiti is at least as oppressive as that in Vietnam. It turns back people from Mexico if they arrive at the border, and British people arriving at United States airports if they do not have permission to enter. The United States, like other countries, has recently been sending back Kurds from Turkey to Iraq, whether they like it or not. This is the universal practice for illegal immigrants. Therefore it is essential that the same policy should be applied in the case of Vietnamese boat people who are screened out as not being genuine refugees.

About a year ago, when I was in Hong Kong, I went to a detention camp, as many hon. Members have done. The camps are not very pleasant places to visit, because the overcrowding is so intense. Through the interpreter I asked a young, fit Vietnamese who had arrived three weeks before where he had come from and what he expected to happen to him. His reply was, "You in the west are so weak, I expect to end up in California." We must break that assumption, because as long as it applies these people will continue to arrive in Hong Kong. We must make it clear beyond doubt in Vietnam that non-refugees will ultimately be returned to Vietnam.

The fourth point of the policy evolved in Geneva in 1989 is not being put into force largely because of opposition from the United States. Because the United States is opposed to compulsory repatriation, so is Vietnam, because it is seeking favour and aid from the United States now that it has lost aid from Soviet Union. I recently discussed this question with the State Department in Washington, when I went over there with a small all-party group. We had a thorough discussion of the whole subject. We pointed out this illogicality, and the people in the State Department treated us courteously but did not have a satisfactory answer.

It is clear that the United States Administration still feel that it is inconceivable that people should be returned to Vietnam, a country that, in the folk memory of the United States, is a terrible place to be, whatever the changes in recent times, and whatever the improvements in life there. I asked the State Department officials what would be necessary before the United States would formalise its relations with Vietnam, and they said that there were two conditions. The first was that there must be a solution to the problem of prisoners of war and those missing in action. I fully understand the trauma that that still causes to people in the United States, and especially to the relatives of those who are missing.

The second condition was that there should be a solution to the problem of Cambodia. I said to the State Department officials, "Are you really saying that there must be a solution to the problem of Cambodia as a precondition? Surely the solution to the problem in Cambodia lies not with Vietnam alone but principally with the four parties in Cambodia. It lies with the Chinese and with other countries. Why are you saying that there has to be a solution to the problem of Cambodia when it is not within the power of Vietnam to produce such a solution?" We left it at that. I hope that the United States, a country for which I have great admiration and respect, will realise that the time has come to move on towards normalisation of its relations with Vietnam.

A possible way forward—and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will deal with it when he replies—is the new concept of a holding centre in Vietnam to which

non-refugees could be returned. The concept has been discussed by the Government with the Vietnamese, and it seems to me to hold great promise. Such a centre would be run by an international and impartial body and monitored by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

There is resentment in Hong Kong at the burden that the territory has had to carry for such a long time. Apart from the financial burden, there are pressures on accommodation and manpower and the dangers to which Hong Kong officials are exposed in the camps. There is resentment because of the criticism that Hong Kong receives from the world in spite of its humanitarian approach; for example, criticism that the screening process is not operated especially well, and that there is not sufficiently good accommodation for those who are in detention camps.

I hope that the people of Hong Kong will realise from this debate that there is a great deal of support for Hong Kong in the extremely difficult situation that it faces. The British-Hong Kong parliamentary group is one of the largest of its kind. We share the feelings of the people of Hong Kong, and we support the efforts that Her Majesty's Government are making. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will give us some grounds for hope when he replies.

9.53 am

Sir Richard Luce (Shoreham): My right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker) has done the House and the people of Hong Kong a great service by raising the issue of immigration before we go into the summer recess. It is a timely moment to discuss it. The problem of the Vietnamese migrants, or boat people, is imposing an intolerable strain and burden upon the people of Hong Kong at a time when they are struggling, with all the support that we can give, to maintain their way of life and to make a success of the 1984 general declaration.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South has set out succinctly and clearly the figures and the scale of the problem. He told the house that there are about 61,000 Vietnamese living in Hong Kong, of whom only about 6,000 are classified as refugees. As he said, 61,000 is a considerable number. When I had ministerial responsibilities for Hong Kong—I left that job in 1985—I think that I am right in saying that there were 13,000 Vietnamese in Hong Kong. That was regarded then as a considerable strain upon the community and the territory. The strain is now much greater. I went to Hong Kong last February and saw one or two camps. I saw for myself the heavy burden and strain that is imposed upon Hong Kong. More recently, as my right hon. Friend said, a delegation of Legislative Council members visited Britain, led by Mrs. Rita Fan. They expressed their anxieties clearly.

There are other exacerbating problems in Hong Kong. My right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South referred to population density and to the fact that illegal Chinese immigrants are returned promptly to China. It is worth noting that since 1975, when the problem of immigrants first began, the Hong Kong Government have spent no less than £220 million of taxpayers' money. It is worth noting also that Hong Kong appears to be the only country in the far east that observes the first-asylum obligation. None of the other countries in the region appears to be doing so. At the same time, the world is less willing to resettle refugees, perhaps partly because of the economic problems.

All the problems being faced by Hong Kong must be set against the background of the major preoccupation of the people of Hong Kong. No territory in the far east could have shown more humanity and practical help in assisting the Vietnamese. Hong Kong's humanity has been demonstrated in other respects: for example, there was its help with the Red Cross during the Gulf war. More striking and more recently, no less than £30 million has been made available to help to alleviate the problems of the Chinese following their recent flood. That information came to me during this week. The money came mainly from the private sector of Hong Kong. Only a small proportion came from the Hong Kong Government. If ever there has been a demonstration of Hong Kong's humanity for its neighbours, that is it.

The Legislative Council elections are coming up soon, the pressures are increasing, and it is vital to focus on making a success of the 1984 joint declaration. This can serve only as an intolerable extra burden for the people of Hong Kong. My right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South is right to refer to ways in which action can be taken, and whch must be taken urgently. He referred to the comprehensive plan of action and the screening process, which used to cause me great concern. There was much anxiety about the thoroughness of the process. Having watched the process myself—it is now under the supervision and guidance of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees—I can say that the procedures are very thorough. I do not think that the process could be better implemented. There are appeal procedures. I feel that it is the best that we can do to identify those who are genuine refugees and those who are not.

The problem of refugees throughout the world is a growing and serious one. The only real way of tackling it is through the countries of origin. Those countries must be helped to find solutions and ways of attracting refugees and migrants back to their countries, or to discourage them from leaving in the first place.

In that context, I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South that the concept of an international holding centre offers an ideal way of arriving at a solution. Clearly the centre would have to be under international supervision and extremely carefully devised. If such a centre can work in Vietnam, it might be a concept that could be implemented in other parts of the world. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will give an assurance that we are concentrating in a major way on trying to achieve this objective.

Another important factor is regional progress. My right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South was right to say that Cambodia on its own must not be a precondition for the United States helping to solve the problem that faces Hong Kong. The fact that there is progress in Cambodia should help to create a better atmosphere in that part of the world. The fact that the Vietnamese and Chinese are beginning to establish closer links is a good sign. The western world should be doing everything possible to encourage Vietnam to move towards some form of plural democracy and to generate growth in their economy. That must be done with the encouragement of Vietnam's neighbours in the far east and with western help and assistance.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxstowe): I agree with everything that has been said so far, but does my right hon. Friend accept that the solutions to the problems of the Vietnamese economy are not furthered by the fact that the Americans have imposed a trade embargo, which means that the economy cannot fulfil its function even if the possible solutions to which he has referred were implemented? If we are to solve the economic problems that are forcing people to leave Vietnam, we should encourage the United States to normalise relations and, possibly, not to stop others, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World bank, from assisting and investing in Vietnam.

Sir Richard Luce: My hon. Friend has put his finger on it. It is important to give every encouragement to Vietnam to make progress. I agree with my hon. Friend that it is extremely important that the United States should do what it can to remove trade restrictions and to help with economic development in Vietnam.

The United States has imposed involuntary returns. Of course, it is right to have a hang-up, to put it bluntly, about its experiences in Vietnam in the 1960s, but times have changed and conditions and circumstances are quite different. The United States has an obligation to assist the British Government and the people of Hong Kong to find a solution to the problem. Our Government's first duty is to Hong Kong and its people, and we look to them to take a positive lead, but with the help of the United States. That is the least that we can do for the people of Hong Kong.

10 am

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): I hope that we can persuade the Americans to lift their restrictions on trade with Vietnam, even though the process of liberalisation in Vietnam is proceeding more slowly than we had hoped. Even if that liberalisation comes, many Vietnamese will be in camps in Hong Kong for the foreseeable future, and I am especially concerned about the children. I hope that the open camp system, such as Taia Chau, can be extended so that families with children are not locked behind barbed wire as they are at High island and Whitehead detention centres—where children spend years without seeing a tree or a blade of grass.

The open detention camps, which are run by Hong Kong Refugee Housing Ltd. are far superior. I hope that we can extend the amount of education provided in the camps, and especially the teaching of English. The refugees will be settled in English-speaking countries, and it would help their resettlement if they could learn English while they were in the camps. All that will cost money. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, unlike other United Nations agencies, is short of cash rather than of competence. We are giving £20 million this year, which is not a bad contribution. It is the sixth largest in the world, and twice as much as France is giving. I hope that the sum will be increased. I am glad that we are giving an additional £6 million to UNHCR in Hong Kong, but I hope that we can lead an international drive to extend the amount of money being given to it.

10.2 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): We are all grateful to my right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Blaker) for raising such an important issue. The debate provides an opportunity for our right hon. and hon. Friends to show the great concern in Parliament about the matter, and it gives me, as Minister, the opportunity to give an update to the people of Hong Kong on the Government's thinking and on our actions to deal with this major problem.

First, I wish to pay tribute to the Hong Kong authorities which, despite preoccupations with their own future and during a time of considerable uncertainty, have continued to provide a safe haven for more than 175,000 Vietnamese who have arrived in the territory since 1975. No Vietnamese has ever been turned away, and Hong Kong's humanitarian record is one of which it can be justly proud.

My right hon. and hon. Friends have referred to the deterioration in the position in Hong Kong, and I do not propose to reiterate the figures. However, I can well understand the frustration in Hong Kong at having to continue to bear that burden, and the desire that immediate steps and measures should be taken to try to stem the flow of Vietnamese migrants to the territory. Finding a durable solution to the problem is a top priority. Since 1989, we have contributed £35 million, £18·5 millon direct to Hong Kong, in support of international efforts to devise a durable solution to the problem. In 1991, we have pledged a further £6 million to UNHCR's appeal for funds, specifically for its work in Hong Kong.

My hon. Friends have said that economic progress is desirable, especially in Vietnam, and we recognise that to tackle the root causes of the exodus it is clearly desirable that Vietnam should become a better and more prosperous place. We have welcomed the Vietnamese Government's acknowledgement of their responsibilities towards their own citizens in Hong Kong and we shall consider aid to Vietnam, including a bilateral aid programme in that context. We also contribute to non-governmental organisation activity in areas of Vietnam from which the asylum seekers in Hong Kong originate.

In February this year, at our instigation, the European Commission inaugurated a six-month, £7 million pilot programme of reintegration assistance in areas of Vietnam from which those people originate. If successful, that will be followed by a two-and-a-half-year, £84 million programme financed by the international donor community. I need hardly add that that programme will be stillborn if non-refugees do not return to Vietnam.

The comprehensive plan of action agreed at the second conference on Indo-Chinese refugees in June 1989, provides for the maintenance of first asylum, the screening of new arrivals to determine refugee status, the return of those found to be refugees, and the repatriation of those found not to be refugees to their country of origin. Screening in Hong Kong has been developed with the co-operation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The criterion used is that contained in the 1951 United Nations convention and the 1967 protocol relating to the status of refugees. That states that a person is a refugee if he has a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion and who, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of his country of nationality.

Improvements in the screening procedure in Hong Kong have been introduced where necessary, and I am confident that it is both fair and achieves the main objectives of ensuring that no one facing repatriation need

fear persecution. Since 1975, more than 13,000 Vietnamese refugees have been resettled in the United Kingdom. At the second international conference on Indochinese refugees, we also undertook to resettle a further 2,000 refugees from Hong Kong within three years.

We have been active in efforts to persuade non-refugees now in Hong Kong to volunteer for repatriation to Vietnam. At the fourth meeting of the steering committee of the international conference on Indochinese refugees in April this year, Vietnam reaffirmed its undertaking that no one returned to Vitenam would be persecuted and that UNHCR would have unhindered access to those who returned. More than 9,000 asylum seekers have already taken advantage of the voluntary repatriation programme, 7,800 from Hong Kong. UNHCR reported in April that there was no evidence to suggest any of them have been maltreated.

The British embassy in Hanoi also makes regular visits to areas of Vietnam to which significant numbers of migrants have returned from Hong Kong. Since December 1989, 11 such visits have been made. Many of the 51 sent back on 12 December 1989 have been contacted more than once. Again, no evidence of maltreatment has been discovered.

However, despite our efforts, it is clear that voluntary repatriation alone will not work. We must seek other ways to repatriate those non-refugees who do not opt to return to Vietnam. Those people are no different from other illegal immigrants except that, because of the emotive background, their deportation is a matter of contention. It is not fair on the people of Hong Kong to expect them to continue to provide a temporary place of asylum at great cost without any expectation of an early solution. Nor is it fair to the Vietnamese themselves to hold out false hopes of resettlement, as some misguided people have done. I note the comments that my right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South made as a result of an interview that he had with one of those people. There is absolutely no prospect that the international community will change its mind and resettle Vietnamese who are not refugees.

We are also concerned about the plight of unaccompanied minors, some of whom have been sent abroad by their parents in Vietnam in the hope that, if the child secures refugee status, the parents will then be able to follow. We continue to urge UNHCR to expedite its procedures to determine the status of those children so that they may be resettled or returned to their parents as soon as possible.

We are, therefore, taking the lead in international efforts to find ways to repatriate non-refugees. But it is essential that any solution that we propose can be implemented. In particular, we need to take account of Vietnam's sensitivity to international and, particularly, United States reactions to any measures which might be taken.

The fourth meeting of the international conference on Indochinese refugees steering committee in Geneva on 30 April and 1 May reaffirmed the principles of the comprehensive plan of action. It confirmed that there would be no change to the policy of screening asylum seekers, not to cut-off dates, and that all non-refugees must return to their country of origin. The steering committee also agreed to further consultations on alternative and additional measures to bring about a greatly accelerated rate of return of the non-refugees to Vietnam.

My right hon. Friend rightly drew attention to the position of the United States and made several comments on the United States Administration's opinion. Following contacts with the United States Administration at the highest level, we informed the Americans that we intend to pursue actively the proposal to create a centre under international management in Vietnam to which non-refugees who do not volunteer can be returned pending reintegration into their own communities.

That approach has the support of UNHCR and the International Organisation of Migration. We believe that it offers the best chance of reaching a durable and human solution to this complex and difficult problem. We also believe that the Americans now accept the importance of making the idea work. Discussions on the proposal for internationally managed centres are currently taking place in Geneva between ourselves, the Vietnamese, UNHCR, and IOM. All sides are keen to make progress. But much work remains to be done.

Meanwhile, we will continue our unremitting efforts to secure a permanent solution to the problem and to ease the pressures on Hong Kong.

RUC (Chief Constable's Report)

10.14 am

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): I am particularly pleased to have this opportunity to speak about the 1990 annual report of the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary. I should first point out that I once served as a special constable in the RUC and presently act as parliamentary adviser to the RUC Federation.

I have, therefore, the greatest affection and admiration for the police in Northern Ireland and nothing I shall say today is intended to detract from the courageous and selfless way in which that service has borne the brunt of 21 years of terrorism. On the contrary, it is intended to highlight the need for a much more realistic approach to the whole problem of policing in an area where the threat is such that every day is a trial not only for the individual policeman but for his family.

Having stated my personal interest in the RUC, I must make it clear that what I am about to say is not motivated by any narrow or sectional interest, but is exclusively in the interests of all the law-abiding people in the community and of Northern Ireland in general.

Year after year, the Chief Constable's report is presented, and for the eight years that I have been an elected Member here I have analysed it with deep concern, because I have seen everything that I believe in and all that I was sent here to represent and uphold eroded by the men of violence. Perhaps in that situation one falls into the trap of believing what one would like to believe. I have on such occasions always looked to the future in the hope that it would be better than the past.

But on 5 July this year it was different. The Chief Constable on this occasion left the long-suffering people of Northern Ireland totally outraged when, after 21 years of terrorism, all he could promise them was:

"The immediate outlook is grim. We are facing the highest terrorist threat in the last two years."

Some may commend his frankness, but finding a Chief Constable reduced to such pessimism caused me to look even more closely than usual at his report.

I could not help but recall the promises which were made in the House in November 1985 by the then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he told us that the Anglo-Irish Agreement would bring about peace, stability and reconciliation, an end to megaphone diplomacy and better cross-frontier co-operation and extradition. Not one of those promises has been kept. I looked anew at the report and found that it confirmed everything about which I have continued to warn the Government. No one has listened. Will the Minister today listen to the facts produced by the Chief Constable and to other information which I intend to provide?

One must look at what the report says and at what it fails to say. It has many fine words and phrases. It says:

"United unequivocal condemnation is a powerful weapon in defence of decency and all those values which we, the police and the people, share, cherish and seek to uphold."

It also says:

"The task of bringing terrorists to justice requires determined people of goodwill to come forward and assist the police. Only in this way, together, will we be able to bring an end to the misery which affects our whole community."

Those are fine words but we all know that in the prevailing security situation there is no way in which such people of good will can be given any degree of protection if they choose to assist the security forces.

Such is the freedom with which terrorists can operate that contractors supplying the security forces are regularly attacked or killed or forced to withdraw their services. Policemen and women are so vulnerable that for their own protection they are having to move in increasing numbers to live in carefully selected estates. There are more and more large areas where they are being advised not to live since they cannot count on reasonable security there.

Yet the Chief Constable fails to tell us how many members of the service have, because of threat, been forced to move home, and he neglects to even acknowledge the contribution and sacrifices which are being made by those who supply goods and services to the security forces.

Those of us who live in Northern Ireland know that during the past six years in particular, there has been a systematic withdrawal of effective policing in many areas. The Chief Constable of Northern Ireland may deny that there are strictly no-go areas, but everyone knows for certain that there are slow-go areas. Because of the threat, people who live in them cannot expect any immediate police or Army reaction when they are in trouble.

The ordinary police officer is often willing to respond to calls for help, but is forbidden from doing so because of inadequate resources in terms of manpower, military back up, or helicopter availability. The use of helicopters is a key element in the movement of security forces to areas in which the IRA may have placed land mines.

I quote from a letter that I received from a police superintendent to whom I had complained about a lack of response to an incident in a town—not in some remote rural area:

"I am pleased to note that you have identified that scarce resources was the contributory factor on the occasion under investigation. Any representations you can make to assist in this aspect will be much appreciated."

That is the kind of reply that I receive again and again from middle-ranking police officers who are doing their best to give a service to the community, but who must choose between putting at risk of life and limb the men under their command and making an immediate response to members of the public who are in trouble.

How did that tragic and frightening state of affairs come about? It has arisen because Minister after Minister has come to the Dispatch Box to tell the House what he likes to believe, and which he has been told by senior police and military officers and by advisers, who know what the Minister would like to believe. It has been one great con game, and in no respect has it been more deceitful than in the way in which co-operation with the Irish Republic has been portrayed. It is to the shame of every right hon. and hon. Member that he or she has fallen for that sham.

I draw the attention of the House to a few incidents that I have monitored, but they do not reflect the totality of such incidents in my constituency, where there is an interface between Fermanagh and South Tyrone, and between the counties of Donegal, Cavan, Leitrim and Monaghan. They give some idea of what is hidden from the House.

On 27 January 1990, a van stolen in Dublin was used two days later in a bomb attack on a police station at Lisbellaw. On 21 February, a mortar attack was made on Kinawley RUC station, and the three vehicles used were

abandoned by the terrorists, who then escaped at the frontier crossing. On 6 June, a gun attack on one of our manned frontier checkpoints was launched from the Republic, from behind the Garda and Irish army cordon. On 25 June, a van stolen in County Monaghan was used in a 400 lb bomb attack on an Army checkpoint.

On 3 September last year, security forces at a cross-frontier position were fired on from the Republic, and on 27 October, a heavy machine gun attack on helicopters was made from the Republic, again from behind a Garda and Irish army cordon. On 23 November, a young man was abducted from Northern Ireland, taken across to the Republic, and there forced to drive a 3,000 lb proxy bomb to an Army checkpoint.

At the beginning of December, another machine gun attack on an Army checkpoint was made from the Republic, and on 27 December, another cross-frontier machine gun attack was launched. On 21 January this year, a constituent of mine, Colin Stephenson—a 63-year-old ex-policeman—was murdered in Brookborough. The car used by the terrorists had been stolen in County Monaghan on 11 December.

On 22 March, there was another cross-frontier shooting, and on 24 March, a sustained machine gun attack was made from the Republic on an Army patrol. On 8 April, a woman was abducted in the Republic and was forced to carry a bomb to Balleek RUC station. On 24 May, a motorcycle stolen in County Monaghan was used later that day in a murder attempt on an RUC inspector. On 3 June, there was an attack on St. Angelo security base. The lorry used and the mortars attached to it had been brought from County Donegal. On 23 June, a mortar attack was launched from the Republic on one of our Army positions.

Other incidents come to mind, such as the cross-border attack on the home of Lord Caledon, and several attacks on the Moy bridge permanent vehicle checkpoint. All those attacks originated in the Irish Republic, but no one has been made amenable by the Republic's authorities to answer for any of them.

The Chief Constable's report suggests that relationships with the Republic are good. Hooray for relationships. Perhaps one should listen to the words of Deputy Brendan McGahan, a Fine Gael member of the Irish Parliament, following the murder a few days ago of Thomas Oliver, who was abducted in the Republic and shot by the IRA for allegedly passing information to the Garda. Mr. McGahan referred to the IRA killers as "the border untouchables" and said:

"There are nests of IRA men who are clearly identifiable. The Garda know who they are, but they need evidence. I believe that the whole area"—

that is, the Cooley peninsula and the Dundalk area—

"should become the centre of tremendous attention from the Garda and the Minister for Justice."

Deputy McGahan went on to call for internment. I think that he and I are the realists—not the two Governments. We have much in common here.

It is not just at Cooley that the IRA has the upper hand. I draw attention to the absolute freedom with which an IRA unit more than 30 strong is able to wreak havoc and murder in the west of my constituency from County Donegal.

The leader of Fine Gael, Deputy John Bruton, realises the full implications from the point of view of the Irish Republic. He has said:

"They are attempting to take on the institutions of the state and are offering a direct challenge to the Garda Siochana. This has very severe implications for the security of the state and for the people living in the state."

That was the reaction to an isolated IRA killing in the Republic—thankfully not so many killings emanate from within the Republic against citizens of that country. Yet we have had to endure that without remission for 22 years and our Government treat the situation as though it had been happening only for the past two weeks and will be resolved within the next two.

The Chief Constable talks about his satisfaction with the state of co-operation, but I can only believe that he does so to please his political masters and at their instigation. Co-operation is not about two neighbouring police chiefs who get on well together, about the freedom of a few senior officers to meet each other, or about the frequency with which RUC commanders are summoned to the Maryfield establishment to exchange platitudes. Co-operation is about the extent to which the war against terrorism is conducted and that is as ineffective now as it was before the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed—perhaps more so because there are more constraints, more bureaucracy and less real communication between policemen who have to face terrorists at the coal face.

That is not sour grapes—it is the truth. I challenge the Minister to produce a solitary fact that will contradict what I have said. I challenge him to say that one fact that I have placed in front of him, through my own resources of from the Chief Constable's report, is an error.

As regards the killings, the Chief Constable shows in his report that, from 1981 until 1985, there had been a steady but slow decline in the annual rate. As a result, terrorist deaths fell from 101 in 1981 to 54 in 1985. That figure of 54 refers to deaths connected with the security situation. There were 47 terrorist murders in that year, but let me stick to the chief constable's figures. Since the agreement was signed, the average annual death rate has increased by almost 43 per cent. and the number of shooting incidents has risen from 237 in 1985, by a massive 135 per cent., to 559. I wish that the Secretary of State would stop asking me if that was not attributable to successful gun-running from Libya through the Irish Republic. I should have hoped that co-operation would by now have meant the discovery of more than 10 per cent. of the estimated 150 tonnes imported through the Republic at that time. Why has the Chief Constable failed to tackle that in his report?

If the number of killings has risen, surely one must at least expect a similar increase in successes against terrorists, but that is not so. Despite the massive increase in arms and explosives available to the terrorists there are roughly about the same finds as in 1985. What has changed drastically is the number of people charged with terrorist offences. While an average of around 600 were charged each year from 1981 to 1985, only 380 were charged in 1990. Why has the Chief Constable nothing to say about that figure?

Is it not a fact that such are the political pressures on the Chief Constable that law-abiding citizens are getting a thoroughly bad deal and that he has failed to withstand the unprecedented political interferences from both the Northern Ireland Office and the Republic's Government? Let the Minister tell me the respective numbers and ranks of those who work in complaints and discipline and those

[Mr. Ken Maginnis]

who struggle at the coal face in special branch. Do those numbers bear any relevance to the respective size of the problem?

Is it not true that complaints and discipline are largely abused for political and terrorist advantage and that of 4,132 complaints lodged, 55·4 per cent. were withdrawn, 38·5 per cent. were not substantiated, 4·6 per cent. were of such a minor nature that they were informally resolved and only 1·5 per cent. were substantiated? Why has the Chief Constable not commented on the abuse of the system and the resultant waste of police time, not merely affecting those who are investigating but those who too often have to be suspended from duty for long periods while they are investigated? Should he not be asking for some form of redress against those who waste police time in that way?

Why have we not heard from the Chief Constable about the number of security bases which have been made inoperable or ineffective by terrorist activity? How many of his own police stations have been wholly or partially knocked out of action, and the issue of replacement put on the long finger? What is his approach to the systematic destruction of the Birches, Tynan, Loughgall and Benburb and the virtual closure of Moy—all within a 10-mile radius? Why are the public, to whom he appeals for more help, not being told what is to happen? He heads up their police force, not that of any Secretary of State for Northern Ireland of any Foreign Minister of the Republic.

On the question of welfare, let me ask why the health and welfare of the officers merits but a single statistical paragraph plus another which alludes to the computerisation of medical records, when we know that a 13,000-strong police force has a total of 226,652 days lost through sickness? What is the level of nervous disorders, and heart disease, for instance? Where is the concern for officers and their families who suffer similar illnesses, which of course cannot be recorded? The public should know about that.

Why is there no mention of the hundreds of members of the full-time police reserve—some of whom have now served for almost 20 years—who do exactly the same job as regular officers but are still without any pension rights? Should the Chief Constable not be making the public aware that the Government are bad employers in that respect? Is it not important that he should highlight how it is virtually impossible, for security reasons, for a full-time reserve officer to find alternative employment if he leaves the force and how he is obliged to live on social security between the time he retires and the time he qualifies for the ordinary state pension?

The Chief Constable refers to his request for 441 additional regular officers, and welcomes the Police Authority's support for that. He tells us he awaits a response from the Northern Ireland Office. But are those the facts?

As long ago as the spring of 1987, the then Chief Constable, Sir John Hermon, made a detailed case to the authority for a huge increase in the establishment of the RUC, which had been static from 1984. The response from the authority, with the approval of the Secretary of State, was an interim increase of 250 in the establishment of the full-time reserve, pending further consideration of the main bid by Her Majesty's inspectorate, the Police Authority and the Secretary of State.

The main bid was the subject of detailed analysis and discussion with the then Chief Constable by Her Majesty's inspectorate but the matter did not come back to the Police Authority within Sir John's period of command, which ended in May 1989. Shortly after his appointment in the summer of 1989, the new Chief Constable initiated a new manpower review. That resulted in a request to the authority for an increase in establishment of approximately 450 officers. The case had been prepared in accordance with Home Office guidelines and scrutinised by Her Majesty's inspectorate. It was the subject of several intensive discussions between the RUC, HMI and the authority in the autumn of 1990.

Ultimately, the authority was satisfied with the case and forwarded it to the Secretary of State in October or November last year, with its full support. Since then the case seems to have become absolutely bogged down in the bureaucracy of the Northern Ireland Office with the result that, incredibly, the Secretary of State told the House:

"In the first instance, the Chief Constable made a submission to the Police Authority, which in due course, will come to me."

In fairness to him, however, he said almost a moment later:

"I am considering that request with all the seriousness that it demands."—[*Official Report*, 11 July 1991; Vol. 194, c. 1071.]

But it is highly probable that his first remark was right and that his second was a typical gentlemanly attempt to cover up for the torpidity of the bureaucracy that services him and his Department.

In the context of the abysmal security situation that now prevails, the way in which the matter has been handled is an absolute disgrace. The blame lies fairly and squarely with the Northern Ireland Office and, I am sorry to have to say, with the leadership of the Police Authority which is unfortunately subservient to the patronage of the Northern Ireland Office.

The Chief Constable's report is superficial and fails properly to reflect the true position. Perhaps that has been the norm, but it must change. If we are to have a Government information document, so be it; but let it not be the Chief Constable's report. Let us have something which is no longer hedged about with political considerations. The public do not require a pep talk or a whitewash. They know that they are being daily let down by the Government and what the level of effective security really is.

It is not up to the Chief Constable to act as an apologist for the Northern Ireland Office. He must be accountable to the public through the Police Authority. Of course, one must sympathise with the Chief Constable in this because the Police Authority has not managed to escape the manipulation of the Government. The relationship between the Police Authority and the Chief Constable is unsatisfactory.

The Police Authority was set up in 1970 in order to remove the RUC from political influence. Is it not then anomalous for the Chief Constable of the RUC to be obliged on a regular basis to interface with the Anglo-Irish Conference on matters which are never disclosed to the Police Authority or discussed with it and are cloaked from

the public, the majority of whom are opposed to the process, but from whom the Chief Constable expects trust and support?

A series of questions arises from areas of policing in Northern Ireland, not all of which I shall have time to put. They deal with the relationship with the Police Authority and the attitude to it. One wonders about the morale of the RUC at the level of chief superintendent and above, following such a disappointment and calculated slight as was caused by the exclusion of internal candidates from the shortlist when the present Chief Constable was appointed.

There are persistent rumours of difficulties between the Chief Constable and the chairman of the authority. The latter, by the nature of his appointment, is dependent on the support and patronage of the Secretary of State and, as a result, he must be considerably restricted in his independence.

Another matter which causes me great anxiety is that it is alleged that the Chief Constable intends to abolish the three senior assistant chief constable ranks and replace them with a deputy chief constable. I hope that that is not so, because the people who at present occupy those ranks are three of the most experienced, principled and independent police officers—men who are concerned first and foremost with the welfare of those under their command and with the needs of the community.

There are many other questions that I should have liked to ask, such as why the Northern Ireland Office found it important to remove at one fell swoop 11 of 18 members of the Police Authority when in so doing it removed those who presently occupy the positions of chairman and vice-chairman within the four main committees. The new appointees are completely green about Police Authority work and will be immediately pressed into the positions of chairman and vice-chairman in those committees. I cannot believe—I declare myself as an Ulster Unionist in saying so—that there was not some malice behind the way in which those men, two of whom served in the security services and one of whom experienced horrific injuries in giving that service, were removed from the service.

I challenge the Minister today. I have dealt with the facts. Let him deny the facts that I have put before him. I have posed questions on behalf of the people of Northern Ireland, which deserve an answer. I finish as I started by saying that we have 13,000 dedicated police officers in Northern Ireland. With their families, they sacrifice a great deal on behalf of the community. They deserve more and the community deserves more. Let us all hope that we obtain more than we have been given until now.

10.47 am

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): I begin by congratulating the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) on initiating this debate on an important subject. It is important not only to hon. Members, as he made clear, and to the Government, as I shall make clear, but, as he was right to say, to all people who live in Northern Ireland.

I am pleased that the hon. Gentleman started his speech by paying tribute to the Chief Constable. I echo that tribute. Given the job that all chief constables have to do in the United Kingdom—it is not an easy job in any circumstances, as the House is well aware—there are special difficulties in being Chief Constable of the RUC. I am happy to associate the Government with the tribute that the hon. Gentleman paid to the Chief Constable. I am glad that he paid it because in the rest of his speech there was a degree of robustness about some of his comments which will be studied with care by those to whom they were directed.

I do not dispute the hon. Gentleman's right to express his views or those of his constituents, or to reflect the views of the federation to which he quite properly referred. However, he and I both understand the importance of reflecting those views within a balanced framework, so that we do not create an impression that would be unhelpful to those whom we oppose. We must not create the impression that matters in Northern Ireland are worse than they are, or that we are not encouraged by and proud of what the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the reserve achieve on behalf of the community. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman agrees with those sentiments.

The hon. Gentleman will understand that he took a significant proportion of the time available and there is no way in which I can answer all the points that he raised, but the Government and, I am sure, the Chief Constable will want to read and reflect on his remarks. A number of questions that he raised about the Chief Constable's report are matters for the Chief Constable. Given the strictures in his speech and his remarks about the relationship between the Northern Ireland Office and the Chief Constable, I shall leave the Chief Constable to answer; otherwise, I shall expose myself to even more strictures the next time that the hon. Gentleman makes a speech on that subject.

To suggest that Ministers believe that the security problems of Northern Ireland started two weeks ago and will finish two weeks hence is not a reflection on Ministers but an untypical reflection on the hon. Gentleman, who knows better. He knows the record of the Government's commitment and he also knows, better than most hon. Members, that the security forces and the RUC are not divorced from Government. It is the Secretary of State's responsibility to set security policies. No one argues that the RUC is not operationally independent, but if the hon. Gentleman reads what he has said in *Hansard* he will see that he has given the impression that he would like the RUC to be almost divorced from Government. The relationship is entirely proper and Ministers are not involved in making operational decisions. Given the tone of the hon. Gentleman's speech, he may take some comfort from that.

The Chief Constable has a responsibility to convey to the people of Northern Ireland how he sees the circumstances at any particular time. As the hon. Gentleman rightly stated, the Chief Constable said that the threat is higher than it has been for the past two years. To extrapolate from that statement, as the hon. Gentleman sought to do, that there had been no improvement over the years and that we could not look forward to a bright future does not do justice to the Chief Constable. The hon. Gentleman knows better than almost any hon. Member that the level of terrorist violence is cyclical—that is not technically the best word, but it ebbs and flows. It is therefore right to recognise the advantages and successes, just as it is appropriate to recognise the difficult times. To chastise the Chief Constable for drawing attention to his honest assessment, which the hon. Gentleman would surely want the people of Northern Ireland to have, is unfortunate.

[Dr. Brian Mawhinney]

Although I cannot, off the top of my head, verify that every incident to which the hon. Gentleman referred emanated from the Republic, no one could deny that there have been incidents emanating from across the border. That cannot be denied because it is on public record, so the hon. Gentleman's suggestion that Ministers were trying to protect hon. Members from that knowledge does not stand up. People have committed crimes in Northern Ireland and then gone across the border. It is also a matter of public record that crimes have emanated from inside Northern Ireland and people have gone to ground there having committed those crimes.

The hon. Gentleman's arguments would have been more balanced had he also referred to the Garda's activities in terms of what they positively achieve, as well as expressing legitimate concerns. To the year ending 31 May this year, the Garda recovered 59 weapons, 16,000 rounds of ammunition and 58·2 kg of explosives. That did not just happen. It reflects police work and co-operation across the border between the RUC and the Garda. The hon. Gentleman is asked not only by Ministers but by the Chief Constable to accept that, although security relations across the border can and need to be improved, the relations between the RUC and the Garda are, I am told, very good. They are improving not at a social or professional level but at an operational level, which is the point that the hon. Gentleman sought to make. That is important to us both.

Mr. Maginnis: Will the Minister give way?

Dr. Mawhinney: No, I shall not give way, because the hon. Gentleman spoke for 33 minutes and I have only about 13 minutes in which to respond.

He will also want to join me in thanking the Garda for detecting the largest bomb—I believe that it was found at Raphoe—that has ever been seen in the island of Ireland. Had that bomb made it across the border, the damage that it would have done and the number of lives that it would have taken would have been enormous. It is therefore important that we keep that balance in mind.

A further point that was emphasised by the hon. Gentleman and which deserves a reply was about resources. The hon. Gentleman will have welcomed the fact that the Police Authority budget for this year is £43 million higher than it was last year, which represents a 9 per cent. increase. Any requests from the Police Authority during the year are given careful consideration, but a 9 per cent. increase is not bad. As the hon. Gentleman made play of the past five years, he may be encouraged to know that during that period the Police Authority grant has risen from £380 million to £514 million—a rise of £134 million. Alongside that, as the hon. Gentleman rightly remarks, there is a manpower bid for 239 regular officers and 202 full-time RUC reserves to be appointed and trained over two years. That is considerable additional funding.

The hon. Gentleman also recognised that the Northern Ireland Office has a legitimate responsibility to look at those requests for public expenditure. Naturally, they must be set against other requests for public expenditure, bearing in mind that the defeat of terrorism is our first priority. That process is nearing completion and the Secretary of State hopes soon to be in a position to respond to that request. The resources argument is helped by the fact that civilianisation of the force is proceeding, and that will provide extra police on the ground. It is also helped by the fact that the Chief Constable is pursuing a policy of centralising and looking for economies of scale. Centralising support services will, in turn, free resources to be deployed on the ground. The hon. Gentleman and I agree that that is where manpower resources need to be deployed.

I do not have time to answer all the hon. Gentleman's questions but I want to respond to one point that he made. The security forces and the police are at the heart of the fight against terrorism in Northern Ireland, but they cannot fight by themselves. It must be a community effort. Everyone must feel part of the fight against terrorism and the support for the RUC and the security forces. The hon. Gentleman and I will agree, I hope, that that support is increasing. Intelligence is improving and becoming more frequent. As that continues, the security forces and the RUC, together with the people, will drive back the terrorist threat——

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I apologise for interrupting the Minister, but I understand that 11 o'clock is the time when statement are usually made. I therefore ask whether you have had a request from the Government this morning to make a statement about the pollution of water supplies. As you know, there was a statement earlier this week about an incident that was deemed to be serious and there was criticism of the delay in notifying the public.

Within the past hour, it has come to my attention that an even more serious incident occurred on 26 December last year. It affected my constituents and those of many other hon. Members. Nobody, but nobody, was told anything. The incident has only now come to light through the media.

Since this incident was more serious than the one discussed earlier, should not there be a statement, and should not the Government conduct an inquiry into the incident and into why there has been silence for so long?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I am not aware of any requests for a statement on this matter, but I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman's point will have been noted.

UNESCO

11.1 am

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): I am delighted to have this opportunity to raise the subject of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, and in particular the need for the United Kingdom to return to its membership without delay. I hope that my hon. Friends the Members for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) and for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) will be allowed to join our brief debate. Both are members of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee and both have taken a close interest in UNESCO for many years.

The House will know of Britain's dominant influence in establishing UNESCO at a preparatory conference held at the Institute of Civil Engineers in London in November 1945. Its secretariat was initially based in London. Its first director general was British and its constitution was deposited in London. Its accounts were audited by the United Kingdom Comptroller and Auditor General.

I have no doubt that, while it was a member, Britain was especially favourably treated. A number of consultancies and contracts were placed by UNESCO with United Kingdom individuals and companies. The Library Association told the Foreign Affairs Select Committee that the United States and the United Kingdom

"have together provided the overwhelming majority of librarians, archivists and other information scientists sent by UNESCO as consultants and advisors."

The United Nations Association told the same Committee:

"leaving aside unquantified yields to eg the British publishing industry . . . the United Kingdom reaps a measurable harvest from its membership."

In short, the United Kingdom receipts from the UNESCO budget were substantially in excess of its direct budgetary contribution—our balance of payments benefited.

I spoke in the debate in November 1985 after the Foreign Affairs Committee had unanimously recommended continued United Kingdom membership of UNESCO, as had the officers of the Conservative foreign affairs committee. Thirteen of the 14 members from all parties who spoke after the Minister for Overseas Development supported our continued membership. The one who did not was given a brief by a Whip and invited to call for our withdrawal. He got his reward on earth and is now a Minister. I suspect that he is ashamed of that little episode, so I will not name him this morning.

Alas, the Government spurned the advice of Parliament and, I believe, the advice of the Foreign Office, and Britain withdrew from membership at the end of 1985. The Government spurned the advice of scientific, educational and cultural institutions. They also spurned the unanimous opinion of our European Community and Commonwealth partners that we should not take the easy option and back out. I suspect that the decision to withdraw was taken by the Prime Minister of the day at a time when British foreign policy was far too closely allied with that of the Reagan Administration.

For much the same reason, we also abandoned all the fine work that we had put into the law of the sea, which had also clearly been in our national interest. The United States-based Heritage Foundation was allowed to play a large part in moulding British official and public opinion. At that time, as Mr. Gough Whitlam pointed out, the foundation was running campaigns attacking the United Nations and its agencies. Many foreign policy decisions taken during that period were regarded on both sides of the House as going against our international traditions and our worldwide roles and responsibilities.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary will be aware that there is still a certain amount of tidying up to be done.

I should like to make it clear that I am by no means starry-eyed about UNESCO. On the contrary, I am well aware of just how badly managed it has been and of how far it strayed from its original course. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, who has kindly come along to reply to this debate, had not yet entered the House when I initiated an Adjournment debate on some of the wilder aspects of the new world information order, as it was then called.

I strongly support the principle of universality while much disliking the word itself. There has been bipartisan support for it in the House for many years. We make a great mistake if we go on picking and choosing which United Nations body or agency we desire to belong to. The hostile Commonwealth reaction to our withdrawal—Commonwealth countries rightly felt badly let down after giving us so much support within UNESCO—partly reflected the high premium placed by Commonwealth and third-world countries on the principle of universality in the membership of the United Nations and its agencies. Every breach of that principle is seen by many as devaluing the entire United Nations system.

The Foreign Affairs Committee concluded in its 1985 report:

"a breach by the United Kingdom of the principle of universality in the UN and its Agencies could have long-term, and damaging, consequences for those organisations, and not merely for UNESCO alone."

I suggest that in the long run we shall put at risk our seat on the Security Council. It is already a matter of comment at the United Nations, where other countries such as Germany and Japan are seen to have a good case for Security Council membership.

Looking back on the foolish withdrawal in 1985, it becomes obvious that the United Kingdom's contribution to UNESCO was more fully appreciated in UNESCO than in the United Kingdom. There was genuine regret at our departure. Our contribution was seen as having been at a much higher level than that of the United States. Looking back, it is also obvious that much of the row was about the influence of the Soviet Union and its allies in eastern Europe. Thank heavens that in 1991 we live in a very different world.

My hon. Friend the Minister will want to tell us—no doubt he has been briefed to do so—that, although UNESCO has made considerable changes, they are still insufficient for our return. I fear that he will be in danger of sounding like Mr. Shamir, who, in the context of the Palestinian-Israeli dispute, is always in favour of talks, while always putting obstacles in the way of them—as we heard on the radio this morning. Some Conservative Members will want to argue that UNESCO has now reformed itself sufficiently to allow us to go back, but my case is different. I believe that the Government let Britain down by quitting. It is in the national interest to rejoin—the sooner the better.

All pro-European Conservative Members have used the argument that we needed to be in UNESCO so that we could influence decisions and those who make them. We

[Mr. Cyril D. Townsend]

have said that it was not good enough to react to those decisions. Precisely the same arguments apply in this debate. We walked off the pitch in a huff, leaving our team to continue the struggle for reform in which, up to then, we had played an honourable part. Now, we wail and whinge from the sidelines instead of returning to the vacant place in the team.

My hon. Friend the Minister told me in a letter dated 3 July:

"We believe that we can exert real influence on the process from where we now stand."

I do not accept that. This is a crucial year in the charting of UNESCO's future. The place that we left is being filled with other national interests, to the detriment of British language users and British interests in general. My hon. Friend will no doubt say that we are monitoring, reviewing, surveying and checking. We have put up £50,000 to fund a management review by independent consultants of UNESCO's office of public information. My hon. Friend the Minister is smiling; he no doubt has a section of his speech devoted to that issue.

We must stop being a spectator and start being a player. We would be a strong player on the managerial and administrative side. The United Kingdom is badly needed, not just for financial reasons. Both the United Kingdom and America are needed if effective reforms are to be carried through. I regret the loss of the United Kingdom's input into the academic, scientific and educational programmes, of which Japan and France are rightly taking full advantage. The truth is that, while we monitor, the United Kingdom and its influence is marginalised.

I hope that my hon. Friend will refer to early-day motion 122, which shows how much support there is in the House for our return. I hope that my hon. Friends will also refer to the recent Select Committee report as I do not have time to do so. I believe that, on a free vote, the House would come out overwhelmingly in favour of our return. I also believe that the non-governmental organisations are overwhelmingly in favour of our return. We shall return one day, and we lose every day that we fail to do so.

How can the United Kingdom influence UNESCO's policies on science education if it has no part in their formulation? There must be a danger that our absence will be accepted as the norm, and a vital sector of academic and scientific activity will be closed to the United Kingdom for the foreseeable future. It is astonishing that we are failing to use UNESCO to promote English as the major means of communication in the modern world. We are setting a bad example to the world. We should announce our return and pledge our determination to help UNESCO clean up its act and return to the high standards that we helped it to achieve after world war two.

Fundamentalism is rampant today, not only in the middle east. Our country has a fine record as a practitioner of the tolerant approach. We should be demonstrating that approach in 1991 in UNESCO. The way forward for Britain is not to sulk and opt out, rather to participate, co-operate and use our special talents in Rolls-Royce diplomacy to help UNESCO to get over its undoubted problems and carry out the vital task that it has been given by the peoples of the United Nations.

11.5 am

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): It is a pleasure to support my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) in this debate. I was pleased that he gained a place in the ballot.

On a day when, because of a little local difficulty, people are talking about the value of Select Committees, this debate shows their true value. We have taken a consistent view and considered evidence from the widest possible range of participants. We did so in 1985, when the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs decided that we should not have left UNESCO. That decision was taken in liaison with some members of the United States Congress who also opposed America's peremptory withdrawal. We were to follow a year later.

In 1990, we had another review and talked to a wide range of people. We absorbed the sort of evidence that Select Committees should consider, and came to a balanced and dispassionate view, which was that much progress had been made by Professor Mayor since the original criticisms were levelled in 1985 which caused us to leave.

Although we were opposed to our leaving, believing that we would be best able to reorganise the organisation from inside, not outside, we charted the reforms which had been introduced by Professor Mayor with considerable energy, and which had then been carried out. We thought that, as wise men, we should give the Government the benefit of the doubt and said that we thought that the reform process was moving extremely well. We said that, although there was a little to do, if the process continued at the pace it had until then, the Government should consider returning within a year. We did not recommend an immediate return because we felt that our suggestion of one year was appropriate to the pace of reform. Now that year is up—this is 1991—which is why we are having today's debate.

There has been some movement in the Government, and we have said that we are moving in the same direction as the Government but at a different pace. For the reasons that my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath has described, the Select Committee feels that we should return now. The Government have said that they will give £50,000 to review the work of UNESCO and then have another period of consideration.

Our original fundamental concerns remain. First and foremost, we believe that the longer we stay out, the less integrated much of what Britain has to offer in the critical spheres of education, science and culture will become. We have been out of UNESCO for six years; if we push that period to a decade, the integration achieved through our excellence in those three critical spheres, which included a better balance of payments figure, will be lost. Therefore, we are on the sidelines during the most critical decade.

Many of us recognise that the decade of the 1990s is a critical period in which we are seeking to narrow the gap between the developed world and the developing world. The process of education is critical in the developing world. In an earlier debate today we talked about mass emigration from Vietnam to Hong Kong for economic reasons. I also gather that, today, there are problems in Italy, where there are 24,000 Albanians whom Italy wants to send back. That is just the tip of a massive potential emigration to the developed world of peoples from countries where they believe themselves to be less

fortunate and more deprived. That is one of the most important spheres in which UNESCO can help, together with other United Nations organisations.

Education is critical; we must ensure that people throughout the world are as well educated as possible. Only on that basis can people start to bring their own countries up to a high standard, revive the economy, and consistently provide the sort of environment in which people want to live. If countries are not able to do that, the consequences for future generations will be beyond anything that we have ever faced before.

It is for those reasons, plus the fact that we should attempt to achieve successful reform from within, that we are today arguing that my hon. Friend the Minister should shorten the pace of his interest. I am delighted that he is interested and has announced that the Government are to fund a review. However, he should shorten the pace and work to a sensible time scale that enables Britain to play a full part in UNESCO. As soon as possible in London, we should work with the people who first established UNESCO and who hold the relevant documents.

At the end of his statement at the recent 136th session of the executive board, Professor Mayor said:

"It has been said that a pessimist is a well-informed optimist. As a scientist I respect the results. On occasions, these have made me a hopeful director general. I think that a hopeful person may either be pessimistic or optimistic, but hopefulness implies more than being well-informed. It means being committed and involved."

I commend those words to my hon. Friend the Minister.

11.20 am

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): I echo the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) on obtaining this debate. It gives us an opportunity to review with my hon. Friend the Minister the progress that is being made with UNESCO.

It is worth reminding the House that UNESCO was founded in 1945 on the proposition that, if war is born of the ideas of man and out of their culture, peace could be born of the same. UNESCO was established in order to influence world thinking on how to keep the peace and prevent war. It is those fundamental ideas that UNESCO seeks to foster through education, science and culture. Science makes war much worse and makes it more likely to destroy mankind.

This nation is rich in culture and education. The English language dominates science and education throughout the world. However, we would be mistaken if we thought that the English language could be taken for granted. It is by no means the dominant human language —Chinese is spoken by many more people throughout the world. Therefore, our education, culture and language are at risk if we do not foster and support them and if we are not confident that they have a contribution to make to the world.

My plea to my hon. Friend the Minister and the Government is on those philosophical grounds. If we begin to lose our pre-eminence and great fortune in dominating education and science, we will also lose out in philosophy and ideas. In doing so, we will deprive the world of what I believe is a developed form of government that permits progress and change without war. I believe that the ideas and issues of war and peace lie at the heart of this debate. Without our contribution, the world will be a much less safe place.

On the issue of universality, it is un-British to take one's ball away and refuse to play. That is what the Government did when they withdrew from UNESCO. It is British to stay in an organisation and to push for reform from within, to meet all the debates head on and put our arguments in a straightforward manner. That is in our democratic tradition. It is the tradition of the House and it is the way in which we seek to persuade and change. For Britain to withdraw is just a failure of courage. It is a failure of confidence in our own ideas and a failure to put them across and have them debated.

There were good reasons for withdrawal. UNESCO was going badly and sadly wrong and anybody who had to endure the endless executive board meetings of the annual conferences in remote parts of eastern Europe will attest to the extreme frustration that was engendered in anyone who was truly interested in promoting education, science and culture throughout the world. However, many of the reforms that we wished to see are now in place and the reductions of the programmes to which we objected, particularly the new world information order, have taken place by common consent. They have been removed from the agenda and have been replaced, in the case of the new world information order, by a commitment to the freedom and pluralism of the press and the spreading of ideas. Freedom of the press is essential for democratic forms of government and for government by consent. Against my better judgment, the shock of the withdrawal of Britain and the United States may have brought about that reform more quickly than any other method.

We have also achieved a great deal towards decentralisation of the programmes from 80 per cent. of them being carried out in Paris to a large number of offices being established overseas. More needs to be done. UNESCO has also reformed its administration and management, which was seriously in need of repair. Many of the reforms have been put in place by the current director-general who appointed the Hammarskjold and Wilenski committees to deal with the personnel administration. It is promised that all those reforms will be implemented by next October. The director-general also ensured that a concentration of programmes took place, thus eliminating many of the serious objections that we had when we withdrew.

The director-general has also appointed an administrator of great and proven worth, Mr. Sharma, who was previously with Air India. He has implemented many additional reforms in the management of the organisation. Nobody would pretend that those reforms are complete or perfect, but they are moving strongly in the right direction.

The Japanese Government have made a constructive proposal on how the board should be reformed. Over the years it has become far too large and is not capable of acting as an executive committee to control the director-general and his staff and move them in the directions in which the international community would wish. The sub-committee on executive and financial advice to the board is welcome and I hope that it will be supported.

Britain needs to be there to support Japan and the European Economic Community partners, all of whom have recently expressed to a visitor from the United Nations Association, Mr. Rashid Kareh, that they wish the United Kingdom to return to UNESCO. I should like to pay tribute to Mr. Kareh for helping to persuade the Government to return to UNESCO. He recently visited all

[Mr. Bowen Wells]

our European partners, including France, Spain and Germany, and they said that they wanted Britain to return to UNESCO to make the reforms work. The same has been said by Japan, Switzerland and Sweden and the Commonwealth. African Commonwealth countries feel let down by Britain's absence because they see overtaking them in UNESCO councils the francophile culture and language promoted by the French and by French-speaking African countries. The English language countries of Africa feel that they do not have the support and friendship that they could expect when Britain was present.

If this is a universal call for a return from our principal allies, and if it is essentially in our own interests and the interests of world order and culture, we should return. There is one overriding reason for return which was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe. If there is to be development in much of the third world —over two thirds of the world's population—education must take place. That education would be best based on the British culture and English language, carrying with it the ideas which we have sedulously matured and which we guard, not just in the form of political ideas but ideas of how one person or one culture relates to another.

If we do not do that, other cultures will take over. Much evidence shows that the Islamic culture is expanding in northern China, often with the support of UNESCO and the French; but where is the British culture, education and language? It is nowhere to be seen. That is a dangerous position for us. Without education, without the elimination of illiteracy, to which UNESCO is devoted, and without our help, we shall not bring about the development of those countries.

Britain has achieved its objectives by leaving UNESCO. It should return immediately to foster the things that we believe in, which UNESCO is pursuing. It should do so now.

11.30 am

Sir Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): May I publicly express my warm congratulations to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the honour of the award of Privy Councillorship, which has given much pleasure to the entire House?

As the House knows, I served in the United Nations for several years. It may seem strange, therefore, that in 1985 I most strongly supported our withdrawal from UNESCO, which had become a scandal and a disgrace to the United Nations Organisation. Although in principle I most strongly agree with my hon. Friends the Members for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend), for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) and for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells), none the less I find the reforms disappointing because the objectives of UNESCO are not being met. In the circumstances, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will give a cautious response to my hon. Friends.

11.31 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) for raising this subject because it gives me the opportunity to explain the Government's thinking on it. I am sad that I shall be constrained to disagree with him and with my hon. Friends the Members for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) and for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester). I do not believe that Britain should rejoin UNESCO at present. I am sorry to disagree with them because, as they know, I have personal regard for all three of them. I am most grateful for the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Sir R. Rhodes James).

The United Kingdom was one of the founding members of UNESCO. In London, in 1945, UNESCO's constitution was adopted. The constitution is sound and I commend it to hon. Members. It refers, among other things, to the

"great and terrible war which has now ended",

and attributes the reasons for the conflict to the denial of the democratic principles, of the dignity, equality and mutual respect of men, and by the propagation in their place, through ignorance and prejudice, of the doctrine of the inequality of men and races. Those are high words.

Britain's attachment to those democratic principles, and to respect for human rights and fundamental reforms, was expressed not only in our support for UNESCO but was apparent in our commitment to building the United Nations system, and through that greater respect for the rule of law in international affairs.

Any debate on UNESCO should be careful to place the organisation in that wider context. The world and the United Nations have changed much since 1945. For all the difficulties that have been faced by the UN, much has been achieved in that time, and much remains to be done. Last week, the Heads of State and Government of the Group of Seven, meeting in London, stated their faith in the future of the United Nations. They committed themselves to working for a stronger United Nations and made clear their belief that a revitalised organisation would play a central role in strengthening the international order.

We are profoundly committed to those objectives. The ideals that prompted us and others to establish UNESCO 46 years ago are still respected by the United Kingdom. It was a matter of regret that we were compelled to withdraw from it at the end of 1985, but there is general recognition, even among many of the most vocal supporters of our renewed membership, that we were right to do so. I realise that my hon. Friends the Members for Bexleyheath, for Broxtowe and for Hertford and Stortford do not hold that view. Some of the reasons that prompted our withdrawal, especially the politicisation of UNESCO, are, I am glad to note, no longer applicable, but I am afraid that others remain.

At the beginning of last year, four years after our departure, two reviews of UNESCO were conducted—an internal review by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and a review by the Foreign Affairs Select Committee. Both arrived at broadly similar conclusions. They agreed that some improvements had been made since 1985 but that the United Kingdom should not return to membership.

In its report, the Foreign Affairs Select Committee decided that

"some more time is necessary before it will be possible to be certain of the Director-General's ability to deliver the reforms which UNESCO badly needs."

Those are significant words, because the delivery of reforms is what is necessary. In his reply to the Chairman of the Committee, my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), my predecessor, my hon. Friend

the Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury), agreed with that view but made it clear that we should not rejoin UNESCO until we were certain.

That shows the fundamental difference between my opinion and that of my three hon. Friends. They opposed our withdrawal in 1985. It follows that they believe that the logic of our position is that we should rejoin as soon as possible. But they lost that argument.

Mr. Wells: It was not an argument.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In a debating sense, they lost the argument. They failed to persuade colleagues in Government of the strength of their opinions. I was outside government at the time, but I strongly supported the Government's decision. My hon. Friends want us to rejoin because they never wanted us to leave. Those who felt that we had to leave do not believe that we should return. We must use our departure to effect the best reforms. I hope to explain how that will take place.

Since last year's reviews, there have been some welcome signs from UNESCO. No one would claim that progress has been fast, but it has begun. I am particularly pleased by the clear recognition of UNESCO member states that there is a need not only to talk about but to achieve reforms. As I said, so far, the achievements have been in short supply.

The last two sessions of UNESCO's executive board discussed fundamental improvements, but so far little has been done to meet expectations. We are not, therefore, certain about the delivery of reforms. Our doubts are shared by reform-minded members of UNESCO. In that context, I was interested to hear the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge, because everyone knows that his commitment to the ideals of the United Nations is second to none.

At the executive board's last session, its 136th, in May and June, we continued to hear criticisms from members about administrative and financial matters, despite undertakings from the director-general to achieve improvements. In March, the director-general received a report—the Hammarskjold and Wilenski report—on the progress that had been achieved in implementing management proposals that were made in December 1989 and February 1990. It is clear from the report that many important proposals remain unimplemented and that little has been done to improve matters. The secretariat staff remains top-heavy. The promotion system is still unsatisfactory, and recruitment needs to be improved. Senior posts need to be pared and the status of women in the secretariat needs to be enhanced. I am glad to say that in the presence of my Parliamentary Private Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Hicks).

As well as the need to improve UNESCO's management and administration, we are convinced that greater decentralisation must take place. It is encouraging that member states have recognised and are addressing that problem. A study on decentralisation was presented to the last executive board. It concluded that UNESCO field offices often feel remote from headquarters, that they are inadequately supported and consulted, and generally underfunded. It was decided that further work should be done to indentify the patterns of decentralisation which would best serve the needs of the various regions. Of course I hope to see progress by the time of the next executive board in October, but I am concerned that it may yet prove difficult for UNESCO to translate useful, sensible recommendations into action.

What other improvements do we and others regard as important? We continue to believe that UNESCO must achieve real programme concentration. It has been difficult to gauge from the draft programme and budget for 1992-93 just how much concentration has been achieved, but there is almost certainly scope for more. I recognise that that may not always be easy. UNESCO has to establish real programme priorities, and stick to them. This inevitably means that low priority programmes, but ones that are often dear to individual member states, will not be carried out, yet this is necessary if UNESCO is to make the best use of its resources.

We were pleased that the next biennium's budget shows negative growth in real terms. This was very largely achieved by member states demanding that expenditure not absolutely necessary for the functioning of the organisation should be cut. It remains the case, however, that, as shown at the last executive board, it is not always easy to get satisfactory answers on budgetary matters.

The budget is difficult to interpret and detailed information is often difficult to obtain. The budget should be much more transparent. Member states would be able more easily to monitor budgetary and administrative issues if the functions of the executive board were improved.

We are generally sympathetic to the interest shown by the Japanese and other member states in trying to achieve a more efficient executive board. The Japanese proposals to amend the constitution are broadly acceptable to us and they have attracted widespread interest. In the middle of July the director-general had received various amendments to the Japanese proposals. It is now up to the general conference to decide the success of this important attempt at reform.

I think that our policy on UNESCO is well understood by its member states and I acknowledge that some members would like to see us rejoin. Equally, others appreciate that our close interest in the organisation may well have proved a catalyst for reform. We shall continue to pay close interest to developments in UNESCO. My hon. Friends have recognised that the recent fund of £50,000 that we have made available shows that we are not blind to the situation in UNESCO and wish to see honest and genuine progress so that one day we shall be able to rejoin a reformed organisation.

As I have said, we recently agreed to make up to £50,000 available to meet a request for help from UNESCO to carry out an independent management review study of its office of public information. This is an area where there is a clear need for cost cutting and reform. This decision clearly demonstrates our desire to see a suitably reformed body. It will be most interesting to see if UNESCO will find it possible to implement the recommendations of the consultants when they are available.

As I have made clear, we continue to support the ideals on which UNESCO—assisted by us—was founded. We shall continue to monitor developments closely and look forward to the day when we are able to rejoin a suitably reformed organisation. Before we can consider that, we must see concrete progress in several important areas. I

[Mr. Lennox-Boyd]

hope that the next executive board, in September and October, and UNESCO's general conference in October and November, will lead to such progress.

Health Service (Greater Glasgow)

11.44 am

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): I am pleased to have this opportunity immediately before the recess for a debate on the important matter of the Greater Glasgow health board and in particular on the financial constraints and the morale of patients and staff. That is a great worry for most people who are aware of what is happening in Greater Glasgow and in a sizeable part of my constituency.

I welcome the presence of the Minister. I think that he will confirm that the board has been underfunded this year by about £13 million and that it has been instructed to make further cuts of between £20 million and £40 million over the next two years. It is not surprising that rumours abound. In *The Scotsman* of 10 May there was an article headed:

"One-third of Glasgow's senior hospital doctors asked to quit."

I do not know whether that is true, but I know that the constraints are causing enormous problems. I hope that the Minister will seize this opportunity to enlighten us on Scottish Office thinking.

Much of what is happening affects Strathkelvin in Monklands, West. A few days ago in the House, my hon. Friend for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) expressed his worries about the long-term future of Stobhill. We are concerned about the immediate impact of decisions on the maternity and other units. Much of my speech will be devoted to the great problems of Stoneyetts hospital in Moodiesburn in the heart of my constituency which the board is determined to close.

What have such closures to do with community care? It is a serious decision and will have profound effects on the mortality rate, an issue which has not been given due consideration by the board. Few of my constituents understand why the board is so determined to close Stoneyetts after the minimum of consultation.

We are looking at the land and land values and some of us have reached an inescapable conclusion. I asked an independent valuer to assess the value of the land, and he said that it was worth between £6 million and £7·5 million. It may be worth even more if the board decides to sell the land to individual developers because it is a beautiful location and has the Campsies as a backdrop. I can find no other logical explanation for the stubborn way in which the board is proceeding with the proposals in spite of the damage that they are bound to cause to health care in my constituency.

Stoneyetts is the cheapest hospital to run in terms of mental health in Greater Glasgow or indeed in the whole of Scotland. The Scottish average weekly cost of a patient is £340 but in Stoneyetts the cost is £235. As the Minister may know, the hospital has 180 patients, whose ages range from 40 to 98, and they all suffer from mental or degenerative illness. I must pose the question that those patients, their friends and families, the staff of the hospital and the community ask. Where are those patients to be sent? We are told that some will go to Woodilee and some to Ruchill in Glasgow and some to Gartnavel on the other side of Glasgow. We have no means of knowing where the rest will go.

The board says that many of the patients have not come from the Moodiesburn area. That is true, but only 46 out

of 180 come from the Ruchill and Gartnavel areas to which, we are told, many of them will be transferred. In any case, many of those people, after long years in that hospital, regard it as their home, their community.

I cannot understand why Ruchill is being considered as an appropriate location. As the board knows, I was there the other week, and I can see that there are security problems even with the new units. I can also see that the environment will cause difficulties if we want real community care. I take grave exception to the account of my visit that was apparently given to the board by a nursing officer when it was considering closure. I make it plain that, although I was impressed by the units, and take the view that they could serve very well purposes other than use in the mental illness sector, at no time did I express the view that that was a reasonable alternative to Stoneyetts or anywhere else. Nobody had the right to give the board that impression.

Over the years, the Greater Glasgow health board has had a strong view about Ruchill. For example, in a report, it said:

"The hospital, as becomes its name, is set on a hill. It is one of its defects in modern conditions . . . It is a serious disadvantage for elderly visitors."

It said that in 1975. Here we are in 1991 and the board is taking the view that Ruchill is a reasonable place for such patients to be sent. It is not, and we are entitled to a better explanation than we have so far received.

The new units at Gartnavel are set a mile and a half from the main hospital entrance and four miles from local amenities. Staff are very important, although I get the impression that the board is dismissing their views on any of these matters. They would have great difficulties in travelling from Moodiesburn and, in fairness, I should say that the board has conceded that single point. As with Ruchill, links between units for patients and the community will be virtually non-existent. If we are genuinely concerned about supporting patients, particularly with psychogeriatric and elderly patients in the mentally ill sector, the fact that buses do not run to Ruchill on Sundays from the Moodiesburn area is extremely important and should not be lightly dismissed.

I have often visited Stoneyetts, particularly in recent weeks. I know that many patients who know Ruchill and Gartnavel do not like the prospect of moving there. It may be acceptable for those who live in the area, and I do not contest the fact that there are modern facilities in the hospital. However, it is not all right to move people there from Lanarkshire and other distant parts and expect them to feel happy.

I am greatly worried about the consultation exercise that the board claims it undertook. I thought that it was a sham. I tried to make my contribution to getting the views of the communities when I arranged a well publicised public meeting in my constituency, in Moodiesburn. I invited the Minister, and I was sorry that he was not able to come. I invited the chairman of the Greater Glasgow health board, but he was not able to come either. Nevertheless, it was the biggest meeting that had ever been held in my constituency, and was widely representative of the churches, the community council, patients, families of patients and people in the community who are simply concerned about the future of the hospital.

In a secret ballot, those attending reached a unanimous view. Although I gave this information in writing to the board the following day, it is not recorded anywhere in its minutes. There was unanimous opposition to the closure of Stoneyetts and Birdston hospital in my constituency.

Despite the evidence that was given, the board dismissed the important issue of mortality rates after disruption. It said that the evidence on the matter was dubious or non-existent. That is an astonishing comment from a board that knows the story of Woodilee, which is next door to Stoneyetts. There was an evacuation in March 1987, and prior to that, 14 patients died every month. In 1987, 22 patients died in March and 27 in April. There is no doubt that there is evidence that disruption increases mortality rates. It has been found by several studies, including the Wandsworth district health authority's report of 1982, that the benefits of relocation cannot be offered without some increase in risk. A similar conclusion was reached by T. L. Coffman in 1981 in *Gerontologist*.

We have heard a great deal in recent days about citizens charters. I should like to know why the board did not take it upon itself to consult the most important group of people, the patients. Many of these people can vote in elections, but they were not consulted about their own future. Even the board had to record that there were 42 unsolicited letters from patients opposing the closure. These are people who are entitled to speak about their quality of life. Had advocacy existed—I understand that it is mentioned in passing in the citizens charter, and it was much in evidence in the Disabled Persons Act 1986—a great deal more would have been said.

The board has said that Stoneyetts is eccentrically located. It is not. As a result of new transport links, because of the Stepps and Cardowan railway station, because of improved local bus services, and above all because of the Stepps bypass, it is clear that there will be improvements.

I emphasise the importance of the community facilities that exist at Stoneyetts. I walked around them on Sunday afternoon. It was a beautiful day. Some of the patients were taking part in a barbecue. They were happy and relaxed in a beautiful setting. Given the alternative arrangements that might be made I do not know anywhere else in Greater Glasgow where that could be done. People were walking at leisure in the grounds beside the hospital. None of that is available in Ruchill or elsewhere. People in the Stoneyetts community and in the wider community —Stoneyetts is recognised as being part of our locality —see real friendship. In the mining community, the Auchewleogh miners club welcomes the patients and offers them facilities. The same is true of the Knights of St. Columbo club. There is peace and tranquility which is fitting for this sort of community care. Unfortunately, it is not always to be found elsewhere.

I know that the Minister will recall that, sadly—none of this reflects on him—even in his constituency there were some difficulties when it was suggested that people with learning difficulties might live in a particular place. I know that such placings raise difficult issues. I emphasise that the Stoneyetts patients are extremely welcome in the community and that the community would be saddened if things changed.

Willie Copeland, who is involved in nursing, said:

"They are not allowing us to be progressive. We do not want to stay in the 50s and 60s. The health board is starving us of funds."

[Mr. Tom Clarke]

There is support for community care. Ricky MacManus, also someone working in nursing, said:

"Stoneyetts is basically well located. It is therapeutically inviting."

Jim Anderson, who is also involved in nursing, said: "This is their community." The fact is that community care is being taken from us.

The board argues that the hospital is in such a state that it must respond in the way that they have outlined. I am sure that the Minister will have the honesty to confirm that time after time I have drawn his attention, and that of the board, to the conditions that exist in Stoneyetts. I have asked for investment for refurbishment. During a previous debate on Woodilee and Stoneyetts, I said:

"I hope that the Minister will be convinced, and in due course will persuade the board, that there is still a need for both hospitals, a need to invest in those hospitals and a need to improve capital and revenue expenditure."—[*Official Report*, 29 January 1988; Vol. 145, c. 676.]

I am not too keen to listen to lectures on the rundown of the hospital. That was clearly a deliberate decision by the health board, so the responsibility lies with the health board. It is certainly not an excuse for closing the hospital, especially in the light of the overwhelming arguments for its retention.

I want to refer to the involvement of Strathclyde regional council. Is there any joint planning? Even the evidence offered by Professor Edwards was taken to be the view of the council, which had not discussed the matter. My regional councillor, Charles Grey, is opposed to the proposals, and he believes that there should be joint planning.

In view of the importance of these matters to my constituents, I ask the Minister to invite the Secretary of State to meet a delegation led by myself, and including people who work in the hospital and people from the wider community, so that he can listen to the views of those who know what they are talking about. Although the Minister could not attend the meeting that I held, I ask him to visit the hospital. I am sure that he would find it interesting. Before the Secretary of State makes a final decision—and the matter rests with him—in the interests of democracy the very least that we should expect is that he meets the delegation.

I want to refer to the health board's strategies for the mentally ill and mentally handicapped in Greater Glasgow. The present strategy was decided in 1987, and it was envisaged that it would be completed by 1993-94. Why is there to be a complete revision of the strategy in 1991? If the reason is not financial, what is it? If it is financial, we must be told the facts. We do not pretend that there are not constraints on the board, because there clearly are. I think that sometimes the board is too apologetic in representing views which are, presumably, those of the Government. It would be helpful if patients and the wider community in Greater Glasgow were told about the real problems with finance. They could then assess how fair the Government were being.

What is now happening has nothing to do with improved patient care, as I and many others envisage it. The Government say that they believe in voluntarism and that they depend upon the voluntary organisations in Scotland, but they seldom listen to their views. The Care in the Community group, the Scottish Society for the Mentally Handicapped, and many other organisations have to deal with the problems of the rundown in hospital provision, and in particular the closure of hospital beds.

My hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) said recently:

"The board has described these changes as readjustments, whereas they are wholesale and sweeping reforms."

A study of the proposals shows us why we should not be surprised by my hon. Friend's conclusions. Currently, there are 2,886 beds for the mentally ill, but the board says that it needs only 1,300. That is a reduction of about 1,600 beds in Greater Glasgow—more than half the beds in use. Again, we must ask, and ask assertively, where those patients will go. On the assumption that other patients might have been admitted in the coming months and years, what will happen to them? The Greater Glasgow health board has been extremely vague on that, as on other issues, but today the Minister has a splendid opportunity to tell us a great deal more than we have already heard.

The changes are massive in their application and implementation and, as a result, we are entitled to ask what consultation has taken place. Strathclyde regional council, again with an immense social work concern, met the Greater Glasgow health board after the decision on the strategies was taken. What about the National Health Service (Amendment) Act 1986? Was not there something there about joint planning? Why, five years later, have the Government declined to introduce an important section of that Act, agreed without a Division in either House, which deals with the kind of joint planning which is absolutely essential if we are to deal with those important matters and to put patient care first?

We are told by the Greater Glasgow health board that hospitals or units within hospitals are to close or to be rundown. In Woodilee, again in my constituency next door to Stoneyetts, we are told that there is to be a reduction in beds from 576 to 180. In Gartloch, there is to be a reduction from 414 to 150. We shall see the complete closure of mental health units at the Southern General and Stobhill. In the mentally handicapped sector, there will be closures in Waverley Park, David Elder infirmary and the upper half of Lennox Castle, among other proposals. Those are pretty drastic reductions, certainly for the patients and their families.

In the absence of reasonable assessments for individual patients and in the absence of preparations to deal with the needs of patients before they leave hospital so that we know precisely where they are going, we must ask where the board thinks that they will go. There is nothing specific in the details that the board has given about arrangements for those patients or about the consultations with local authorities, the voluntary organisations, the advocates where they exist, or the patients themselves.

Such an exercise is gravely damaging to the whole concept of community care. The Minister will know that I must be one of the strongest supporters of community care. I want to see genuine care in the community. I would, of course, much prefer the Victorian hospitals to be part of our history, although there will always be a need for hospitals. Yes, I want to see people living in the community, properly supported by home help services, occupational therapy, meals on wheels and so on, and with that feeling of independence which is so important. Therefore, I know that the Minister will accept that my commitment to genuine community care is real and is

something that I want to see. But I do not believe that what the Greater Glasgow health board is now doing represents that type of community care.

The Greater Glasgow health board says that there are three alternatives to existing arrangements when the beds have gone and the hospitals have closed. We are told that one is community care, as it sees it.

We are told that there are partnership agreements, such as that with Birdston hospital in Milton of Campsie in my constituency. We are entitled to know more about such agreements, because for the most part they have been untried, and our limited experience of them does not fill many of us with great confidence in terms of the provision of the best in patient care. Agreements between the board and the private sector seem to be reducing the role of Greater Glasgow health board, which does not seem unhappy at the prospect of changing its role from an enabler to a provider. I would like to hear the Minister's defence of that policy change, because it is not one endorsed by the majority of the people of Scotland—and never has been.

The fear is that, although people will be given an opportunity to provide, initially with low profit margins, fees will then mysteriously increase. I can predict a scenario in which the board will be held to ransom because it will be so difficult to make alternative arrangements. What is a local authority supposed to do once it finds that its role will be reduced from that of an enabler to a provider, in terms of dealing with the elderly?

With the move towards privatisation, competitive tendering and commercialism, with profit-making as the main incentive, local authorities will be asked to deal with the most difficult elderly patients. I cannot imagine that private entrepreneurs will go rushing in to care for people who are doubly incontinent or who suffer from other difficult conditions. I do not have much confidence in the board's proposals, and we should hear much more from the Minister today on that aspect.

My hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden wrote to the chairman of Greater Glasgow health board on 24 July in respect of the board's three alternatives to current policy. He dealt with the third alternative by quoting from the board's own document, "Mental Health Strategy 4.4":

"A rationalisation of short-stay beds by realigning catchment populations (to among other things take account of available capacity at the new Parkhead hospital) and gaining consistent performance in the use of the retained beds."

My hon. Friend rightly asked the board's chairman:

"What does this mean in ordinary language?"

I put the same question to the Minister now. People are entitled to the answer, because such decisions are extremely important to patients and the health service in Greater Glasgow. It is not enough for the Minister and his colleagues simply to impose conditions on the people of Greater Glasgow in the absence of consultation, and in the knowledge that in any reasonable consultation or secret ballot, the people of Greater Glasgow would not accept the board's proposals in a million years.

I ask the Minister to be more candid today than hitherto. He should display more candour than the health board and the Secretary of State, and this debate provides him with a splendid opportunity. My constituents are entitled to candour from the Minister, given that, for example, heart disease is a third higher among them than the national average. If we are told that is a reflection of the quality of life in my constituency, it seems unlikely that the health board's proposals will add to that quality of life. I do not believe that our history of unemployment, closures and the rest is helpful to that quality of life. Constituents, from every age group and in every part of my constituency, have suffered a great deal in the past 12 years. They have suffered closure after closure—a once proud mining and steel community does not have a job left in those industries and many other jobs have gone too. If, on top of that, it is now proposed that the national health service as we recognise it should be dismantled, I assure the Minister of State that, although I look forward to his reply, he can expect a long hot summer on health issues in Greater Glasgow because some of us will attack again and again, as we believe in preserving the very best of the national health service in our constituencies.

12.15 pm

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Michael Forsyth): I am surprised at the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) and at some of his less than favourable comments about the Greater Glasgow health board. I can only assume that he has not yet had an opportunity to read the health board's annual report and has not seen the lists of major developments and innovations in health care for which that board is responsible. I shall mention only a few: the newly refurbished accident and emergency department at the Glasgow Royal infirmary, costing just over £1·5 million; the 180-bed development for elderly patients at Rutherglen; the refurbishment at Drumchapel costing £1·1 million; the installation of a new total body scanner at Yorkhill; the investment at the Western infirmary on the first of two linear accelerators at a cost of £1·8 million; and the announcement of a new heart transplant centre at the Glasgow Royal infirmary. There are many other examples of Greater Glasgow health board working for patients.

The health board is to be congratulated, not least for its innovative and progressive attitude towards identifying new ways to provide a better quality of health care, and its ideas—some of them quite new to the health service—such as the provision of a patients' hotel on the Western infirmary campus, which is an exciting concept and will release acute beds and provide a better environment for convalescent patients and those who do not require constant nursing or medical care.

For the hon. Member for Monklands, West to describe the best-funded health board in Scotland as underfunded takes one's breath away. He knows very well that resources are being transferred from the Greater Glasgow health board to other boards but that is because people have moved out of Glasgow into Ayrshire and the surrounding communities and the Government have built new hospitals, such as those in Paisley and Ayr, so that services are where the people are. Only a socialist would argue that services should be provided to meet the convenience of the NHS, which may be resistant to change, rather than to meet the needs of patients for whom the service is provided in the first place.

It is certainly true that Greater Glasgow health board is rationalising services and that that will affect a number of hospitals. I am clear, and I know that the hospital board is clear, that such changes are designed to consolidate and

[Mr. Michael Forsyth]

improve services provided to the community. The board's acute services strategy involves substantial investment—about £13 million—spread over several years.

The hon. Member referred to the fact that Greater Glasgow health board is studying the future organisation of its maternity units. The five units vary in quality and, given their age and the condition of some of them, a review was essential. Extensive consultations were held and they led the board to conclude that the change is needed sooner rather than later. The board has taken account of the needs of modern obstetric practice and of the standards that expectant mothers desire when they visit a maternity unit. I hope that it will soon be possible to announce a decision on the board's proposals.

The hon. Gentleman will have received a copy of the board's consultation document on proposals for the future organisation of community care in its area. The board makes some interesting points and suggestions. I am especially encouraged by the emphasis placed on health promotion. I know that the board is keen to have reaction and constructive comments, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will play his part in that consultation process.

The health board does not have a blinkered approach to health provision. It puts patients first. I welcome its initiative in taking advantage of spare capacity in the private sector. The hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith), the Opposition spokesman, attacked the health board because it chose to make a contract with a private hospital to ensure that more than 100 patients were given cardiac surgery who would otherwise have been put on the waiting list. It is an example of dogma being put before patient care when the Labour party attacks health boards which are doing everything within their resources to ensure that waiting lists are reduced.

As the hon. Gentleman said, the board's involvement with the private sector also extends to its arrangements for care of the elderly. Again its approach puts patients first. The board has decided on plans for four partnership developments with the private sector for provision of continuing care of the frail elderly and the elderly mentally ill. Two of the plans have already been identified at Rutherglen and Darnley, and patients will transfer towards the year end. As a result, elderly patients will be accommodated in state-of-the-art accommodation, and resources which are taken up in the acute sector at present will be released for further patient care. I regret to say that the board's progressive approach has met with condemnation by Opposition Members.

Further benefits to patients arise from the investment in patient care of all savings effected under the board's rigorous competitive tendering exercise—for which, again, the board has been criticised by Opposition Members. But that competitive tendering exercise has released some £11·5 million this year. Greater Glasgow health board has achieved savings which are about 40 per cent. of the total saved in Scotland as a result of that process.

The hon. Member for Monklands, West mentioned that the health board is conducting a review of mental handicap strategy. The board consulted on its strategy in 1987 and published a document in June 1988. It is that strategy which is under review. I look forward to seeing the board's further proposals in due course. There are many strands to the board's review of mental handicap and mental illness strategies, some of which will require separate and careful consideration.

The board has already consulted on the proposals that it has prepared for the closure of Stoneyetts hospital, which provides psychogeriatric care. Following its consultative exercise, the health board announced proposals on 16 July for the closure of the hospital. The board proposes that the psychogeriatric service be transferred to the two new purpose-built units at Ruchill hospital and Gartnavel Royal hospital. If approved, the proposal will represent a £4·5 million investment in the area by the board.

The new accommodation proposed for Ruchill and Gartnavel Royal will match the level of provision at Stoneyetts. There will be no reduction in the number of psychogeriatric beds as a result of the proposal. As I said earlier, the closure is subject to ministerial approval and as yet no formal submission has been made to me.

I have been made aware of the campaign in support of Stoneyetts hospital. The health board has taken account of all views lodged with it during the consultation exercise on the proposal affecting the hospital. Of course, comments were made in support of the board's view that Stoneyetts should close which the hon. Gentleman did not mention, most notably by the local health council and the board's professional advisory committees. The views of the hon. Gentleman were also taken into account, as was the 8,000-signature petition lodged in support of retention.

The board has emphasised that it is its principal intention to establish the individual needs and wishes of the patients and, wherever possible, those will be taken into account when decisions are made on placements. I am sure that, if the decision is taken to transfer Stoneyetts patients, the board will honour its commitment to deal with the transfer of patients with sensitivity, care and consideration. All staff at Stoneyetts will be offered alternative employment with the board. It is hoped that the majority will transfer with the patients to the new units at Gartnavel and Ruchill. I assure the hon. Gentleman that, once I receive the board's formal application, I shall consider it very carefully.

The hon. Member for Monklands, West disappoints me and doubtless disappoints the relatives of the patients at Stoneyetts hospital. I am aware, for example, that the board, having quite properly sought the views of relatives, was encouraged that 70 per cent. of those who responded were fully in favour of the move to Gartnavel and Ruchill.

Clearly, the hon. Gentleman is not speaking on behalf of the local health council, the professional advisory committees, the patients or their relatives. It is absurd that he is arguing that elderly people should be placed in old-fashioned, sub-standard accommodation, rather than encouraging the board in its efforts to provide modern, purpose-built, easily accessible facilities which will give patients the benefit of more pleasant surroundings and a better quality of life.

The hon. Gentleman's argument in favour of Stoneyetts hospital was that it was the cheapest hospital to run. The Government are interested not in cheapness but in quality of care and value for money.

I have heard and read the hon. Gentleman's empty allegations that the board's proposals are financially motivated. He would do well to accept that the board is reacting to patients' needs and to the fact that Stoneyetts accommodation is now proving sub-standard compared

with what can and should be provided for those patients. If approved, this proposal will represent a commitment of some £4·5 million—hardly the action of a board starved of resources, more an investment in patient care.

Greater Glasgow health board recognises the need to look beyond its geographical boundary where appropriate for specialist treatment of patients from Glasgow. We have seen that in their commitments to brain injury rehabilitation at Wishaw.

Greater Glasgow health board, as with all 15 health boards in Scotland, is for the first time setting targets for waiting time within which patients will be expected to obtain treatment. This initiative is designed to cut hospital waiting times and follows up proposals in the Government's citizens charter programme. The initiative will make a comprehensive improvement in waiting times. I am sure that patients will welcome that move. They have every right to know how long they can expect to wait for treatment. The Government intend to give them that right, no matter where in Scotland they live.

Waiting times at present are affected in no small part by the fact that, since 1979, the number of referrals has increased by over 21 per cent.; the number of in-patients treated has increased by over 22 per cent. and day cases by a staggering 147 per cent. Indeed, for Greater Glasgow health board, the increase in day cases is an incredible 205 per cent. Waiting lists have fallen by 14 per cent. over the same period, and we continue to look for improvements.

The Citizens Charter will have a direct bearing on the patients served by the Greater Glasgow health board. Patients and relatives will know exactly what they can expect of the national health service and what the board must do to meet those expectations. Patients will know exactly what they are entitled to and the service standards to be met. Patients charters will be in all hospitals and other units, and Greater Glasgow health board has led the United Kingdom in taking that idea forward. Targets are being set on waiting times for admission for treatments. The Greater Glasgow health board, like all other health boards, will have to give guarantees on maximum waiting times.

In the teeth of opposition, Greater Glasgow health board has proved to be innovative. I regret to say that Opposition Members, including the hon. Member for Monklands, West, sometimes appear to be spokesmen for COHSE and NUPE rather than representatives of patients' interests. The proposals in respect of Stoneyetts are an example of a board innovatively tackling difficult problems and providing a quality of care which previous Labour Governments could only dream of.

BAA plc (MMC Review)

12.29 pm

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): It is fitting that, before we go into the recess, we should discuss airports and airlines and I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for giving me the chance to talk about the British Airports Authority.

When the Government privatised BAA, they were breaking fresh ground. No one had any idea of the impact that the privatisation would have on aviation. Five years on, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission has taken a look at the way in which the BAA has operated and has made recommendations to the Civil Aviation Authority, the regulatory body.

Hon. Members who were in the House in 1985—I cannot see too many of them here today—will remember that at the time of the privatisation of the BAA I warned that privatising all the London airports in one unit was fraught with danger and likely to prove anti-competitive. I am afraid that that has happened. The MMC report recognises the advantages that have accrued to BAA shareholders—the pension funds and others—but it has also drawn attention to the fact that BAA is being run somewhat anti-competitively. Airport charges, landing fees, passenger fees and parking fees have been grossed up and the charges have been passed on to the airlines. These charges have been set at the whim of the management, so discriminatory practices have crept in.

The smaller domestic, regional and British airlines have suffered from discrimination. The landing fee at Heathrow has risen by 107 per cent. in the past five years and has been applied regardless of the size of the plane. A 50-seater plane—shall we say, a Brymon plane to Plymouth—will be charged the same as a 400-seater jumbo landing from New York. A 146 plane belonging to Manx Airlines with 85 seats will also pay the same as a 400-seater jumbo.

It might be appropriate to declare an interest. I fly Brymon Airways most weekends down to my constituency and I help Manx Airlines, which is part of the Airlines of Britain group, to which I am an adviser.

I have complained not only about landing fees but about parking fees. Landing fees have risen for smaller airlines and declined for jumbos; parking charges have fallen for jumbos and increased for smaller airlines. So small regional airlines flying short-haul planes to and from Europe or around Britain pay far more each time they land and park at Heathrow than would a jumbo that sits on the tarmac for 12 to 24 hours having deposited 400 people at a terminal. That is discrimination against people and airlines wanting to fly around Britain or Europe; and it is positive discrimination in favour of those who want to fly long-haul to and from the United States, India or the far east.

It seems as though BAA welcomes the maximum use of each slot, and I understand that, but we cannot have the whole of Heathrow full of jumbos. That would not be possible even if it were desirable.

At present, 70 per cent. of traffic at Heathrow is short-haul and only 30 per cent. is long-haul. The reason is simple: every jumbo that takes off must be fed by the small, short-haul airlines. That is recognised by Schiphol airport in Holland, which is making considerable strides in attracting regional airlines from all over Europe to deposit passengers, not at Heathrow but at Schiphol, attract the

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long-haul carriers into Schiphol and send them out across the Atlantic and elsewhere. In order to have a prosperous long-haul industry, one needs feeder aircraft. I am concerned that BAA's policy of trying to get more and more long-haul aircraft and fewer short-haul aircraft through a discriminatory pricing policy means that, in the long term, Heathrow could cease to be the No. 1 airport in the world.

A privatised public utility with a total monopoly hold is starting to price out smaller aeroplanes from Heathrow. How much longer can Brymon Airways or Manx Airlines continue to offer a service? How long can Brymon fly from Heathrow to Plymouth for £195 return—more than the apex fare to Gibraltar, Barcelona or Milan?

The Monopolies and Mergers Commission report must be welcomed, as it recognises that the formula that the Government adopted in 1985, called RPI minus one—the retail prices index minus 1 per cent.—was not strenuous enough and worked largely against the British-owned airline industry. The Monopolies and Mergers Commission said that BAA has been an amazingly successful money machine, which had been good for shareholders, pension funds, big institutions and large airlines with large aeroplanes. Clearly, regional and short-haul airlines are the losers and, even more so, the travelling public—the consumer. As charges go up for the short-haul lines, so the price of tickets reflects that, and increases.

The MMC suggested that the formula of RPI minus one should be changed to RPI minus four. The retail prices index minus 4 per cent. would be the maximum that BAA could charge over the next five years for landing, parking and so on. I believe that the MMC got it right, but the CAA—to which it reports—has an ever better suggestion. It suggested that the profits were still too great when based on the RPI minus four formula, which should be changed to RPI minus eight.

I pay tribute to the new chairman of the CAA—Christopher Chataway. I am delighted—as I am sure the whole House will be—that he has come back to public life; it was an enlightened decision to suggest that he should be chairman of that regulatory organisation.

The CAA's public decision to recommend that an RPI minus eight formula be applied to the running costs at BAA's airports is an enlighted and courageous move.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): Before my hon. Friend's enthusiasm for the CAA report runs away with him, will he comment on some inconsistencies in it? The report states that BAA should raise its charges by less than inflation, but the CAA increased charges by 45 per cent. The report says that BAA is a low-risk business and needs only a 7 per cent. return, while the CAA wants an 8 per cent. return. The report says that the MMC is wrong and the people who brought out the report are not financial experts. The report claims to be a CAA report, yet I am told that just two CAA employees will make the final decision. Instead of enthusing about the report, will my hon. Friend accept that it is flawed and written by people whose philosophy is, "Do as we say, not as we do."

Mr. Steen: I always enjoy commenting on my hon. Friend's remarks, but on this occasion I shall pass because he has made his points and I do not wish to be drawn on them.

Whatever the formula—I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) will wish to listen to this carefully—what is crucial is not how much the landing fees, passenger fees or parking fees may be, but how BAA applies them to individual airlines. The question is whether it is able to discriminate, as it has in the past five years, in favour of larger airlines and larger planes to the detriment of our smaller airlines which use smaller planes. There is nothing to stop BAA continuing to discount the total landing, passenger and parking fees by the percentage prescribed in the formula and applying it to the individual carrier as it pleases. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister realises that that is the critical issue. It does not matter whether the restrictions are greater or fewer. The application of the formula by BAA should be the same for all airlines and should not discriminate against our smaller British airlines.

The trouble with the privatisation is not that it has been too successful, but that its success has allowed restrictive practices that discriminate against those who want to fly in Britain or around Europe. It is an anti-competitive practice to try to drive airlines away from Heathrow and towards Gatwick or Stansted where they may not want to go and where the consumer definitely does not yet want to go. It is not fair competition.

There are two points. First, there is the formula about which my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne spoke with great gusto, as is his norm since he feels that an injustice has been done and the CAA has got it wrong. Secondly, there is the way in which the formula is applied.

Oddly enough, the MMC report and the Civil Aviation Authority report—whether it was prepared by two men or 200—have ducked the key issue. Paragraph 18 of the CAA report says:

"The CAA agrees with the MMC that this highly important issue of aviation policy can only be dealt with properly in a wider context, and that they are not able to comment on whether a limit should be placed on the airport's scope to rebalance charges."

That is a total cop-out and it can be dealt with only by the Government. That is why I am delighted to see my hon. Friend the Minister in his place. I am sure that he will wish to get to the root of the problem. It strikes at the basis of Government aviation policy as to charging, discrimination and the power of the airports authority, though a pricing mechanism, to direct where airlines should fly. The argument is not about numbers and percentages—RPI minus six, eight or 10—but about fair competition and achieving a marketplace where smaller carriers operating smaller short-haul planes do not find themselves priced out and disadvantaged by a private monopoly that used to be in the public sector. It is about the Government halting the discriminatory practices of the BAA which favour large carriers and wide-bodied planes.

Will the Minister make it clear that BAA will not be allowed to cock a snook at the Government's approach to the aviation industry, that it will not be allowed to prejudice short-haul aircraft, and that they will be put on a level footing with long-haul aircraft?

As the Minister knows, we are all consumers. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made that clear on Monday, when he announced the citizens charter which

recognised the right of citizens to be protected against the sort of practices that I have described. When I asked my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister whether his charter would extend to the aviation industry he said that it probably would not. However, he said nothing about airports.

I invite my hon. Friend the Minister to realise that I am talking about the pricing mechanism of the airports authority and citizens' right of protection from that practice rather than the operation of individual airlines, where there is opportunity for competition. Why should not the consumer have a cheap and efficient service to regional and European destinations? Why should he have to pay extra if he flies to an EC country rather than to the United States or to the far east?

It is clear that, whatever formula BAA has to accept, it will lose some income. It must not be allowed to try to recoup its losses from the travelling public or from airline operators. The trouble is that it believes that it will be given a licence to print money indefinitely. It is now horror-stricken that that may not be true. It has threatened that the projected loss of income will lead to all sorts of disasters and has hinted that it may no longer be able to build the fifth London terminal and that the Paddington to Heathrow rail link will be seriously delayed.

That is scaremongering. It is a bit thick for the authority to whinge when it has spent £300 million on an improvement programme at Stanstead. That was its commercial judgment. Despite the fact that passenger traffic hardly justified it, that was its decision; it had nothing to do with the Government. Such expenditure was a question for the management, who decided to spend that money when they could have spent it on Heathrow, which desperately needs it. It was as though the authority were building a monument to itself, just as Brunel built the great western railway. It took a commercial decision and should not expect too much sympathy when it finds itself short of a few bob.

BAA is not the first private company to find itself in need of some extra finance. Unlike other private companies, its monopoly position enables it to make good its losses by clobbering the travelling public. I do not think that that should be allowed. I am sure that it will not be allowed, because we are extremely fortunate to have not only a new chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority but a new management team under the direction of Sir John Egan, whose track record is well known. I am sure that if the enthusiasm that he showed at Jaguar is converted to airport strategy, it will be an exciting time for us all. I wish him well.

I venture to make a few suggestions which I hope will help Sir John Egan when he is considering how to raise sufficient finance. As a private company, there is nothing to stop BAA going to the stock market for extra funds through a rights issue. There is no reason why its manpower should not be reduced; a leaner authority would surely be cost-effective. Could not the number of landing slots be increased so that more traffic could use Heathrow? In 1985, it said that 275,000 movements was the maximum, but today the figure has risen to 385,000. There is additional space, and if the air traffic controllers could be freed of some of the restrictive trade union practices, more planes could land, which would generate more income for the BAA.

Why does not the BAA consider selling an airport or two? It has enough airports. Surely it could do without, say, Prestwick. The fact that three London airports are under the same management has militated against competition. Why not sell off Gatwick and Stansted? Bringing a new player into the market would stop restrictive practices, and the market would drive down overheads. Consumers and airlines would benefit, but possibly not the shareholders of the authority, although with the cash realised it could build the Paddington to Heathrow link and begin the fifth London terminal.

When BAA was privatised in 1986, the Government were moving in uncharted waters. The fact that the authority has been such a success clearly shows that the Government were right, but several lessons have been learnt in the five years since it was privatised.

The most important point is that private monopolies can be as anti-competitive as public ones. The regulatory authority, in this case the CAA, can and should ensure that the regulations and formulae prevent that from happening. It is not a question of the Opposition saying, "I told you so," but of the Government recognising the new problems that have arisen as a result of our imaginative privatisation proposals and introducing the necessary safeguards so that our short-haul airlines in Europe and our regional airlines throughout the country are not driven out of Heathrow by the pricing mechanism.

Freed of any pricing regulations, BAA would without doubt feel obliged to obtain the maximum revenue for its institutional shareholders. The job of the House is to ensure fair play—to ensure that this privatised company is subject to the rules of fair competition that regulate the rest of the private sector.

Our airline industry is far more frail than it was five years ago. Airlines are going bust, but airports are not. We must make sure that our airport authority helps our airline industry and assists the British companies that fly round our shores and into Europe. That is where our future lies, and the Government's job is to ensure that a healthy airline industry is not destroyed through predatory pricing and discriminatory practices.

12.50 pm

The Minister for Shipping and Public Transport (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) on his success in raising this issue. It is some time since the House debated aviation and, as usual, when it is debated we hear different views from my hon. Friends about the right way to go forward. My hon. Friends the Member for South Hams and for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) and I are convinced of the need for a good, healthy aviation industry. It is important that that industry should not deteriorate in some of the ways suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams.

First, I shall outline the arrangements for the regulation of BAA's airports and the involvement of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. The mechanics of the system are rather different from those which apply in other regulated industries. Because of that, and because the present review of BAA's London airports is only the second time that these arrangements have come into play, the system is perhaps not widely or well understood.

I recognise that the provisions in this part of the Airports Act 1986 appear somewhat complex and certainly do not make for easy reading. For that reason,

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too, I take this chance to explain briefly the nature of the regulatory process before returning to the specific points that my hon. Friend made.

A system of economic regulation of all sizeable airports was established by the Airports Act, before the privatisation of the former British Airports Authority. Privatisation has allowed BAA's managers to get on with the job of managing, has ensured a large and continuing programme of investment and has brought many benefits to the air traveller. Heathrow remains the world's leading international airport and, as my hon. Friend said, we want it to retain that position. Gatwick airport is not far behind.

When the Government privatised BAA, they were conscious of the need to guard against the risk of exploitation of the natural strength of airports which found themselves in a largely monopolistic position. The present regulatory regime is the result.

The first tier of regulation, which applies to all airports above the certain maximum turnover, is exercised primarily by the Civil Aviation Authority and has to do with preventing trading or pricing policies which discriminate unreasonably against particular airport users, or against the holders of rights or concessions at an airport. It also enables the CAA to act against the fixing of airport charges at artificially low levels, which would be harmful to another airport's business.

A second and still more stringent tier of regulation, and the one with which we are concerned today, is applied at the more powerful airports: specifically at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted, and also at Manchester. It provides for the CAA to set a limit on increases in airport charges. Since 1987, when the system was introduced, that limit has been expressed in terms of a formula which relates permitted increases in

"average annual revenue per passenger",

to movements in the retail prices index. The present price-cap formula covering the three BAA London airports limits increases to RPI minus 1 per cent.

The 1986 Act provides for the price cap formula to be reviewed every five years and for the CAA then to establish a new formula for the coming five-year period, having first taken the advice of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. That extensive report was presented to the CAA not long ago. The present formula for the BAA airports expires at the end of March 1992.

Last December, therefore, the CAA referred the three BAA airports to the MMC, with a request for advice in two areas. First, the MMC was asked for advice on the price cap that should apply for the coming five years. Secondly, the MMC was asked to report whether the airports have pursued, through their airport charges or through their operational activities, any course of conduct adverse to the public interests and, if so, to advise how this might be remedied.

Over the past six months, the MMC has reviewed substantially the entire business of the three airports, and in doing so has taken evidence from a wide range of bodies and organisations, including, of course, BAA itself. My Department was among those which put views to the Commission, as those who have read the report will know.

The main findings of the report were that from April, increases in airport charges at Heathrow and Gatwick, and at the three BAA airports taken together, should be limited by the formula RPI minus 4 per cent.; but that in the event that BAA started building a fifth terminal at Heathrow in 1995-96, the formula in respect of Heathrow should be amended to RPI plus 1 per cent., and that for the three airports together amended to RPI minus 1 per cent. The commission also identified a weakness in BAA's arrangements for consulting users about charges for certain of its facilities and it has recommended measures to remedy this.

The commission's third main recommendation was that the regulatory formula should be amended as and when necessary, to compensate BAA for the effects of the abolition, of duty-free and tax-free sales, and for any changes that might be required in connection with frontier controls post-1992. Finally, the commission recommended an increase in the proportion of costs arising from new security measures which may be recovered through the charging formula, and a reduction in the recovery period.

Let me say a word now about what happens next. The determination of the price formula which will apply from April is a matter for the CAA, which must have regard to the commission's advice but is not bound to follow it. The authority has published its proposals for a new regulatory regime and these are the subject of consultation. The authority has included in its proposals a draft condition to tackle the shortcoming in BAA's consultative arrangements—a shortcoming that BAA itself has acknowledged. My hon. Friend went over the points relating to the fact that the CAA was recommending RPI minus 8 per cent.

In a short debate such as this, the arithmetic may be a little complex, so I shall move on to some of the other points made by my hon. Friend. He asked whether it was possible for BAA to sell a London airport to raise funds. Under the special share arrangements, BAA could not dispose of any of its three London aiports without the permission of the Secretary of State. The special share in BAA was taken by the Government for reasons of national interest. I have no reason to believe that BAA is considering the course that my hon. Friend suggested. If it were to propose to sell one of its London airports, the Government would need to take a view on the matter at the time such a proposal was made.

The merits of separate ownership of the London airports were, of course, discussed at the time of privatisation, when some argued for splitting them up. The Government took the view then that this would not in practice be beneficial, because it would be unlikely either to bring real competition—given Heathrow's natural dominance—or to remove the need for new airport regulation.

Mr. Steen: What about the charging of smaller airlines, which discriminates against them landing and parking as compared with long-haul flights?

Mr. McLoughlin: I realise that both my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams and my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris), who is also here, take this point seriously. It is in the interests of both BAA and the country to have a multi-airline industry. The important point that my hon. Friend made about the need for regional services to and from our major international airports is not lost on me or my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. We know that there is concern that charges make access difficult for carriers on the domestic routes.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has said that he would consider it unacceptable if airports,

through their charging policies, abused their position or exploited their users. He has referred to legislative safeguards against unreasonably discriminatory pricing. There is a mechanism that enables airlines to appeal to the CAA. The CAA has produced recommendations following the MMC's report. They will have to be considered before any decision can be made on the next step.

I have tried to answer as many question as possible in the time available to me. We could talk for much longer within the framework of a proper aviation debate, because I am fully aware of the great interest that my hon. Friends, at least, take in these matters.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A decision has been taken today by the Luxembourg court that affects the sovereignty of the House and the manner in which the Merchant Shipping Act 1988 should be implemented. We respect the rulings of the court but its findings recently have suggested that Acts of this Parliament are significantly at risk. There is no doubt that in the treaty that is about to be proposed there arises serious doubt about whether the competence of the House will continue in the way that it has in the past. It is of grave importance that we ensure that the competences and privileges of the House are maintained and that, by one means or another, we ensure that we maintain our sovereignty in the House on behalf of the entire electorate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): The hon. Member will recognise that, notwithstanding the seriousness of the matter that he has raised, it is not one for me.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Given the importance——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Member will be brief. Points of order will eat into private Members' time.

Mr. Harris: Given the importance of the European Court's decision, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is there any chance, even at this late stage, of a Minister making a brief statement?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member's remarks will have been heard——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member's remarks will have been heard by the occupants of the Treasury Bench.

Royal Assent

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified her Royal Assent to the following Acts and measures:—

Finance Act 1991
Appropriation Act 1991
Agriculture and Forestry (Financial Provisions) Act 1991
Planning and Compensation Act 1991
Badgers (Further Protection) Act 1991
Badgers Act 1991
Smoke Detectors Act 1991
Medical Qualifications (Amendment) Act 1991
Wildlife and Countryside (Amendment) Act 1991
Road Traffic Act 1991
Arms Control and Disarmament (Inspections) Act 1991—*[Interruption.]*

Order. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is interrupting my reading of the list.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): My hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) asked me what my "ministerial" statement was all about, and I told him.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I think that I got as far as the Arms Control and Disarmament (Inspections) Act 1991. I shall continue:

Social Security (Contributions) Act 1991
Forestry Act 1991
Foreign Corporations Act 1991
Coal Mining Subsidence Act 1991
Atomic Weapons Establishment Act 1991
Mental Health (Detention) (Scotland) Act 1991
Child Support Act 1991
School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1991
Age of Legal Capacity (Scotland) Act 1991
Local Government Finance and Valuation Act 1991
Ports Act 1991
Criminal Justice Act 1991
Deer Act 1991
Agricultural Holdings (Scotland) Act 1991
Water Industry Act 1991
Water Resources Act 1991
Statutory Water Companies Act 1991
Land Drainage Act 1991
Water Consolidation (Consequential Provisions) Act 1991
Statute Law Revision (Isle of Man) Act 1991
Armed Forces Act 1991
British Railways Board (Finance) Act 1991
Breeding of Dogs Act 1991
Dangerous Dogs Act 1991
Highland Regional Council (Harbours) Order Confirmation Act 1991
London Local Authorities Act 1991
North Yorkshire County Council Act 1991
Brighton Marine Palace and Pier Act 1991
Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1991
Diocesan Boards of Education Measure 1991

West Glamorgan (Funding)

1.3 pm

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): I commend you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your stamina and energy.

I begin by welcoming the Minister of State, Welsh Office, back to the House after his short illness. I am sure that we are all pleased to see him.

West Glamorgan's net revenue budget for the current year is £242 million. Education accounts for £138 million, social services £28 million, and environment and highways £15 million. The county is renowned for providing nursery education for 90 per cent. of three-year-olds. It is also famed for its provision of music and drama in schools.

Although it has a reputation for financial prudence, the county is running into a brick wall with the Government's restrictions and cuts in spending. Next year it needs to spend an additional £11·1 million—6 per cent. real growth—just to meet the additional statutory obligations that the Government have placed upon it. They are not optional spending measures; they are requirements under the Government's legislation and directives.

The demographic changes resulting from school rolls beginning to rise again, together with a continuing increase in student participation in higher education, will account for an additional £1·5 million spending. National curriculum support measures will require an additional £500,000. Local management of schools and colleges, the provision of computer systems, extra administrative support, and training for staff and governors will require an additional £400,000. Special educational needs provision under the Education Act 1981—it is not discretionary—will require an additional £500,000. Maintenance of school buildings will require an additional £1·5 million, for which the authority has budgeted, against a £20 million backlog. In social services, the Children Act 1989 requires additional support for families, principally through increased preventative and assessment responsibilities for children at risk, and that will require an additional £500,000.

The community care that the Government have unceremoniously dumped on local authorities such as West Glamorgan, social care planning, assessment and case management will require an additional £700,000. Mental handicap and mental illness provision will require an additional £300,000, again under pressure from the Welsh Office. Training and staff development, the introduction of professional qualifications and management development for community care responsibilities will require an additional £200,000. On top of all that, the authority must spend an additional £5 million on upgrading highways and improving the environment to meet basic safety and maintenance obligations. Those are obligations that the authority must meet—it has no discretion—on top of the extra 6 per cent. that it needs to spend next year.

If there is no relative change in the standard spending assessments between Welsh counties, Tuesday's statement by the Secretary of State will mean that there will be an increased provision for West Glamorgan of only 6 per cent. on its current budget. Of that 6 per cent., 1 per cent. has already been committed by the full-year effects of this year's staff pay, principally teaching staff, working its way through. Some 4·5 per cent. has been assumed by the Secretary of State to cover pay and price rises. Therefore, 5·5 per cent. of that 6 per cent. has already been swallowed up, leaving only 0·5 per cent. to cover any additional award above 4·5 per cent. by the teachers' pay review body.

The increase will be eaten up without any scope for essential and additional expansion of the sort which I have described and which is required by the Government. To meet that additional £11 million expansion in provision, most of it statutorily required, there will have to be a cut in spending on other services of about 6 per cent., which will mean cuts in teaching staff, larger class sizes and reductions in social services. That is already happening. Indeed, primary schools in the Neath area have suffered cuts in teaching staff and classes have had to be merged, resulting in larger class numbers.

Welsh Office Ministers, sitting in their ivory tower, seem oblivious to the savage impact of their policies on local communities such as those in West Glamorgan. One group who are affected are the elderly. There are 74,000 pensioners in West Glamorgan, many of whom depend on income support. Some of them suffered disgraceful cuts in the benefits that they received in April this year when retirement pensions for the over-75s and disabled pensioners were increased by 10·8 per cent. whereas income support was increased by just 8 per cent. That meant that those receiving income support lost access to benefits and rebates. Some of the most vulnerable sections of our elderly population suffered an additional cut in that way.

Many of the 74,000 West Glamorgan pensioners have small additional private or widows' pensions to supplement their retirement pensions and that group is often hit the hardest by the present situation. What the Government give with one hand they take away with the other in tax increases and loss of benefits.

Many pensioners in the Neath constituency and throughout West Glamorgan are without cars. Many live in valley villages and rely on bus transport which, even with the West Glamorgan concessionary fares scheme, they find costly. For example, a pensioner making a return trip from Ystalyfera to Swansea has to pay £2·20 and from Seven Sisters to Neath, £1·65. Such sums may seem small to the Minister on his salary, but, repeated day after day, they eat into the income of our elderly citizens, especially as they face exorbitant water charges, a colour television licence fee of £77, standing charges on all the main services of telecommunications, electricity, gas and so on, on top of high heating charges for electricity, gas and coal, and, in addition, the continuously rising cost of living.

That is why I believe that pensioners would be enormously boosted by a new free fares system in West Glamorgan. That would be an imaginative targeted measure which would directly assist some of the most vulnerable members of our community. It could transform the lives of elderly people living in West Glamorgan and have a liberating effect on them. It would not just give relief to our elderly citizens, some of whom are living on the poverty line; it would also enhance their quality of life and so ensure that they would be less of a burden on the state as they grew into old age.

In fact, the Government would save money by such a measure. If they did their accounting in terms of social costs and benefits, rather then with the tunnel vision of their profit and loss balance sheets in which people do not figure, they would find that even injecting the additional funding needed to provide a free fares scheme they would

end up spending less money by having healthier citizens who were more at one with themselves, enjoying a better quality of life.

The existing West Glamorgan concessionary fares scheme commenced on 26 October 1986 and provides for a one third cut in bus fares. Under the Transport Act 1985, bus operators working the scheme may not make a profit from the concessionary fares available to them and reimbursement must come wholly out of local authority budgets. The problem is that, under current Welsh Office guidelines and spending targets, no flexibility is offered to local authorities. They do not have the flexibility to provide that additional service either in terms of free fares for pensioners on the buses or in their spending commitments.

The cost of the present concessionary fares scheme is just £0·8 million, so a free fares scheme would cost an additional £1·6 million—not very much. If West Glamorgan county council, Neath borough council, Swansea city council, Lliw borough council and Port Talbot borough council came to the Welsh Office with a specific request for funding for that additional £1·6 million, would the Minister agree to it? That is the question that I wish to put to him today.

Why should Neath pensioners, and pensioners throughout West Glamorgan, be deprived of a basic right enjoyed by many other pensioners in our society? According to a report published in 1988 by the transport and road research laboratory, 22 per cent. of the concessionary transport schemes available in Great Britain are free-fare schemes. Most are in metropolitan areas such as London, South Yorkshire and the west midlands. Many operate outside the rush hours, after 9.30 am or during the weekend. Millions of senior citizens throughout Britain can travel on the bus or the underground free of charge, but none of them is in Wales.

The Welsh Office should hang its head in shame. Why cannot the Government show some compassion and generosity for once and provide the funding necessary for Welsh local authorities which wish to do so to transform their present concessionary fare schemes into free-fare schemes? That will also have the benefit of improving revenues for the bus operators who at present, after deregulation, at times offer, particularly to residents in the valley villages, a shoddy service which runs out late at night and is very weak during the weekend. The additional revenue generated by carrying those extra passengers, although all the finance would be returned to the county, would make for a more effective service.

It is no use the Minister saying that it is up to local authority discretion whether West Glamorgan or any other Welsh authority spends part of its budget on a free-fare scheme. The fact is that their hands are tied by highly restrictive and in some cases punitive Welsh Office spending guidelines. Virtually all local authority spending in Wales, as elsewhere in the country, is centrally controlled—and tightly at that. Authorities do not have the discretion to operate such a scheme.

My simple and specific proposal could greatly enhance the quality of life for some of our poorest citizens, who have given their working lives to their communities but are now forgotten or ignored by the consumerist, materialistic, me-first culture in which the Government glory. I urge the Minister to respond positively to my proposal, and to provide the funding necessary to West Glamorgan and the boroughs within it, so that they may establish a free-fare scheme as soon as possible. In that way, our senior citizens could enjoy transport in reasonable comfort at a pace that suits them so that they might take advantage of the opportunities otherwise denied to them.

1.17 pm

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts): I congratulate the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) on his success in raising the question of Welsh Office funding for West Glamorgan. His speech focused on local authority spending. On Tuesday, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales announced a provisional local government finance settlement for 1992-93 that proposed a level of total standard spending in Wales of £2,639 million. That is an increase of £206 million, or 8·5 per cent. on 1991-92, and is the appropriate level of spending for the coming year, taking account of all relevant considerations. My right hon. Friend also proposed a level of aggregate external finance of about £2,383 million—an increase of 6·7 per cent. on the current year.

The settlement must be seen in the context of the Government's success in bringing down inflation. It is a realistic settlement, and one that provides local authorities in Wales with a firm foundation on which to budget prudently for the coming year. It builds on the settlement for the current year, which increased total standard spending by 8 per cent. on budgets, and increased aggregate external finance by 11·2 per cent.

The level of expenditure per Welsh charge payer for which the settlement allows is £1,207. If local authorities budget in line with our plans for 1992-93, charge payers should, on average, contribute just £118 per head of that through the community charge, before taking into account various benefits and relief. The settlement for the current year, 1991-92, provided for an increase of more than £31 million in West Glamorgan county council's standard spending assessment to £263·5 million; a rise of 15·1 per cent. on the level for 1990-91. That was the highest percentage increase in Wales, bar one county—Gwent—and represents an increase of almost 7 per cent. on the unnecessarily high budget set by the authority for 1990-91, which was £14 million over SSA. That decision resulted in a community charge for standard spending of £28 more than would have been necessary if the authority had spent in line with the Government's plans, and that placed an unnecessary burden on its charge payers.

This year, the authority is receiving an increase in grant support towards its expenditure of £18·5 million. Again, that is the second highest percentage increase in Wales. Charge payers in the county have also benefited directly from the £140 reduction in community charge liability which was announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor in his Budget. The aggregate increase in standard spending assessments for 1991-92 over 1990-91 for the four district councils within West Glamorgan is £8·9 million, a rise of 20·7 per cent. The aggregate increase in grant for those authorities in support of that spending is £5·9 million, which represents a rise of 16·7 per cent. over 1990-91. The increase in SSA for the hon. Gentleman's constituency is 16·6 per cent. over 1990-91, despite a slight decrease in population.

While Port Talbot, Lliw Valley and Neath set community charges in line with the settlement, it is unfortunate that Swansea city council chose to budget for

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a charge of £57, no less than 52 per cent. above the settlement level of £38. That placed a quite unnecessary burden on its charge payers.

The levels of expenditure and support that I have just described were sufficient to enable the authorities concerned to meet both inflationary and service pressures in providing an appropriate level of service. The provisional settlement announced by my right hon. Friend on Tuesday will build on the foundation that has been laid.

It would not be appropriate or possible to consider how the proposed settlement for 1992-93 will affect individual local authorities. My Department and the local authority associations in Wales are considering the grant distribution arrangements for the coming year and will make recommendations to the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government Finance in due course. With the exception of certain specific and supplementary grants towards current expenditure, Government support towards local government spending in Wales under the settlement is unhypothecated. That means that, while the Government provide the appropriate level of resources, it is for individual authorities to make their own expenditure decisions in the light of their assessment of local expenditure requirements and priorities. That is entirely appropriate and accords with the wishes of the local authorities. It is against that background that the funding of specific services such as those mentioned by the hon. Gentleman must be considered.

The hon. Member for Neath talked at some length about the position of the elderly and, in particular, about their travel arrangements. I share the hon. Gentleman's concern about the mobility of our senior citizens and I note his view that they should be allowed to travel free of charge on local buses. Of course, the Transport Act 1985 gives local authorities powers to fund travel concession schemes for various groups of people, including persons of pensionable age. The local authority may determine the nature of the concession and its level.

It is right that this is a matter for local authorities as they are in the best position to determine the type of concession which best suits the needs of their areas. Costs are an important factor in this. In West Glamorgan, for example, senior citizens may apply for a pass which entitles them to a third off normal single or return fares. The cost of this concession to the charge payer in the current financial year is estimated to be some £810,000, of which £402,000 will be met by the district councils.

However, the provision of free travel would not merely increase those costs by a factor of three to £2·4 million. I understand that that is the correct figure, but it would generate much higher usage, as more people would take advantage of the concession. This would result in higher claims from the bus companies and extra costs to the council.

But there are points other than costs to bear in mind. The scheme run in West Glamorgan imposes no time restrictions on senior citizens who use it. This means that pass holders may travel at any time, including at peak hours. This is helpful to the pass holders and makes for economic and easy administration of the scheme. A penalty of free travel which the hon. Gentleman advocates would be the need to restrict the times at which concession holders could travel in order to ensure that adequate capacity is available on the buses for those who need to travel. The hon. Gentleman mentioned that restriction.

Mr. Hain: Does the Minister agree that millions of pensioners elsewhere in the United Kingdom enjoy this benefit? Why do not pensioners in Wales enjoy it?

Sir Wyn Roberts: As I said, it is entirely a matter for the local authority to decide what best suits its locality. I imagine that, as the hon. Gentleman said, many free-travel schemes are to be found in heavily urbanised areas where fewer disadvantages may occur. Indeed, it is for each and every local authority to decide what type of concessionary scheme it can operate successfully and afford. In looking at concessionary fares schemes, local authorities have to consider what is affordable and the effect on other persons who, for whatever reason, need or choose to use the buses.

The hon. Gentleman concentrated very much on the needs of the elderly. He will be aware that, in our "Caring for People" White Paper and subsequent guidance, we have set out a comprehensive policy to ensure care in the community for elderly people. Each social services department is leading the production of a joint county social care plan for service development with health authorities and other bodies, including the voluntary sector, and in close consultation with service users and carers. The first plans will be published by next April.

We are supporting the implementation of those reforms with a unique programme of concerted action in Wales. The Welsh Office initiative began in 1987, and 56 demonstration projects testing innovative ways to care for elderly people in their own homes have been approved for grants. Four of those projects are in West Glamorgan, and the Welsh Office has allocated approximately £2·5 million for them. One of the projects, the staying-at-home initiative which started in January 1988, explores ways to improve community services and, in particular, enable dependent elderly people who would otherwise require residential care to remain in their homes.

Squatting and Second Homes

1.30 pm

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): I wish to discuss the case for a review of the law on squatting and its effect on privately owned second homes. Many people associate second homes simply with the wealthy who have a weekend cottage or a country home that they visit on Friday nights, returning to London or wherever on Sundays. In recent years, however, that has not been the only definition of a second home. More and more people own second homes because they must travel elsewhere for work and be away from their families from Monday until Friday, returning to the main family home at weekends. Many people have a second home simply because, as a result of mortgage interest rates, they have been unable to sell their home but have decided to move to their new home so that they do not lose that purchase.

Since I first raised the matter with the former Prime Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), I have been extremely grateful for the help of my right hon. Friend the Minister of State at the Home Office for the part that he and his officials have played in this thorny, pressing problem. There is no short cut to a solution and no easy answers. Many complex legal attitudes and issues must be looked at before we come up with an answer that will deal with the problem.

The current legal position is that squatting is an act of trespass which, in general, is dealt with by civil rather than criminal law. However, in cases of displaced residential occupiers—people who are displaced from their main residence—the provisions of sections 6 and 7 of the Criminal Law Act 1977 apply. That gives immediate relief to lawful occupiers who are deprived of living accommodation. If squatters' actions result in making occupiers homeless, immediate action can be taken to remove the squatters. The criminal law deals with the more objectionable behaviour associated with squatting. If damage is done to the property during entry into or occupation of the property, an offence is committed under the Criminal Damage Act 1971.

Although the principle of the law may be excellent, in practice it does not work so well for those who own a second home and are caught with the problem of squatters. The law is inadequate for the current circumstances and needs to be reviewed urgently with respect to squatters in individuals' second homes, which are not only holiday homes but second homes simply because they are taking longer to sell their main homes than they had hoped.

I should like to mention two cases to highlight the heartache, misery and expense that squatters can cause. One relates to my constituency of Chelmsford; the other took place elsewhere. For obvious reasons, I cannot mention any names. My constituents' home is still unoccupied and they live in fear of squatters returning to the property.

The first case was that of someone who is not a constituent. I should like to read the episode, which concerns the misery caused to a woman and her home. The local newspaper wrote:

"A woman wept last night in her dream home, now reduced to a stinking shell by squatters.

Mrs. X broke down in tears at the appalling damage to the house in which she had sunk her hopes and her savings.

The vandals even scrawled obscene rhymes on the walls, threatening to sort her out with a crowbar.

She said, 'How can I live here now? I never thought people could be this base. The house even smells of animals.'

The gang wrecked the two-storey house which was being converted to a single home from bedsits.

Mrs. X was only days away from moving in. Now it will take months and more than £15,000 to repair the damage caused in a drunken orgy of destruction.

The vandals ripped bannisters from stairs, smashed seven sinks, two showers and a bath, wrenched off every radiator, hacked out all the plumbing.

Floorboards were pulled up; skirting boards stripped and plaster chiselled off so that they could pull out copper pipes . . .

Every room was covered in obscene graffiti. 10 hippies and two dogs lived in the house for just over a week. As well as the damage, they left beer bottles and rotting rubbish everywhere.

They started ripping the house apart after Mrs. X obtained a writ for their eviction . . . Police today said that they were powerless to combat the squatters".

Every reasonable and decent person will have a great deal of sympathy with Mrs. X, given the reprehensible activities of the squatters who destroyed the home into which she hoped shortly to move.

The second case concerns constituents of mine who wanted to sell their house and in the meantime found another house into which they wished to move. So as not to lose the sale on the house they bought it and moved into it, having emptied their original home and ensured that all the windows and doors were securely bolted and locked so that no one could force entry. Imagine their horror when they discovered that squatters had entered the property. I believe that what they had done should be considered forced entry, but under the legislation it was apparently not an offence. They had managed to gain entry by removing the window panes without damaging them and had then unlocked the window. They proceeded to open the front door by unlocking it, brought up a van with their possessions and moved in. Nothing could be done by the police to remove the squatters immediately.

The squatters remained for just over a week, in which they held open house parties every night, inviting total strangers from the local public house to come and enjoy themselves and drink. The wallpaper, the carpets and the remaining beds in the house were damaged, and it was left to my constituents to seek a court order to get the squatters evicted.

My constituents were relatively lucky. It took quite a short time for them to get a court order, but they were determined, and because they could not have their case heard in a court in Chelmsford quickly enough they fortunately managed to find a court in Essex which was able to deal with their problems relatively speedily. They got their court order and the squatters left. But it cost those people a considerable amount of money to gain that quick access to the law. It cost them even more money because they had to repair the damage to their home before they could ask people to visit it with a view to buying it. That is unacceptable.

Fortunately, my constituents had the financial resources to seek redress from the courts, but many people do not have the £800—or, in some cases, more than £1,000—necessary to go to court to seek quick redress. It seems inherently unfair that people have to spend considerable sums of money to obtain possession of their home. One argument is that such people could sue the squatters for the damage caused, but that is not realistic. Most squatters

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would not have the financial resources, even if they could be identified and taken to court. Suing or claiming damages from squatters is not a viable alternative.

It was for those reasons that, on 19 June 1990, I raised the matter with the then Prime Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley at Prime Minister's questions. I said:

"Is it not time that the balance of the law was redressed to favour the innocent home owner, rather than the reprehensible activities of squatters?"

To her credit, my right hon. Friend replied:

"As my hon. Friend is aware, squatting that directly excludes a householder from his home is already a criminal offence. The police can act, and penalties are severe. However, squatting in a residential property which does not cause the immediate threat of homelessness can be dealt with only through civil action."

My right hon. Friend continued—and this is crucial—

"I agree with my hon. Friend that there appears to be a defect in the law, and I am looking into the matter further." —[*Official Report*, 19 June 1990; Vol. 174, c. 797.]

I am grateful that my right hon. Friend looked into the matter further and I know that, over the past year, my right hon. Friend the Minister of State and his officials have considered the matter carefully and may possibly order a review of the law, which I welcome.

I accept that there are no easy answers; the law on property ownership is complex and difficult. Obviously, the law must be fair and any solution must be fair to all parties. However, the law at present is grossly unfair. It is balanced away from the innocent victims—home owners—and a review must address that problem urgently.

I accept, as I know my right hon. Friend the Minister would, that there is a problem of homelessness in this country. Fortunately, actions taken by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is dealing realistically with those problems. I am sure that everyone welcomes the fact that, in the past six months, the number of people sleeping rough on the streets of London has been halved due to my right hon. Friend's precipitate action and his imaginative policies of seeking to open up buildings such as the one in Soho square to provide night stay.

However, the fact that we have homelessness does not give squatters a divine right to take the law into their own hands and move into the properties of innocent bystanders who have taken all the care that they thought necessary properly to secure their homes against people breaking and entering, and squatting. It seems ironic and unfair that people lock their houses and ensure that they are secure but, because of the definition of what constitutes damage to a property when gaining entry, there is a legal way in which people can gain entry to those properties causing mayhem, misery and expense for homeowners, who find it can take some time to sort out the problem.

I should like to thank my right hon. Friend the Minister for what he has done and for the fact that at 1.45 pm on the day in which we go into recess he is prepared to listen to the problems that are close to the heart of people who, sadly, have become caught up with the activities of squatters. I urge him to ensure that his Department's review is concluded swiftly so that we can discuss in detail any suggestions that his Department is prepared to make for changing the law and putting an end to these reprehensible and anti-social activities.

1.45 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): My hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) has expressed his case with characteristic lucidity, and I congratulate him. The problem that he has highlighted over the past year, since he asked the question of our right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), has got worse. The problem of squatting has been deteriorating over the past three or four years and I applaud the action that my hon. Friend has taken. He has highlighted the issue and caused us in the Home Office as well as my noble Friend the Lord Chancellor and my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General to look at this fiendishly complex problem. It involves both criminal and civil law, landlord and tenant law and an individual's right to occupy property. It is exactly where criminal and civil law intermesh and where, over several hundred years, a complex set of statute laws has grown up.

Following my hon. Friend's question last year, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and I have been engaged in a wide-ranging review of the law on squatting. I am afraid that I cannot make any announcements today, but I can assure my hon. Friend that it will not be long before I am able to make an announcement about the next step in what we intend to do.

Squatting is not trivial. It causes enormous inconvenience and, on occasions, great expense for those involved. The two examples that my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford gave, one from his constituency and one from elsewhere in the country, clearly showed the personal tragedy as well as the expense and inconvenience that can be caused to innocent people who own property in which they are not currently living.

I am sure that people who have had squatters in their property feel the same as those who have been burgled. They may never feel comfortable in the house or flat again. Someone has entered the property by force and done the sort of thing that my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford described. Although I have never been in that position, I am sure that I would not feel comfortable in my home for a considerable time afterwards. The emotional distress can be considerable.

I join my hon. Friend in rejecting absolutely any suggestion that squatting can ever be defensible or that it is normally—there may be exceptions—related to homelessness. The majority of those who squat, as in the cases described by my hon. Friend, have chosen to invade the property of others in a measured and calculated way as they move from place to place. I have seen that in my own part of the country. Squatting is the unlawful occupation of someone else's property and it cannot be justified.

Squatting involves not only residential property. We have received alarming reports from different parts of the country about an increase in the amount of squatting in commercial and shop property. My hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) has made a strong plea for further action in that regard. I know that the Confederation of British Industry, on behalf of its members, feels that more needs to be done about squatting by those who look as if they are professional gangs of shop squatters. They manipulate the law and sometimes set up shops for a few days and sell sub-standard goods. Of course, the use of any electricity or gas that may be connected to the property renders them liable to criminal prosecution, and the people who have purchased goods

from such places will find themselves in an unfortunate position. My hon. Friend's campaign has flushed out that additional dimension. We are trying to deal with the problem, but squatting in domestic properties is rather easier to deal with than the complex problem of shop squatting.

It is difficult to gauge the extent of squatting: it is like drug addiction, it is a hidden problem or a passing problem as people move in and out. It is difficult to obtain accurate statistics. Recent newspaper reports estimated the number at 50,000. Sometimes newspaper estimates are as useful as ministerial estimates, and I would not dispute that number. However, statistics are available for local authority properties. My hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning reports that, at 1 April 1990, approximately 5,200 local authority homes were being unlawfully occupied. Ninety per cent. of those were in London and 65 per cent. in just three boroughs—Southwark, Lambeth and Hackney. Those boroughs are a byword for hopeless housing administration.

The 1986 London housing survey suggested that a quarter of an estimated 7,500 residential properties that were being squatted in were privately owned, the remainder being owned by local authorities and housing associations. The survey estimated that there were 12,500 squatters in London, about half of whom were under 25; only 8 per cent. were over 40. It is essentially a young person's problem. The survey revealed that mass squatting was rare and that, mercifully, cases involving young children were negligible.

Hard figures may be difficult to obtain, but the Government do not doubt that squatting represents a problem that merits serious attention. Squatting is one form of the civil tort of trespass and has traditionally been dealt with in the civil courts. This approach was justified in the past by the fact that squatting was seen as the simple occupation of property, which may be subject to genuine civil disputes. Where squatting is accompanied by criminal activity such as theft, criminal damage—undoubtedly some of the matters to which my hon. Friend referred fell into the category of criminal damage—the abstraction of electricity and the use of gas, the general criminal law is available for use against squatters, as it is against anybody else. The problem is that it is difficult to obtain evidence when people swoop into houses or shops and move on.

The traditional approach, which has dominated our approach to the occupation of property as far back as records reveal—that is a long way—has always been to leave it to the civil law. That approach was modified for the first time by the Criminal Law Act 1977, which made it an offence for a trespasser to remain on premises after being required to leave by a displaced residential occupier or a protected intended occupier—someone who has several defined legal interests in the property.

Given the seriousness of the predicament facing those who were made homeless by squatters, that approach was justified. Someone could come home, find people squatting in their home and have nowhere to go. That was put right, and Parliament decided that a civil remedy alone was insufficient.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford and other hon. Members would like to extend that protection to those who are not made homeless by squatters but who nevertheless may suffer considerable hardship at their hands. I think particularly of my hon. Friend's constituents, who had moved to a new house but were unable to sell their former house because squatters had moved in while it was on the market. After those squatters had been evicted, my hon. Friend's constituents were still faced with the difficulty and expense of returning their old house to a fit state for sale. That is a serious issue. There is no denying the feeling of injustice that my hon. Friend's constituents and others rightly feel at having been put in such a situation, often with little prospect of compensation from the squatters. They must feel helpless and in need of the law's protection. That is the point which my hon. Friend has been pressing on the Government.

My hon. Friend will agree that a distinction can be drawn between this sort of case, serious as it is, and cases which the law recognises in which lawful occupiers of property are made homeless. My hon. Friend draws attention to the case for a review of the effectiveness of the present law in dealing with the sort of case that I have just outlined. I assure him that, in reviewing the law, the Home Secretary and I have such cases very much in mind.

As I have explained, squatting is not generally a matter for the criminal law, except in cases where squatters commit criminal offences. The civil remedy is to seek an order from the High Court or the county court to get possession of the property. The courts are aware that it is often important to move quickly against squatters, and expeditious procedures are now available. I have recently discussed these matters with the Lord Chancellor, who said that all that it is possible to do under present procedures to expedite matters is being done. In the most urgent cases, where there is a danger to life or limb or to property, it is possible to obtain an immediate ex parte injunction, although that involves much cost by those who are threatened.

Mr. Burns: The Minister has given two examples of the definition of emergency. An emergency is often more pressing to those who own a property than it is to the law, and they probably interpret it differently from the courts. For example, I suspect that in many cases there would not be loss of life or limb. The emergency for the people involved is that of no longer having their property under their control but invaded by others.

Mr. Patten: That is a good point, characteristically made by my hon. Friend, and we shall have to take it into account as we finalise the review of the law in this area.

It must be stressed that there are dangers in widening the scope of the criminal law in this field. In the past, some hon. Members have suggested changes which in practice would mean that anyone who could not satisfy a policeman or even a local authority official—and such officials are not necessarily as benign as local authorities officials in Chelmsford, now happily back under Conservative control since May—that he or she was in lawful occupation of the house could therefore be thrown on to the streets without further ado. In that context, I am sure that my hon. Friend appreciates the difficulties.

Even with less radical extensions of the law, we must be apprehensive about the prospect of involving the police in what may be genuine disputes over property rights or disputes between landlords and tenants and not disputes over squatting. There are considerable difficulties, and we would not wish to see chief constables or hard-pressed policemen and policewomen turned into a free eviction

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agency for landlords. We must also be sensitive to the possible public order consequences of police involvement in squatting cases.

I acknowledge that, in the great majority of cases, the squatter is in the wrong, and knows it. A further point which my hon. Friend did not raise but which underlines much of the complexity of the consideration that the Home Office is giving to this issue is the matter of third party rights. For example, in his constituency or mine, an absentee landlord may sell a property in which there are squatters and not care very much for immediate repossession. On either side of the property, or above and below if it is a flat, people may be grossly inconvenienced by the noise, smell and attendant nuisance.

That is a live question. In the spirit of the times, I know that my hon. Friend will spend almost the entire recess at his desk in the Palace of Westminster attending to the problems of his constituents. Over that time, perhaps he will give some attention to the problem and let me have his views. It may be that third parties should have the right. I do not know. It is a complex issue and such a right might give other people a gratuitous opportunity to cause trouble.

The criminal law already intervenes in the worst cases of squatting. Before we go any further, we have to know precisely what it is that we are aiming to catch, and ensure that we do not aim too wide. It would be a good idea, particularly as matters concerning property are always sensitive, if there were wide agreement on both sides of the Chamber. If we make changes to the law, we want them to stick, in the interests of citizens, not in the interests of a personal or political point of view. Therefore, a fair measure of agreement would be a good thing.

I hope to be in a position to make an announcement about this issue soon, and I will ensure that my hon. Friend, who has spoken so forcefully about this important issue, gets a copy of the announcement on the day that it is made.

Newhill Sub-post Office

2 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): The matter that I wish to raise might best be seen as a constituency case with several important implications. These may emerge as I present the case and suggest the need for consistency of standards and their relationship to general decision making. Although the debate is concerned primarily with the closure of a local sub-post office, it touches on the future of the whole postal and Post Office service. I shall suggest that there is a need for the role of the sub-post office to be adequately perceived and more fully appreciated.

Sub-post offices provide an important social service. They are a point of contact, and the best of our sub-post offices, and their staff, can be providers of information, advice and assistance to those who are most often in need of that support. That fact needs to be fully recognised and that service needs to be adequately valued and maintained. This point is a timely one to make shortly after the Prime Minister sought public favour through his citizens charter. Apparently, the charter is not to be accompanied by any adequate allocation of public resources. Without an acceptance that improved services and helpful approaches may require that the operation involved is a little more costly and that profit motives may need to be a little less dominant, the concept of the charter will not be adequately fulfilled. Words may be fine, but actions are something else.

If the Post Office determines that there shall be fewer sub-post offices, individual citizens, perhaps many of them, will face extra cost and greater inconvenience and maybe comparatively severe extra costs or significantly increased personal inconvenience. The Post Office may benefit financially, but the individual and the affected community will gain nothing. If the individual counts, then, when such a decision is made, it should be seen as serious and the approach to such a decision should require greater consideration and care. That has not been our experience in regard to the loss of the Newhill sub-post office.

As I hope to explain, I have been unable to reach the conclusion that the closure of Newhill sub-post office received the care that one would have thought necessary. On 23 February, I received a letter from a Mr. D. Skipworth, one of the management staff of Post Office Counters Ltd. in Sheffield. It informed me that the Newhill sub-post office was to close. The letter read:

> "The closure has been brought about by the decision of the Co-operative Retail Society, in whose store the Post Office is situated, to close down their operation in Cemetery Road with effect from this date"—

that is, 23 March.

> "There are no other suitable retail outlets in the Newhill area to which we could consider relocating."

Therefore, the service is to end.

I think that I replied by return to inform Mr. Skipworth that I much regretted the loss of the facility, not least because it would be unhelpful to my constituents residing in the Newhill area. I added that the additional use of the Wath upon Dearne post office that would follow would mean greater inconvenience for my constituents. That is already a busy post office. I wrote that, if an alternative

opportunity arose that would allow Post Office facilities to be re-established in the locality, it should be considered as a matter of emergency.

Local concern became acute. I was kept informed by a Mr. J. Robinson, who was acting as the ad hoc secretary of an action group that had been formed to contest the closure. I met some constituents with Mr. Robinson and ward councillors at the Crown inn at Newhill on 17 March. There I met another shopkeeper whose premises, in my view, are adaptable for the purpose of establishing a sub-post office service, and whose personal record was certainly such as to qualify him for the position.

On 18 March I wrote again to Mr. Skipworth at Sheffield. I referred to the meeting that had taken place on 17 March and to the strong support that had been expressed within the community for the retention of the service. I referred also to the commendation of the representatives of the community who were present at the meeting for the transfer of the business to 189, Cemetery road, which is virtually adjacent to the location of the former sub-post office. I referred to the deep local anxiety, not least because many pensioners live in close proximity to the sub-post office. They had told me most firmly that the closure of the Newhill sub-post office meant additional 40p bus fares to use the alternative service. That may not matter to the Post Office, but it matters to my constituents.

The local action group had a meeting with the district general manager, Mr. Marsden. Its members were advised —I was not—that Wath upon Dearne was over-provided with sub-post offices. At that meeting Mr. Marsden and his colleagues were left in no doubt that there was deep and bitter resentment about the closure.

I wrote again to Mr. Skipworth on 18 April, and did not receive a reply. I wrote again and asked whether those involved with the matter would concern themselves with my correspondence and favour me with a reply to my letters. I did not receive a reply. I tabled four parliamentary questions on 8 May. I hoped that the fact that questions had been tabled would stimulate Post Office Counters Ltd. to respond. I wrote to Sir Bryan Nicholson, the chairman of the Post Office, on 4 May. I received a swift acknowledgement from Sir Bryan's office, which told me that inquiries would be made. That led to a little flurry of action. I received a call to say that my letters had not been received by Post Office Counters Ltd. in Sheffield, although they were clearly addressed.

I asked my secretary to send copies of my letters to Mr. Marsden at the district office and then I telephoned Mr. Marsden, to be told that a careful check had been made and that none of my letters had been received. I was rather angry about that. The implication was that my secretary had not posted the letters. I made it extremely clear to Mr. Marsden that my secretary, who has worked with me for a long time, is of irreproachable character and that when she assured me that the letters had been posted, I knew that they had been.

There was further evidence to justify the claim. When my secretary sent the letters to Post Office Counters Ltd. in Sheffield, she sent copies to Mr. Robinson, to the ward councillors and to the local press. All of them received the copies without delay. The ones that apparently went astray were those sent to Post Office Counters Ltd.

I sent copies of the letters that were said to be missing and received a further reply. I should have said that I was told by Post Office Counters Ltd. that it would ask Royal Mail to investigate. I could not see Royal Mail being able to identify the location of the letters that Post Office Counters Ltd. said had gone astray. I am not critical of Royal Mail for not being able to find that correspondence. I received a letter, dated 20 May, from Mr. A. J. Roberts, the managing director of Post Office Counters Ltd. He said that he was replying to my letter to the chairman. I would have thought it only courteous had the chairman replied himself. Mr. Roberts made it clear that the original notification to me of the proposed closure was not entirely accurate. He said:

> "I am told that it was the initial decision by the Co-operative Retail Society to cease operations, allied with the over-provision of counter services in Wath, which led to the decision to close the Newhill office."

In February, I was told that the reason for the closure was entirely due to the Co-operative Retail Society, but by April Post Office Counters Ltd. has widened the cause.

The letter contained another interesting development. Mr. Roberts confirmed that

> "the petition you mention was presented to Mr. Marsden at the Public Meeting held on 23 April."

My initial letter to the chairman of the Post Office asked him to receive a petition. I still have that petition. I was assured by the chairman of Post Office Counters Ltd. that it had already been received. That suggests a degree of carelessness—something to which I referred earlier. I was not happy about the letter from Mr. Roberts, especially as he suggested that I saw the regional manager and the district manager—the people responsible for the muddle and confusion in the first place.

I decided that the best thing to do would be to write once again to the chairman of the Post Office saying that I was not happy about the muddle and confusion and that I still wanted to present the petition. The Minister will understand that petitions of that sort are rarely in the legal condition that would allow me to present them in this Chamber. I wanted to present that petition to the man who bears responsibility for the Post Office. I thought that, at least, he would receive me briefly and graciously, and allow me to express the deep concern of my constituents and my irritation at the way that the matter had been handled. Instead, I received another letter from Sir Bryan—which was extremely courteous—saying that Post Office business was so divided or parcelled out between the Royal Mail, Parcelforce and Post Office Counters Ltd. that such matters would be better dealt with within those departments, and not by himself.

Sir Bryan was courteous, and so he should be. However, he would not see me. I shall be blunt, and say that Sir Bryan receives emoluments of £149,195 a year to lead his industry. When a Member of this House—it does not matter from which side—needs to see the leader of an industry because of gross incompetence and confused actions within it, he should surely receive him. If what Sir Bryan says is correct, and his industry is now so well organised that he has no responsibilities, why does he retain his job? Many of our constituents have been made redundant for far less marked a change. If Sir Bryan does not have a role that allows him to meet Members of Parliament with a justified cause, is not that role superfluous? Either the man has a job to do and does it, or he does not have a job, in which case he should not be paid.

The Post Office may not be particularly concerned because old-age pensioners have to find an extra 40p to meet the additional cost of going to an alternative post office——

Mr. Terry Patchett (Barnsley, East): It does not care.

Mr. Hardy: This morning I received a delightful communication from the Post Office, as all hon. Members will have done, telling me how much it supports and welcomes the Prime Minister's initiative on the citizens charter. I hope that the Minister will look at the delightful comments in that. It welcomes the proposals for improved service. Those proposals would add impetus to improving the quality of service. It is proud of its achievements. That pride is not shared in Newhill. It is putting its customers first. It has not put my constituents in the Newhill area first. It will test the service at selected sub-post offices. It will not be able to test it at the Newhill sub-post office because it has gone, and that is not satisfactory. The experience is distressing.

I deeply regret that my letters should have been lost; that my request that the petition should be received should be so lightly dismissed; that when I requested the chairman of the Post Office to receive the petition I was advised to hand it to the person who said that he received the original one and who must have inadequately advised Mr. Roberts, the managing director, in the first place when Mr. Roberts assured me that he had already received the petition. I do not believe that there has been the care that is required, and I illustrate that with one further example.

One of the letters that I received from Post Office Counters Ltd. referred to the meeting in Newhill, and the senior official of the post office responsible wrote to me to say that it had been suggested that the London road sub-post office should close rather than the Newhill one. But I do not have a London road sub-post office in my constituency. There is no London road in my constituency. If the Post Office cannot get the names of the roads right when Members of Parliament write to it, it is little wonder that this Member of Parliament is so concerned.

The matter is serious. I hope that the Minister will confirm that I am entirely justified in expressing anxiety on behalf of my constituents and that I was entirely justified in seeking to pass the petition, and to express the concern of my constituents, to Sir Bryan Nicholson, the chairman of the Post Office. I hope that he will share my concern that the conduct that I have experienced is not satisfactory in a parliamentary democracy. If those standards are to continue, the Prime Minister will be a disappointed man, and many of my constituents further afield than Newhill will have cause for irritation and anger, as well as the prospect of inconvenience and additional cost, as my constituents have had.

2.18 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Edward Leigh): I take up straight away the comments that the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) made at the end of his speech. I confirm my view that he is entirely justified in raising the matter on this Adjournment debate. From what he has said this afternoon and in discussions with those who advise me, he is entirely justified in everything that he has done in the matter during the past few months.

The debate is particularly timely because in it the hon. Gentleman has referred to two areas to which the Government attach considerable importance. First, the future of Newhill post office raises the question of the adequate provision of post office services—an important subject that needs to be debated in the House. Secondly, there is the question of the quality of service provided by public sector organisations such as the Post Office—and the Government have, with the publication of the citizens charter this week, expressed in concrete terms their determination to raise those standards. During the speech of the hon. Member for Wentworth, I referred to that part of the citizens charter that deals with the Post Office. It states:

"The objective of our reforms is to improve the range, choice, reliability and value for money of postal services. We also plan to increase the power of the customer to take action when the service provided falls below a reasonable standard."

There follows, rightly, the statement that the Post Office has already raised its standards and can certainly lay claim to be the most efficient organisation of its kind in Europe.

However, the charter adds:

"There is, however, further scope for increasing efficiency, reducing costs and improving standards of service."

That is why this debate is so timely. As the hon. Member for Wentworth said, a citizens charter must embrace not just words but actions, and we should ensure that public utilities such as the Post Office show—in the words of the hon. Gentleman—consideration and care to all members of the public and to those who represent them.

I know that the hon. Gentleman would not have drawn attention to the issue if he did not feel considerable concern, and I hope that he will not mind me saying that he has gained an enviable reputation in the House, during his long service of more than 20 years, as an exemplary constituency Member of Parliament. Today's debate is another example of his determination, which we have all noted over the years, to stand up for his constituents, and to speak up for them. The Adjournment debate procedure provides an ideal format in which to do that.

The Post Office provides a service on which we all rely at some time.

Mr. Patchett: In what way will the citizens charter assist the customers of Newhill post office?

Mr. Leigh: I have another nine minutes in which to finish my contribution to this debate, and, having given considerable thought to the matter, I hope that I will be able to respond positively. If the hon. Member for Barnsley, East (Mr. Patchett) will be a little patient, I will outline what we consider to be the advantages accruing to the citizen from the charter and what can be done in the particular case of Newhill.

Although we can usually rely on Post Office services with confidence, it is unfortunately inevitable, given the size of the organisation, that, from time to time, difficulties of the kind that were described earlier would arise. I accept absolutely the genuine concern expressed by the hon. Member for Wentworth about the need for proper provision of Post Office services for his constituents, and for efficient and helpful handling of representations to the Post Office. I shall return to those specific aspects.

Let me make it clear at once that I agree with the hon. Member for Wentworth that aspects of the case that he raised should and could have been handled with greater sensitivity by the Post Office. It has a statutory duty to have regard to the social—I lay special emphasis on the word "social", and in that respect I hope that my response will be helpful to the hon. Member for Barnsley, East—industrial, and commercial needs of the United Kingdom in exercising its powers. It is important to set the difficulties that the hon. Member for Wentworth described against the background of the corporation's statutory

duties and the many positive steps that it has taken to reorganise its business, and to improve its accountability and quality of service.

Since the Post Office ceased to be a public department and became a public corporation 20 years ago, it has transformed itself into a profitable organisation run on commercial lines, with a clear priority given to serving the customer. In the past, the Post Office operated as a monolithic single business but in practice it often covered a number of distinct activities—letters, parcels, counters and Girobank. The last few years have seen increasing separation of the different businesses, leaving them to deal at arm's length with other parts of the Post Office. That has given each not only more commercial incentive to make the best use of its assets and develop its own business, but an opportunity to take a more responsive approach to the needs of its different customers. That is why, in the particular circumstances raised by the hon. Member, there was a wish to resolve the issue within the counters business rather than at the chairman's level, and furthermore on a regional basis rather than centrally, to allow local knowledge of customer requirements to inform the decision-making process.

I will draw the attention of the Post Office chairman to the issues raised in this afternoon's debate, and I will personally ask him to reconsider his decision not to meet the hon. Gentleman. Despite the heavy responsibilities laid upon the chairman of the Post Office, if requested courteously to meet a Member of Parliament to discuss a matter of some importance, he should do so, and I shall write him a letter. Of course, this is entirely a matter for the chairman of the Post Office as he has operational independence from the Government, but I shall write to him in those terms and perhaps that will offer a suitable opportunity for the hon. Gentleman to present his petition in person to Sir Bryan.

Post Office Counters Ltd. was incorporated in 1987 as a wholly owned subsidiary of the Post Office. Since then, it has consistently made a small operating profit on its turnover, which was last year about £950 million. We all have an interest in seeing that it continues to operate efficiently, effectively and profitably. It will not be in anyone's long-term interests if the Post Office is not able to generate the funds to maintain and improve its service.

The task is not an easy one. Traditional Post Office services are increasingly subject to competition. Stamps are now sold in some 40,000 other retail outlets. Automated funds transfer directly into bank and building society accounts already provides an alternative means of delivering pension and benefit payments and for the payment of bills. The option for doing that is to be extended under the provisions of the citizens charter to provide greater customer choice. The Post Office therefore needs to look to costs and efficiency if it is to remain competitive and retain business, but it clearly recognises that economic considerations are only one part of a wider equation; it must earn and retain a reputation among its customers for meeting their requirements if it is to keep their loyalty.

It is worth pointing out that it currently has the largest retail network in the country consisting of more than 20,000 post offices throughout the United Kingdom. Indeed, it is considerably larger than that of any bank or building society, and it is worth pointing out that it has more outlets per head of population than the post office networks in France, Germany, Japan or the USA. In the United Kingdom, post offices are therefore generally easily accessible to all but those in the very remotest areas. So post offices are very much local institutions, a point made by the hon. Gentleman, and I would be the first to acknowledge that. Particularly—but by no means exclusively—in rural areas, they often serve an important social function in their local communities. Again, the hon. Gentleman referred to that, especially in regard to pensioners. That fact was, as I have said, clearly recognised in the Act establishing the Post Office as a public corporation.

We have repeatedly made clear our commitment—and I am more than happy to do so again today—to the maintenance of a network of post offices adequate to enable the Post Office to fulfil its statutory duties. I know that the Post Office has also made clear its own commitment to the maintenance of its network.

However, I must emphasise that that does not always leave the Post Office with comfortable decisions about individual offices. In the case of the Newhill office, the Post Office was placed in an unusual position, following the decision of the existing retailer to close its store. I understand that immediate initial inquiries suggested that there were no suitable alternative retail sites. I know that the hon. Gentleman has done a lot of work on that, and no doubt it is an operational matter that he could discuss with the chairman when he meets him.

The Post Office must, however, consider a number of criteria when taking decisions on the level of provision of post office services. There is, of course, the important consideration of the extent of local demand and the nature of that demand. We are all conscious of the difficulties faced by the elderly and handicapped in reaching their nearest facilities. That is why Post Office Counters, in deciding that the Newhill office could not be reopened, took account of the high level of provision in the area.

I hope that it is clear from what I have said that the Post Office has put considerable effort into maintaining an appropriate and efficient network. Although specific decisions about the running of post offices must be left to the Post Office, I recognise the anxieties raised by the hon. Gentleman. I share his considerable surprise that three letters could fail to arrive at Post Office Counters, despite the fact that copies were made. But, of course, there are other instances of letters being lost, so we do not know what the real reason was. I hope that I have reassured the hon. Gentleman that I take the matter seriously. I trust that the meeting can be arranged and that the matter will be satisfactorily resolved.

Pakistan and Kashmir

2.30 pm

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): I am glad to have the opportunity to introduce this debate and I am especially pleased that the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Mr. Lennox-Boyd), is to reply. I am also glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) is in his place this afternoon, for he is not only a distinguished vice-chairman of the British Pakistan Group in the House but a long-term friend of Pakistan and the south Asian sub-continent.

I was inspired to seek this debate following the speech by the Chairman of the Senate of Pakistan at the 39th annual dinner of the Pakistan Society held on 20 June. The Chairman of the Senate took the opportunity to touch on the progress of parliamentary democracy in Pakistan and to raise the Kashmir question.

In the 44 years since the establishment of Pakistan as an independent country, there have been only 21 years of genuine civilian government. The murder of President Zia in 1988 set in train the return of a civilian Government. President Zia had always made the commitment that democratic elections should take place, but I pay a very warm tribute to the President of Pakistan for his courageous stewardship of his country's affairs since 1988. Without the wise statesmanship of President Ishaq Khan, I doubt whether Pakistan would have made the continuing progress with parliamentary democracy.

I had the pleasure of meeting President Khan in the week before he exercised his constitutional powers to dissolve the National Assembly, when he took the view that circumstances had arisen in which the government of Pakistan could not be carried out in accordance with the provisions of the constitution and that the electorate should be invited to decide which of the competing political parties should form the future Government of the country.

The election that followed the dissolution of the National Assembly was regarded by the majority who observed the process as lively and vigorous. For example, *The Guardian* of 31 October 1990 reported from Islamabad that three international reports gave Pakistan a clean bill of health. Perhaps more importantly, in view of the relationship that Pakistan has with the United States, the same newspaper reported:

"The Washington-based National Democratic Institute has already declared that the elections were generally free and fair".

The polls saw a landslide victory for the Islamic Democratic Alliance, and Mr. Nawaz Sharif became Prime Minister. We in the House warmly congratulate Pakistan on its continued commitment to democratic parliamentary institutions and wish them every continued success. We also warmly welcome Pakistan back into membership of the Commonwealth.

The new Prime Minister and Government found themselves having to deal with the consequences of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Notwithstanding the fact that popular sentiment at street level was in favour of Saddam Hussein, the Government of Pakistan courageously sided with the United Nations and condemned the invasion of the independent state of Kuwait. Pakistan remained true to that principle throughout what was inevitably a difficult period for a Muslim state. I am sure that I echo the opinion of many in the House when I say that it was an act of very real courage and statesmanship to stay the course and support the United Nations and its coalition.

Pakistan sent troops to Saudi Arabia for defensive purposes and the United Kingdom recognised the impact of the Gulf crisis on the Pakistan economy, which was damaged by price increases, disruptions in the oil supply and the loss of remittances of workers in Iraq and Kuwait. The United Kingdom played its part in helping Pakistan through the International Monetary Fund's enhanced structural adjustment facility, of which the United Kingdom is the largest contributor to the interest subsidy account. I hope that Pakistan was able to take advantage of that facility.

Since coming to office, Nawaz Sharif has moved with remarkable speed and given a high priority to economic growth and productivity. He is putting into place a vast programme to privatise inefficient state-owned businesses and recognises that the wider welfare programmes can be paid for only by a thriving economy. The Government of Pakistan have brought forth fresh initiatives for investment and exports, with an important relaxation of foreign exchange controls to encourage inward investment. We in the House warmly welcome those developments, especially as the United Kingdom is the largest foreign investor in Pakistan and our overseas aid programme is the third largest in Asia.

I am especially glad that Prime Minister Sharif's Government have decided to work for a thriving free-enterprise economy, because that offers the best prospect of improving the well-being of all the people and will provide a real bridge between Pakistan and India. A successful free economy will do more to solve Indo-Pakistani differences than anything else, and therein lies the longer-term solution to the Kashmir question to which I shall refer later. People who have financial success and something to lose in the event of war are more likely to strive for peace and good will. Real and imagined differences begin to fade when people succeed and the quality of life improves for all. Nawaz Sharif has a vision for the economic future of his country; I hope that he succeeds and I wish him well for all the reasons that I have given.

There are three other issues on which I would like to touch briefly. The first relates to the Shariat Bill. It is not generally understood in the United Kingdom that that Bill is not about what the western press beguilingly labels fundamentalism, but is aimed at making Pakistan a modern, progressive, democratic, Islamic state. Pakistan hopes that the Bill will assist in the elimination of corruption as well as providing fairness and justice for all. Importantly, the Bill does not affect the personal lives, religious freedom, traditions, customs and ways of life of non-Muslims. Minorities will continue to enjoy the full freedom to lead their lives in accordance with their own beliefs.

The second issue, which provides a very firm bond between the United Kingdom and Pakistan, concerns the control of drugs. I know from my visits to Pakistan that the issue of drug addiction is very serious, because Pakistan and its people are as much victims of narcotics as people living in the United Kingdom. I am glad that an increasing level of co-operation exists between the United Kingdom and Pakistan over the collection and use of

intelligence information and in other ways. Last year, the former chief inspector of constabulary visited Pakistan to assist the special commission set up to review the future of the police.

I know from my own work that a close relationship is developing between our two countries to assist with the control of narcotics and the problem of lawlessness. The level of heroin addiction is of very great concern, and I hope the United Kingdom will do all that it can to assist Pakistan. I particularly hope that the Foreign Office will be able to provide a bursary to enable senior officers from the Pakistan police to attend the overseas course at the police staff college. These experiences and links are one of the many ways of assisting a democratic police force in its awesome fight against the drug traders.

I now come to my final point, and it inevitably relates to Kashmir. In his speech to the Pakistan Society, the Chairman of the Senate made it clear that the Government of Pakistan wish to have friendly relations with India. He reminded his audience that there is much in common between the two countries in terms of history, and social and economic conditions. I warmly welcome the fact that both countries wish to resolve the problem of Kashmir through peaceful means, but I would like briefly to outline the history of the Kashmir question.

On 23 March 1940, the Muslim League in session at Lahore passed a resolution demanding in plain terms the partition of India and the formation of independent states in the north-western and eastern parts of India in which Muslims were in a majority. The term Pakistan was used to describe those parts of what was then India to be included in an independent state, and the K of Pakistan referred to Kashmir. The British scramble out of India in 1947 unfortunately left Kashmir as an open question. The then ruling Prince was a Hindu and eventually decided on Kashmir forming part of what was the then dominion of India, whereas the majority of the inhabitants who are Muslim clearly thought that they should be part of the new dominion of Pakistan.

Britain voted in favour of all the United Nations resolutions on Kashmir in 1948 and 1949. Those resolutions remain on the table. Sadly, Pakistan and India have been to war twice over the issue of Kashmir. In the Simla peace agreement of 1972, they agreed to

"settle their differences by peaceful means through bilateral negotiations, or by any other peaceful means agreed on between them",

and the United Kingdom regards the issue as one to be settled by bilateral discussions.

Of course, the House most earnestly wishes that that should be so, yet the fact of the matter is that a substantial part of the Muslim population in Indian-held Kashmir is in rebellion against Indian rule. That has inevitably resulted in Indian police and military forces having to deal with the consequences of determined opposition. I have seen with my own eyes the results of this dispute in the hideous injuries suffered by men, women and children who have been caught up in the conflict, and huge armies stand in readiness on either side of the line of control.

In common with many Members of the House, I believe that we have to do our utmost to encourage our friends in these two democratic Commonwealth countries to find a lasting solution to the Kashmir question. That solution must be to follow the principle that the people of Jammu and Kashmir must decide in some form of agreed test of opinion whether Kashmir should be part of Pakistan or India. That test of opinion will be difficult to arrange. Will it be the opinion of the people in Indian-held Kashmir alone or in Pakistan Kashmir; or will Pakistan Kashmir be exempt from such a test; or will it be the opinion of the people in the whole of what is called Jammu and Kashmir?

Some people irresponsibly suggest that there is a second option of an independent state of Kashmir. Such a proposition is unacceptable to either India or Pakistan and does not accord with the United Nation's resolutions. Nor does it have any credible basis in the recent history of the region. I would not welcome the further fragmentation of the south Asian sub-continent; one need only look at the miserable position of Bangladesh to see the failure that has come from the break-up of former British India. What cannot be allowed to continue is the violation of human rights and the suppression of the right of people to determine their future.

There are many human rights activists in Delhi who share the concern of those of us who worry about events in Kashmir. The incidents which give rise to human rights concerns are a consequence of civil conflict. It has always been so throughout history—even in the days of British rule—that people who seek political change suffer, especially the innocent. I do not want to be suborned into the negative argument as to which alleged atrocity is true. Some incidents will be true, others partially so, and some the concoction of those fighting for their interests. What matters is a lasting solution to the problem and I would rather concentrate on that aspect of the matter and what the leaders of Pakistan and India can do to achieve it.

Those of us who desire to see India and Pakistan develop their economies for the greater benefit of their people firmly believe that every encouragement must be given to the solution of the Kashmir question. As long as the problem remains, the threat of conflict hangs over the sub-continent. I believe that the United Kingdom must shoulder part of the burden of finding a lasting solution. Our unseemly scramble from our responsibilities as the paramount power in 1947 left behind an unwanted legacy. We, too, must show greater concern for this issue and assist our friends in Islamabad and Delhi towards a lasting solution. I hope that United Kingdom policy will be directed towards this effort. We cannot sit on the fence and ignore a growing and serious situation.

2.47 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) on raising the important subject of relations with Pakistan and the issue of Kashmir. I have listened with great interest to what he has had to say. I recognise the attention and careful concern that my hon. Friend has long shown in matters relating to Pakistan. Indeed, he has for a long time been a close friend of that country, as well as of India.

I strongly endorse my hon. Friend's remarks about Pakistan's consolidation of parliamentary democracy and his complimentary references to the President and Prime Minister of Pakistan.

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): In his reply, will my hon. Friend the Minister take into account the enormous burden that Pakistan has had thrust on it as it has had to look after the refugees from Afghanistan? Will he also

[Mr. Neil Thorne]

consider the considerable financial burden that that has created, particularly when the United States, for other reasons, has withdrawn its support?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I endorse my hon. Friend's comments about the great efforts that the Pakistan Government have made in relation to the refugees. It is a subject to which my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North might have referred. We are happy to congratulate the Pakistan Government on that.

We share the pleasure of my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North in noting that, once again, Britain and Pakistan are fellow members of the Commonwealth.

We in this country respected the courageous stand taken by the Pakistan Government during the Gulf crisis in support of the multinational coalition, despite the considerable domestic difficulties which the Pakistan Government confronted in doing so. We were associated with our European partners in a message of support from the Twelve which was delivered to the Pakistan Prime Minister in early February. Pakistan's commitment to international order was visible and effective. It is also ongoing: even now, nine Pakistani officers form part of the United Nations' mission to man Kuwait's frontiers.

We also appreciate that Pakistan, like many other countries, suffered considerable economic disadvantage from Saddam Hussein's aggression. I understand that Pakistan has not yet made use of the International Monetary Fund's enhanced structural adjustment facility, but that Pakistan is continuing its discussions with IMF officials about this and other forms of IMF and World bank assistance.

We welcome the Prime Minister of Pakistan's impressive range of economic reforms, covering foreign investment, exports, tariff and foreign exchange controls, taxation and privatisation. We hope that they will make a strong contribution to the country's economic growth and benefit our bilateral trade and economic relations.

I note my hon. Friend's remarks about the Shariat law which has recently been enacted. Many people, both in Pakistan and the United Kingdom, await with interest the reports of the various commissions set up by the Shariat legislation to see what impact they will have on Pakistani society. We hope that the protection of minority interests will be assured and welcome the remarks made by senior figures in Pakistan which show that they recognise the need for this.

I thoroughly endorse my hon. Friend's remarks about the dangers of the drugs trade and the need to control, in particular, the dreadful problem of heroin addiction. That menace threatens both the United Kingdom and Pakistan and we are working closely with the Pakistan Government to combat drug-related problems. While I was in Pakistan in February, I was glad to have the opportunity to discuss these problems at first hand with those involved in trying to control them.

I was delighted to receive the Minister for Narcotics Control, the Honourable Rana Chandar Singh, when he visited London in May. During that useful visit, we were able to exchange views on a wide range of drug enforcement measures. I understand that the Minister is working actively on anti-drugs legislation on the seizure of assets. I hope that that will be enacted soon and will have a particular impact on dealing with drugs-related offences.

I thank my hon. Friend for his suggestion about police training. We agree that that is a worthwhile way in which we can help Pakistan. Every year, we provide funds to train seven Pakistani police officers in the United Kingdom, many of whom attend the overseas course at the police staff college. Further consideration is being given to what more we can do to help their police forces, and we are in touch with the Pakistan authorities about this.

I note carefully what my hon. Friend said about Kashmir. We share his concern, that of the House and many other people in this country about the situation in Kashmir, not least the tension that it has caused between India and Pakistan, both good friends of Britain, and concerns that have been expressed about human rights.

I assure the House that, far from sitting on the fence and ignoring the problems of Kashmir, we have been active in encouraging India and Pakistan to find a peaceful solution to the dispute. Both sides have appreciated our efforts. We welcome, in particular, efforts being made by India and Pakistan to reduce tension and reach agreement on various confidence-building measures through a series of regular talks between their senior foreign affairs officials. That is a process which we earnestly encouraged both sides to pursue in spring 1990. Both bilaterally and with our European Comunity partners, we have reiterated our concerns about tension between India and Pakistan, about the activities of terrorist groups and those who support them and about human rights abuses.

We are aware of Indian claims, and Pakistani denials, that Kashmiri extremists are receiving support from Pakistan with training and supply of weapons. We have indicated to the Pakistan Government the concern that it would cause in Britain if official support were to be given.

My hon. Friend referred to some of the historical background to the Kashmir problem and to the United Nations resolutions on Kashmir in 1948 and 1949. Those resolutions, which were agreed to by India and Pakistan and supported by Britain, envisaged troop withdrawals on both sides and a plebiscite under United Nations auspices of all the inhabitants of the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir on whether to accede to India or Pakistan. non-implementation of the resolutions was due, at least partly, to the failure of both sides to implement the provision on troop withdrawals.

Pakistan maintains that the status of Kashmir can be decided only by a plebiscite in line with United Nations resolutions. We believe that it is for India and Pakistan to decide how to resolve their dispute over Kashmir, one element of which involves disagreement over whether Kashmiris have been able to express their wishes fully already, or whether a further test of opinion should be held. It is not for us to attempt to prescribe how the problem should be resolved, but the difficulties of holding the plebiscite envisaged in the United Nations resolutions are obvious. The fact is that the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir is now, in effect, split into several district parts. It has been divided de facto between India and Pakistan by the line of control, and another part has been ceded to China.

India argues that the 1947 accession of the former princely state to India was legal, that ratification of the accession in 1954 by the elected Kashmir constituent assembly fulfilled its commitment to a test of popular opinion and that Pakistan had failed to implement the basic provision of a complete withdrawal of forces.

Our position on the status of Kashmir remains that this should be settled by peaceful agreement between India and Pakistan, in accordance with their agreement in 1972 at Simla, under which both countries

"resolved to settle their differences through bilateral negotiations or by any other peaceful means mutually agreed between them."

This agreement also looked forward to a

"final settlement of Jammu and Kashmir."

I welcome the terms in which my hon. Friend raised the problem of the continuing violence in Kashmir. We share the widespread concern about this. We have consistently condemned those who use violence for political ends, and we support the Indian Government in their efforts to deal with the serious challenge from terrorist violence in Kashmir. At the same time, we continue to encourage the Indian Government to exercise the greatest restraint in dealing with the serious problems facing them. The maintenance of law and order in the face of violent challenge from certain Kashmiri extremist groups is clearly difficult. Abuses have certainly occurred on both sides. I assure the House that, in our contacts with the Indian Government, we have made clear the importance that we attach to human rights being respected.

We have emphasised the importance of allowing independent investigations by human rights organisations, such as Amnesty International, and of being seen to bring to justice members of the security forces who may have misbehaved. The Indian Government have told us that allegations of abuses are thoroughly investigated, that they are concerned to bring to book those responsible for wrongdoing and that action has already been taken against a number of security force personnel.

I assure the House that we will continue to watch the situation in Kashmir closely and to encourage India and Pakistan to find a peaceful solution to this dispute. We remain ready to help, if both sides would like us to do so. We hope that the process of confidence-building between India and Pakistan will continue and that this will help to create the right conditions to bring an end to the violence and lead to a lasting settlement of a dispute which threatens political stability in India and Pakistan and has blighted the lives of many in the sub-continent.

Mr. Speaker: Before I adjourn the House, may I take this opportunity to wish all right hon. and hon. Members a good recess and a restful holiday? May I, on behalf of all hon. Members, express our thanks to the Officers and staff of the House, who serve with such dedication. None of us can foretell the future, but I hope that we shall all assemble here again on 14 October.

It being Three o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Resolution [19 July], till Monday 14 October.*

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 15 July 1991

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Serious Fraud Office

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Attorney-General what is the number of cases for investigation that have been referred to the Serious Fraud Office by company auditors since its establishment.

The Attorney-General: None.

Probate Services

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Attorney-General when the Lord Chancellor intends to publish his regulations under sections 54 and 55 of the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990.

The Attorney-General: My noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor is today issuing a consultation document setting out draft regulations for probate complaints schemes under sections 54 and 55 of the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990. Under the provisions of that Act, membership of such a scheme will be compulsory for financial institutions and other persons wishing to provide probate services to the public. The draft regulations require all probate practitioners to belong to an ombudsman scheme with powers to award compensation. Copies of the consultation document and draft regulations will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses, are available in the Vote Office, and have been sent to representatives of the financial institutions, the legal profession and others who have an interest in the content of the regulations.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Slovenia

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Yugoslav Government concerning the need to prevent risk of ecological catastrophe or human suffering arising from the threatened attack by terrorists on the nuclear power plant at Krsko near Zagreb; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Countries that operate civil nuclear power programmes are responsible for ensuring the safety of plants. The restoration of peace in Slovenia and Croatia would be the best guarantee of the safety of the nuclear power plant at Krsko. The plan agreed between the European Community troika and Yugoslav representatives at Brioni on 8 July offers a basis upon which negotiations for a peaceful resolution of the Yugoslav crisis can restart.

Baltic States

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received on behalf of the Baltic states regarding requests by the Soviet Government for economic aid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have received representations from members of the public and Baltic emigré associations about economic assistance to the Soviet Union. In our approach to assistance for Soviet economic reform we will be sensitive to wider political developments, including the Soviet authorities' approach to the Baltic republics.

Iraq (Weapons)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 2 July, *Official Report*, columns *124-25*, what analysis has been completed at Porton Down in relation to Iraq's chemical and biological weapons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A vapour sample from the United Nations special commission's first chemical weapons inspection at the Muthanna establishment in Iraq from 9 to 14 June 1991 was analysed for the Commission by the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment at Porton Down. While details of the results are confidential to the special commission, they are consistent with the press statement made by the United Nations on 24 June 1991 that nerve agents of the types GB and GF were present at Muthanna.

European Community Co-operation Agreements

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the European Community has signed any other co-operation agreements similar to that signed with Morocco on 27 April 1976.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The European Community signed similar co-operation agreements with Algeria in 1976, Tunisia in 1977, Egypt in 1976, Israel in 1976, Lebanon in 1977, Syria in 1977, Jordan in 1977 and Yugoslavia in 1980.

Arms Control

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement outlining recent progress achieved with other Governments in the direction of arms control.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are committed to verifiable arms control agreements which enhance our security. We participate actively in the follow-on negotiations to the conventional forces in Europe treaty of November 1990 and in negotiations on further confidence and security-building measures. We also participate in negotiations for a global ban on chemical weapons. We are promoting my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's proposal for a United Nations register of arms transfers and consulting other major arms suppliers, in particular the other permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, on how best to strengthen controls on all forms of arms proliferation.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to discuss arms control with the United Nations and his EC counterparts.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no immediate plans to discuss arms control with the United Nations. Some of this Department's senior officials recently met other members of the permanent five at the United Nations Security Council in Paris on 8 and 9 July to review issues related to conventional arms transfers and to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. This group will next meet in London in September. It is possible that my right hon. Friend will discuss arms control issues with his European Community counterparts during the next Foreign Affairs Council on 29 July.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further plans he has to introduce new international controls on arms sales.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are actively participating in efforts to introduce greater responsibility to the international transfer of conventional arms. The five leading arms exporters met in Paris on 8 and 9 July and agreed to work together to develop guidelines for restraint in arms transfer, and to set up a mechanism for continual consultation and exchange of information on these issues. This work will be taken forward at further meetings in London in the autumn.

Arms Sales

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress he has made in securing agreement for an international register of arms sales.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Our initiative for a UN register has received wide support. President Bush, President Mitterrand and Prime Minister Kaifu have endorsed the idea, and the European Council on 28 and 29 June decided that the Twelve should put forward a joint resolution to the next UN General Assembly proposing a register. At their meeting in Paris on 8 and 9 July the five permanent members of the Security Council also expressed their support for further work to this end. We are pleased that the recent report of the UN expert study group on transparency has recommended the prompt establishment of a register.

WALES

M4

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to minimise road works and the limitation on road lanes on the M4 for the remainder of the holiday period and particularly at weekends.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Two contracts are in progress on the M4. No additional schemes are to be carried out until September. Present restrictions required for these schemes will continue, but are unlikely to cause unnecessary delay to the public.

A5

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his reply of 8 July, *Official Report*, column *265*, if he will state the year in which it is expected that the work in building the A5 across Ynys Môn will commence.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The 1991 supplement to "Roads in Wales: Progress and Plans for the 1990s" shows the A5 improvements as planned to start after April 1994. It is not possible to give a firmer indication of timing at this stage.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a list of all infant and junior schools in each local education authority which have integrated units for children with special needs, together with their funding requirements under local management of schools; and whether each integrated unit receives all of the funding allocated to it under the local management of schools formula.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information on infants and junior schools with integrated units for children with special needs is not available centrally.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to give local education authorities the statutory duty to provide places for pupils with special needs up to the age of 18 years at least.

Sir Wyn Roberts: At present local education authorities are required to secure the provision of suitable full-time education for pupils up to the age of 18, including those with special educational needs. For 16 to 18-year-olds, the Government intend that this duty will transfer to further education funding councils for England and Wales in a new independent further education sector. Our plans are set out in the White Paper "Education and Training for the 21st Century", Cm 1536.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many pupils with special needs were in schools and colleges, by year group, from five to 18 years in each of the last five years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information in respect of pupils with statements of special educational needs in schools is given in the table. Data on special needs by year group are not available. Local education authorities are not required to maintain statements for young people in colleges of furrther education.

Number of pupils in schools[1]

	Number
1986-87	9,916
1987-88	11,549
1988-89	11,340
1989-90	10,965
1990-91	12,647

[1] At January of each year. Includes pupils receiving education within and outside their own local education authority in primary, Secondary, special and independent schools and special units.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a list of all secondary schools in each local education authority which have integrated units

or other provision for children with special needs, together with their funding requirements under local mangement of schools; and whether each integrated unit, or other provision, receives all of the funding allocated to it under the local management of schools formula.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Details on the secondary schools with LEA designated special classes and their respective LMS budgets are given in the table. Information on schools with integrated units for children with special needs is not held centrally. Formula funding under LMS is based on two key principles—that the resources available should be allocated to schools on a clear and objective basis related to their relative need to spend, and that schools' budgets should depend mainly on the numbers and ages of their pupils. Whether or not factors for integrated units or other provision are included in the formulae is for LEAs to decide. LEAs retain their responsibilities in respect of children with statements of special educational need.

School Name	*Local Management of Schools Budget(1) £*
Clwyd	
Rhyl High School	1,881,310
Denbigh High School	1,478,990
The Groves High School	1,447,240
Dyfed	
Fishguard County Secondary School	1,315,469
Ysgol Y Preseli	1,164,472
Pembroke Comprehensive School	2,227,550
Cardigan County Secondary School	1,183,228
Penglais Comprehensive School	1,652,523
Ysgol Gyfun Maes Yr Yrfa	1,026,535
Gwendraeth Valley Comprehensive School	1,079,200
Gwent	
St. Julians Comprehensive School	1,986,631
Hartridge Comprehensive School	1,614,260
Newbridge Comprehensive School	1,183,073
Pontllanfraith Comprehensive School	1,336,205
Llantarnam Comprehensive School	1,706,110
Glanyrafon Junior Comprehensive School	669,801
Cwmcarn Comprehensive School	730,367
Chepstow Comprehensive School	1,677,119
Caldicot Comprehensive School	2,194,349
Abersychan Comprehensive School	1,374,224
Abertillery Comprehensive School	1,447,560
Gwynedd	
Ysgol John Bright	1,763,941
Ysgol Dyffryn Conwy	1,493,505
Ysgol Friars	1,703,648
Mid Glamorgan	
Afon Taf High School	2,118,000
Cyfarthfa High School	1,850,000
Vaynor and Penderyn Comprehensive School	695,000
Bryn Celynnog Comprehensive School	2,476,000
Hawthorn Comprehensive School	1,744,000
Ysgol Gyfun Rhydfelen	1,744,000
Blaengwawr Comprehensive School	1,233,000
Tonyrefail Comprehensive School	2,010,000
Cynffig Comprehensive School	1,724,000
St. Cenydd Comprehensive School	1,622,000
St. Ilan Comprehensive School	1,599,000
Bryntirion Comprehensive School	1,670,000
Ynysawdre Comprehensive School	1,910,000
Pencoed Comprehensive School	2,078,000
Lewis Girls Comprehensive School	1,686,000
Brynteg Comprehensive School	2,698,000
Ferndale Comprehensive School	1,866,000
Tonypandy Comprehensive School	1,989,000
Bedwellty Comprehensive School	1,101,000
Archbishop McGrath School	830,000
Powys	
Caereinion High School	882,275
Llanidloes High School	838,497
Newtown High School	1,817,623
Welshpool High School	1,293,060
South Glamorgan	
Rumney High School	1,787,357
Willows High School	1,176,007
Fitzalan High School	2,182,776
Llanedeyrn High School	1,579,164
Cantonian High School	1,687,323
Llanrumney High School	1,565,969
Llanilltud Fawr Comprehensive School	1,684,498
Barry Boys Comprehensive School	2,421,338
Bryn Hafren Comprehensive School	2,390,428
St. Cyres Comprehensive School	2,308,914
St. Illtyds High School	1,247,509
Mary Immaculate High School	1,141,442
West Glamorgan	
Olchfa Comprehensive School	2,862,000
Sandfields Comprehensive School	1,488,000
Gowerton Comprehensive School	1,960,000
Cwmtawe Comprehensive School	2,107,000
Cwrt Sart Comprehensive School	1,243,000

[1]These details have been taken from LEAs' section 42 financial statements for 1991-92.

Education Support and Training Programme

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many applications were made for grants under the education support and training programme 1992-93; and how many were successful;

(2) if he will publish his programme of grants awarded under the education support and training programme 1992-93 and the conditions under which grants were awarded in each section.

Sir Wyn Roberts: We will be publishing details of the 1992-93 GEST programme for Wales this month. Local education authorities will have until October to submit bids for grant support. Information on how many applications were successful and the grants awarded will not be available until we have had an opportunity to consider these bids.

Standard Assessment Tasks

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 1 July, *Official Report*, column *33*, if he will place in the Library copies of the representations he has received on the standard assessment tasks completed by children aged six-and-a-half to seven years this year.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The representations received about the implementation of the assessment arrangement for the first statutory SATs undertaken this year were unsolicited and as such cannot be made public without consent.

Abattoirs

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the abattoirs in Wales which slaughter fewer than 12 livestock units or cattle each week.

Mr. David Hunt: It would not be appropriate to list the information requested, in view of its commercial sensitivity. However, information on throughput derived from annual advisory visits by state veterinary staff to local authority licensed abattoirs is recorded in size bands. The 1990 figures for Wales are as follows:

Livestock units	*Abattoirs*
0-5	10
6-10	3
11-15	4

Private Nursing Home Residents

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether residents of private nursing homes whose only income is from income support are eligible for additional benefits to cover the costs of support services including physiotherapy and chiropody where such services are not wholly provided by the health authority.

Miss Widdecombe: I have been asked to reply.

No additional benefits are available to cover these services.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Schools

78. **Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish details of the cash value and age-weighted pupil units allocated by each education and library board in Northern Ireland under the scheme for local management of schools to *(a)* preparatory school pupils and *(b)* primary school pupils; how much the difference is between the weighting for pupils attending preparatory and primary schools; and what is the reason for the difference.

Dr. Mawhinney: Primary pupil age-weightings depend on the class being attended. The range of age-weightings in each education and library board is as follows:

Prep	*P1*	*P2*	*P3*	*P4*	*P5*	*P6*	*P7*
BELB n/a	1·20	1·0	1·0	1·10	1·0	1·00	1·10
NEELB 0·5 of P1-P7 values	1·23	1·09	1·0	1·09	1·0	1·09	1·09
SEELB 0·45	1·20	1·20	1·1	1·20	1·1	1·20	1·20
SELB 0·47	1·10	1·00	1·0	1·10	1·0	1·00	1·10
WELB 0·5	1·00	1·00	1·0	1·00	1·0	1·00	1·00

The cash value of each age-weighted pupil unit reflects the different approaches in each board area and are not, therefore, directly comparable. The figures are:

	AWPU £
BELB	813·79
NEELB	788·75
SEELB	730·92
SELB	852·35
WELB	812·25

Prior to local mangement of schools—LMS—the Department paid 50 per cent. of approved teachers' costs with all remaining costs being met by fees payable by parents. The reduced weighting under the LMS arrangements continue to reflect the ongoing contribution from fees.

Ministers (Overnight Stays)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on how many nights in each of the months of January, February, March, April, May, June 1991 each of the Ministers at the Northern Ireland Office remained overnight in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is

	Mr. Brooke	*Lord Belstead*	*Dr. Mawhinney*	*Mr. Needham*	*Mr. Hanley*	*Total*
January	5	10	8	10	12	45
February	13	7	8	8	11	47
March	9	12	9	5	8	43
April	6	10	12	9	13	50
May	10	7	17	12	13	59
June	10	12	14	9	10	55
Total	53	58	68	53	67	299

Publications

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details for each of the last five years of all booklets, pamphlets, promotional literature, annual reports, statements of accounts, and other printed matter required by statute to be made publicly available by all (i) Government Departments, (ii) statutory bodies, (iii) other public agencies or authorities; the total cost in each case; and whether printing was carried out in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is not held centrally and can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Advertising Campaigns

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will list the commencement dates and duration of each publicity campaign given in his answer of 3 July, *Official Report*, column *145;*

(2) if he will list the advertising, promotional or public relations companies employed by, or on behalf of, his Department who are involved in the campaigns given in his answer of 3 July, *Official Report*, column *145.*

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 11 July 1991]:* The information is:

Campaign	Commencement date	Duration	Company
Crime Prevention Public Awareness Campaign	Launch Autumn 1991	Media element 4 weeks	Cannot be disclosed on security grounds
Environmental Awareness and Energy Efficiency	22 August 1991	3 months	A. V. Browne Advertising Limited
Job Training Programme	Not finalised	Not finalised	Anderson Advertising Limited
Pedestrian Safety	26 June 1991	1 month	Chrysalis TV
	16 September 1991	1 month	

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the public opinion surveys carried out by his Department since his answer of 20 December, *Official Report*, column *280*.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 11 July 1991]:* The surveys since the answer on 20 December are:

Entrance to Youth Training Programme

Training and Employment Agency: Attitude and Awareness Survey

Northern Ireland Museums Advisory Committee's Survey of Public Attitudes and Views of Museums in Northern Ireland

Job Staff Satisfaction in DHSS

Northern Ireland Continuous Household Survey

Vehicle Testing Customer Survey 1991

Customer Attitude 1991

ENVIRONMENT

Planning Inquiries

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) on the latest year's figures available for England and Wales, what were the mean, median, longest and shortest lengths of time between the closing of a public inquiry and the subsequent announcement of his decision;

(2) on the latest year's figures available for England and Wales, what were the mean, median, longest and shortest lengths of time from notification of a public inquiry to the announcement of the decision, following a call-in under section 77 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, previously section 35 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, or as the result of an appeal against a planning authority's decision, or for any other reason.

Mr. Yeo: The information is not available in the form requested, and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. The table sets out available information on the median periods between the opening of inquiries and the issue of decisions in respect of planning appeals made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and listed building consent appeals made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

England 1990-91	Section 20 appeals (weeks)	Section 78 appeals (weeks)
Inspector inquiries	7	7
Secretary of State inquiries	24	28

Comparable information for advertisement and enforcement appeals, and for Wales, is not available.

Crown Suppliers

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many staff were in the Crown Suppliers furnishing business on 15 August 1990.

Mr. Yeo: There were 493 industrial and non-industrial staff in post in TCS Contract Furnishing on 15 August 1990.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many Crown Suppliers staff who transferred into Property Services Agency building management have now left the civil service on principal civil service pension scheme early retirement and severance terms.

Mr. Yeo: Seventy-six of the Crown Suppliers staff who transferred to building management have left the civil service on early retirement or severance terms.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what auditing arrangements apply to the preparation of Crown Suppliers Contract Furnishing for privatisation and eventual closure.

Mr. Yeo: The accounts of the Crown Suppliers, and costs in respect of any residual activities, are subject to audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General. An internal audit presence remained throughout the closure process.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many Crown Suppliers furnishing staff left the civil service under the principal civil service pension scheme early retirement and severence scheme terms in the first seven months of 1990 prior to the closure announcement.

Mr. Yeo: From 1 January to 14 August 1990, 85 Crown Suppliers furnishing staff left on early retirement and severence terms.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the projected cost excluding index-linking of annual compensation payments to design and furnishing staff until their retirement age.

Mr. Yeo: A total of £7,916,000.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the purchase value of all stocks of furniture and equipment held by Crown Suppliers furnishing business on 15 August 1990.

Mr. Yeo: A total of £7,873,000, excluding VAT.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many Crown Suppliers staff have left the civil service on principal civil service pension scheme early retirement and severence terms from 15 August 1990 to date.

Mr. Yeo: From 15 August 1990 to date the following industrial and non-industrial staff have the Crown Suppliers on early retirement and early severence terms:

	Number
TCS Contract Furnishing	256
The Buying Agency	15
TCS Transport Services	69
	340

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the cost of annual compensation payments made under the early retirement rules of the principal civil service pension scheme to design and furnishing staff, Crown Suppliers staff generally, and Crown Suppliers furnishing staff separately, since 1 January.

Mr. Yeo: The information is as follows:

	£
Design and Furnishing Staff	471,000
Crown Suppliers Staff generally	4,000
Crown Suppliers Furnishing Staff	42,000

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many design and furnishing, professional and technical officers transferred out of Crown Suppliers Contract Furnishing into Property Services Agency Building Management on 1 January 1989.

Mr. Yeo: A total of 108 design and furnishing, professional and technical officers were transferred to PSA Building Management on 1 January 1989.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what the cost has been so far, excluding early retirement and severance payments, of closing down the Crown Suppliers Contract Furnishing business.

Mr. Yeo: The cost to the end of June 1991 was £10,400,000.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what money was realised from the sale of Crown Suppliers Contract Furnishing stocks of furniture and equipment disposed of after the closure announcement.

Mr. Yeo: A total of £6,460,000, excluding VAT.

PSA Building Management

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many design and furnishing staff are left in Property Services Agency Building Management; and what plans there are for compulsory redundancies.

Mr. Yeo: Thirteen design and furnishing staff are left in PDS Building Management; four of these may have to be considered for compulsory redundancy.

EC Supplies Directive

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to ensure that arrangements and contracts between Government Departments and the Property Services Agency comply with the European supplies directive.

Mr. Yeo: While the PSA is part of the Government, the arrangements that it has with other Departments do not fall within the terms of the directive. The parts of the PSA that are proposed for privatisation are not suppliers of goods on any major scale. However, all PSA divisions have been reminded of the EC/GATT rules relating to public procurement.

Housing Associations

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will discuss with the chairman of the National Federation of Housing Associations a new format for the presentation of housing association annual accounts, with a view to making them more easily understood.

Mr. Yeo: The Housing Corporation is reviewing the prescribed format for housing association accounts in consultation with the National Federation of Housing Associations. In considering what proposals for revision to put to my right hon. Friend, it will certainly have in mind the need to ensure that the accounts are clear and readily understood.

Pollution Inspectorate

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which district offices of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution have closed in the last year, or are scheduled to close in the future.

Mr. Trippier: The former district offices in Bristol and Leeds closed in 1990-91 when new regional headquarters offices were opened in those centres. The former district offices in Luton will close shortly following the opening of the new eastern regional headquarters at Bedford. The position on other offices is being reviewed in the light of the Government's proposal to create an environment agency.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the forecast expenditure for 1991-92 by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution on *(a)* staff dealing with authorisations and *(b)* staff undertaking inspection work.

Mr. Trippier: The forecast Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution staff—salary related—costs for 1991-92 for dealing with authorisations and registrations, and for carrying out inspection work, are as follows:

	£
Authorisation	2,150,000
Inspection	3,275,000

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the forecast expenditure for 1991-92 by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution on research work; and what proportion of this will be *(a)* undertaken by outside contractors and *(b)* devoted to radioactive substances work.

Mr. Trippier: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution plans to spend about £8 million on research work in 1991-92. All research is undertaken by outside contractors and about 80 per cent. of the total relates to radioactive waste.

"Black Country Bright Future"

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to "Black Country Bright Future" to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Key: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 28 October to 1 November.

City Challenge

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to announce successful bids under the city challenge programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: We intend to announce the successful authorities by the end of July.

Traveller Sites

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many permanent traveller sites or pitches are provided currently by each local authority in west Yorkshire; what was the figure for the comparable period last year; how many additional pitches or sites are expected to become available during the coming year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The number of permanent traveller pitches provided by each local authority in west Yorkshire at this time last year, the current provision and the likely provision by next year are as follows:

Authority and site	*Number of pitches*		
	Last year	*This year*	*Next year*
Bradford			
Mary Street	24	24	28
Esholt Lane	16	16	19
Calderdale	Nil	Nil	Nil
Kirklees	Nil	Nil	Nil
Leeds			
Cottingley Springs A	20	20	20
Cottingley Springs B	Nil	36	36
Wakefield			
Heath Common	52	52	38

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many permanent traveller sites are currently available in Bradford; how many pitches are available; when improvement work to sites is expected to be completed; what is the total cost of improvement work to date; what is the total estimated cost of improvement work; how much of this improvement work is paid for by grant from his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: There are currently two permanent local authority gypsy sites in Bradford, one at Mary street and the other at Esholt lane.

Phase I improvement works to the Mary street site costing £183,449 were given approval in February 1988 and these works have been completed. The site currently provides 24 pitches.

Phase II and III improvement works to the same site costing £549,983 were approved in February 1991. These works will produce further site improvements and an additional four new pitches bringing the total number of pitches on this site to 28.

The total estimated cost of improvement works to the Mary street site is £733,432.

The Esholt lane site at present provides 16 pitches. Improvement works costing £549,481 were approved in March 1991. These will result in a total of 19 pitches on this site.

Grants are available to local authorities towards the capital cost of providing gypsy caravan sites. The rate of grant on admissible costs on schemes approved by the Secretary of State is 100 per cent.

Housing

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans are currently being made by his Department to deal with the growth in demand for public and private sector housing which will arise when the establishment of the armed forces is reduced and service men and women cease to be entitled to Ministry of Defence housing.

Mr. Yeo: My Department is in touch with the Ministry of Defence about the likely effects of "Options for Change". The final form that the changes will take has still to be decided, but I know my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence will be taking into account the housing implications.

Humberside

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what weight he intends to give to the Boundary Commission's interim report "The Future of Humberside" in the full national local government review;

(2) what account he is taking of the proportion of the public response to the Boundary Commission's interim report "The Future of Humberside" which favours retaining the present county of Humberside.

Mr. Key: Due consideration will be given by my right hon. Friend to all the views expressed in the course of the review of Humberside.

Empty Properties

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the figures for empty properties by tenure for each London borough annually since 1979.

Mr. Yeo *[pursuant to the reply, 9 July 1991, c. 312-20]:* Local authorities report the number of their own dwellings which were empty at 1 April, and estimates of empty dwellings owned by other public sector bodies, housing associations and the private sector, in their annual housing investment programme returns (HIP1). The available figures for London boroughs appear in the "HIP1 All Items Print" for each year since 1979, at the column references given in the table.

"HIPI All Items Print"—column references

Year	Local authority	Housing association	Other public sector*	Private sector
1979	B41	B42+B43**	B44	B45
1980	A81	A82+A83**	A84	A85
1981 to 1984	A71	A72	A73	A74
1985 to 1989	A81	A82	A83	A84
1990	A71	A72	A73	A74

Notes:
* Other public sector includes dwellings owned by other boroughs, the GLC (up to 1985), government departments and other public sector agencies.
** For 1979 and 1980 there were separate estimates for local authority funded housing association dwellings and others.

Copies of all the documents are in the Library.

Housing Grants

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many discretionary grants were awarded to private sector owners and tenants in the years 1989, 1990 and 1991 to date;

(2) how many mandatory grants were awarded to private owners and tenants in the years 1989, 1990 and 1991 to date.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 12 July 1991]:* For the period up to June 1990 grants to private owners and tenants were made under the Housing Act 1985, although payments for grants approved are still continuing. The available information distinguishing mandatory and discretionary grants relates to payments for financial years up to 1989-90 appears in the table.

Grants paid to private owners and tenants under the Housing Act 1985: England

(numbers of dwellings)

Year	Mandatory	Discretionary	All grants
1988-89	20,823	81,624	102,447
1989-90	17,729	82,750	100,479
1990-91[1]	n.a.	n.a.	70,475

Notes: Mandatory grants are composed of all intermediate, some special and some repair grants.
[1]Provisional.

A new system of grants under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 began in mid-1990. The number of mandatory and discretionary grants approved and paid is shown in the following table.

Grants to private owners and tenants under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989: England

(number of grants)

Year	Approvals		Grants paid	
	Mandatory	Discretionary	Mandatory	Discretionary
1990[1]	5,148	13,834	611	7,009
1991 (first quarter)[1]	9,950	11,761	3,390	9,477

Notes: Discretionary grants include minor works assistance.
[1]Provisional.

Rural Development Commission

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the work of the Rural Development Commission since its inception.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 11 July 1991]:* The work of the Rural Development Commission is described in its annual reports which are in the Library of the House.

East London Transport (Inspectors' Reports)

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he expects to receive the inspectors' reports on the east London river crossing and the London City airport before 31 August.

Mr. Yeo: Both reports have now been delivered.

Tenex Elbow

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what assessment his Department has made of the dangers present to individuals and the environment by the Tenex Elbow shock absorber; and what safety tests have been carried out on the absorber;

(2) whether his Department will take steps to ban the sale of the Tenex Elbow shock absorber until he is satisfied that no danger exists for the public or the environment either whilst it is in use or when it has been disposed of.

Mr. Baldry: The Tenex Elbow shock absorber has been examined by the Laboratory of the Government Chemist. It contains 30 grammes of mercury, a substance which is a well known environmental hazard and may pose a threat to the environment when discarded. I am therefore considering whether their supply should be prohibited. I have asked officials to contact the suppliers.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Obscene Publications (Prosecutions)

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions for breaches of the Obscene Publications Act 1959 have taken place in the past five years; and how many have been successful.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is given in the table. Data for 1990 are not yet available.

Defendants proceeded against and found guilty of offences under the Obscene Publications Act 1959[1]
England and Wales

Year	*Total proceeded against*	*Total found guilty*
1985	275	226
1986	129	126
1987	121	93
1988	158	130
1989	125	96

[1] Obscene Publications Act 1959, section 2 as amended by the Obscene Publications Act 1964, section 1.

Mr. Kanagerotnom Jeyabolasingam

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to reply to the letter dated 5 November 1990 from the hon. Member for Woolwich about the case of Mr. Kanagerotnom Jeyabolasingam of 15 Goldfinch road, SE28, reference No. J/134460.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I will write to the hon. Member shortly.

Mr. Abdulahi Osman Jama

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to provide a substantive reply to the letter of 25 June 1990 from the hon. Member for Woolwich about the case of Mr. Abdulahi Osman Jama, reference TN2/1581/12236/89, which was acknowledged by his Department on 31 July 1990.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A reply was sent to the hon. Member today.

Political Asylum

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much will be the extra expenditure on the United Kingdom immigrant advisory service, following his statement on political asylum on 2 July.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Edinburgh Central (Mr. Darling) on 9 July at columns *324-25*.

Prisons (Parcels)

Mr. Cormack: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of parcels addressed to prisoners held in high security prisons are opened and searched by prison staff before delivery.

Mrs. Rumbold: The current instruction to governors at all establishments on the handling of inmates' correspondence requires all incoming parcels to be opened by a member of staff in the presence of the inmate and examined for illicit enclosures.

British Nationals

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many British nationals have absconded from home leave in each of the last five years and have not been recaptured.

Mrs. Rumbold: Since details of the nationality of prisoners who fail to return from home leave are not routinely collected, the information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to transfer the holding of remand prisoners from police cells to military camps.

Mrs. Rumbold: Remand prisoners have to be held in secure accommodation near the courts which have remanded them so that they may be escorted to and from the court for remand hearings. Military accommodation is not generally suitable for this role, although it has been used to hold sentenced prisoners in times of severe overcrowding. The present position is that industrial action has prevented the prison service from using existing prison places in order to avoid using police cells. But prison service management continues to work to gain access to accommodation and to use the prison estate flexibly.

Police Pursuit

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will discuss with the chairman of the Association of Chief Police Officers the policy of chief constables in relation to the pursuit of suspects driving away vehicles; whether any limits are imposed on the freedom of police officers to enter into pursuit and on the maximum speed of police vehicles while engaged in pursuit duties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The pursuit of suspects driving away vehicles is an operational matter for individual chief officers of police. The Association of Chief Police Officers, in a recent review of police driver training, has produced a recommended code of practice on pursuit management and driving.

All the emergency services, including the police, are exempt from the speed limits if observing them would hinder the purpose for which the vehicle was being used.

Women's Issues

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what studies the ministerial group on women's issues has made into issues affecting older women.

Mrs. Rumbold: Most of the issues discussed by the ministerial group on women's issues affect women of all

ages. Topics in which the interests of older women have been more specifically addressed have included a review of the needs of carers and training opportunities for women returners.

Harmondsworth Detention Centre

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people are currently detained at the Harmondsworth detention centre in London; why these people are detained; what was the *(a)* minimum, *(b)* average and *(c)* maximum period of detention, to date, during 1991; what the comparable figures are for the same period in 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: At 10 July 1991, a total of 94 people were detained at the Harmondsworth detention centre. Of these, 66 were detained pending further examination of their applications for leave to enter the United Kingdom. Of the others, 13 have been refused leave to enter, seven have been served with notices that they are illegal entrants and eight are the subject of deportation action. These 28 people are detained while representations are considered, appeal rights exercised, or arrangements for removal from the United Kingdom made.

Consideration is given in all case to whether release on temporary admission is possible; but the particular circumstances of each case makes this inappropriate.

Records of those detained at Harmondsworth over the course of a year are not held centrally and it would be possible to provide all the information requested only at disproportionate cost. However, the minimum period of detention in 1991 to date has been less than 24 hours. The minimum period of detention in 1990 was also less than 24 hours.

Other available information is as follows.

The average period of detention of those held at Harmondsworth on 10 July 1991 was 24·6 days. This compares with an average of 10 days for those held on 10 July 1990.

The maximum period spent by anyone in Harmondsworth in 1990-91 was 406 days—between 13 January 1990 and 22 February 1991.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many days in the past month persons detained at the Harmondsworth detention centre in London have refused food; how many detainees are currently refusing food; what reasons have been given by detainees for refusing food; how frequently detainees refusing food are medically examined; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: As at 11 July, no detainee at the Harmondsworth detention centre was refusing to take meals. In the period 12 June to 10 July 1991, detainees declined meals on a total of seven days, the details being shown in the table.

Date	*Number of persons*	*Reason*
26 June	2	Not hungry
30 June	1	Protest
2 July	2	Not hungry
2 July	1	Protest
3 July	1	Not hungry
4 July	11	Protest
4 July	2	Stomach upset
8 July	4	Protest
9 July	1	Protest

All detainees who refuse meals are referred to the detention centre's medical practitioner's daily surgery for examination.

The fact that a detainee is refusing meals does not necessarily mean that he or she is not taking nourishment. A range of confectionery is available for purchase within the centre and visitors are allowed to bring in certain items, including fruit.

Illegal Immigrants

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each of the past three years the fines imposed on British Airways relating to the arrival of illegal immigrants at United Kingdom airports; and how many fines remain outstanding.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987 makes carriers who bring improperly documented passengers to the United Kingdom liable to a charge. It is not the practice to disclose information on the record of individual airlines under the Act.

Hillsborough Football Stadium

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chairman of the Police Complaints Authority on the reasons for the delay since the result of the inquest on the Hillsborough football stadium disaster and any decision being made on the bringing of disciplinary charges against those police officers under investigation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. My hon. Friend will be aware that on Friday 12 July the Police Complaints Authority issued a statement announcing their decision to direct that disciplinary charges be brought against two officers of the South Yorkshire police.

Police and Prison Manpower

Mr. John Browne: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the incident at Winchester crown court on Tuesday 9 July and set up an inquiry to report specifically upon security of building construction and security procedures and on the manning levels of the local police and prison service.

Mrs. Rumbold: At 13.40 hours on 8 July at Winchester Crown Court, six prisoners created a disturbance in the custody area. All were already serving sentences, and it is believed that their actions were in protest at the prisons to which they might be allocated when their current trial was over. They armed themselves with items of broken furniture in order to resist or prevent intervention by prison staff, and two climbed into the roof space above the cells area. All had surrendered to prison staff by 19.16 hours that day. There were no injuries to staff or to prisoners. The Hampshire police force is conducting a criminal investigation into the incident.

An investigation into the design and construction of the custody area at Winchester Crown Court will be carried

out by members of prison service headquarters. The detailed security procedures in the custody area of the court are a matter for the governor, in consultation with the Lord Chancellor's Department.

The current strength of the Hampshire police force is fully up to its authorised complement, and Winchester prison has sufficient staff to carry out its work.

Winchester Prison

Mr. John Browne: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the overcrowding and staffing at Winchester prison and the reason why he decided not to invite the local hon. Member to attend his visit to Winchester prison.

Mrs. Rumbold: The certified normal accommodation of Winchester prison is 458 and its operational capacity 623. On 10 July 1991, the latest date for which figures are available, the population was 556. This compares well with other local prisons. As far as staffing is concerned, I am satisfied that Winchester prison has been provided with enough staff to carry out its work.

My hon. Friend will be informed of any future plans for Ministers to visit Winchester prison, and my right hon. Friend very much regrets that though a misunderstanding this was not done on the occasion of his visit on 6 March 1991.

CIVIL SERVICE

Civil Service College

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service (1) how many staff were in post on the date that the Civil Service college was established as an executive agency; and how many staff are in post now;

(2) what group bonus schemes are in operation in the Civil Service college; and if he will state the cash amount per person awarded in the last year for which figures are available, and the conditions attached to its award;

(3) how much was spent on events and publicity surrounding the launch of the Civil Service college as an executive agency; and whether the cost was borne by the parent Department or the new agency;

(4) if he will list those new facilities for staff including nurseries and health care schemes which have been introduced in the Civil Service college since its establishment as an executive agency;

(5) if he will list the new forms of alternative working patterns introduced into the Civil Service college since its establishment as an executive agency; and a breakdown by grade of the numbers of staff taking up each new working pattern;

(6) what appointments from the private sector have been made to the Civil Service college at grade 7 or above since its establishment as an agency; and if he will list the post, grade and maximum salary payable, including any performance related element.

Mr. Renton: These are matters for the chief executive and I have asked her to write to the hon. Gentleman direct.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when the last annual report for the Civil Service college was published; and when the next one is due.

Mr. Renton: The Civil Service college's annual report and accounts for the year ended 31 March 1990 were published on 20 August 1990. Copies were placed in the Libraries of both Houses in that week. It is planned to publish the 1990-91 report and accounts by 31 July 1991.

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will list the public opinion surveys conducted by, for or on behalf of his Office since his answer of 20 December, *Official Report*, column *293*.

Mr. Renton *[holding answer 11 July 1991]:* No public opinion surveys have been conducted by my office since 20 December 1990.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Accountancy Practices

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether under the proposed recognised supervisory body regime, investors will be able to take legal action against the Auditing Standards Board for *(a)* adopting and *(b)* issuing passive auditing guidelines.

Mr. Redwood: The Auditing Practices Board will have no functions under the supervisory regime in part II of the Companies Act 1989, so the question of legal action against the board by virtue of the introduction of part II does not arise. Whether the board could be liable for damages under the general law would be for the courts to determine.

Salmon

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment he has made of the impact EFTA being given access to the EC free trade area will have on the Scottish salmon farming industry.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 8 July 1991]:* The negotiations between the EC and EFTA to create a European economic area continue. EFTA has not been offered improved access to the EC market for salmon.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make it his policy that no agreement will be signed between EFTA and the EC until the current trade dispute with Norway is resolved.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 8 July 1991]:* I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the recent anti-dumping investigation by the EC into farmed salmon products from Norway. This case was dropped by the Commission following the receipt of assurances from Norway. I am aware of the salmon farming industry's concerns about imports of salmon or salmon products from Norway to the Community. These concerns are being borne in mind in the current discussions between the EC and EFTA on the European economic area.

EC Trade

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what was the value in ecu of the total imports into the EC of manufactured goods in each of the last three available years;

(2) what was the value in ecu of the total exports of manufactured goods from the EC in the last three available years.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 11 July 1991]:* The information is available in table 3 of the External Trade Statistical Yearbook published by EUROSTAT, which is held in the Library.

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what was the total value in ecu of the total exports of imported goods from *(a)* Germany, *(b)* France and *(c)* Italy in each of the last three available years;

(2) what was the value in ecu of the total exports of imported goods from the United Kingdom in the last three available years.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 11 July 1991]:* The information is not available.

Units of Measurement

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) on units of measurement, of 2 July, *Official Report*, column *99*, when his Department will begin consultation about the implementation and timing of the EC directive on units of measurement referred to in the debate on European Communities Document No. 4102/89 on 11 April 1989, *Official Report*, column *858*.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 12 July 1991]:* My Department has already consulted interested parties about implementing the units of measurement directive and the timing of phasing out certain imperial units. The Department is preparing drafts of the implementing legislation. There will be further consultation when this work has been completed.

PRIME MINISTER

Building Societies

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Prime Minister, if Ministers, at the time of the 1985 Budget, intended to lay regulations to create liability for tax relating to a year for which building societies composite rate tax liability had been fully discharged; what estimate of the money involved was available to Ministers at the time; and what, and when, an estimate was first made available to Parliament.

The Prime Minister: The 1985 Budget day press release announced that there would be transitional provisions to deal with the changeover for building societies from an annual to a quarterly accounting system in line with that for the banks.

The announcement followed confidential discussions with building society representatives during which Ministers made it clear that the provisions would cover payments between the end of societies' accounting periods in 1985-86 and 5 April 1986 that would otherwise fall out of account.

No estimate was made at the time of tax on interest accruing between the end of societies' accounting periods ending in 1985-86 and paid before the end of that tax year. No estimate covering all societies has subsequently been made available to Parliament. For societies other than the Woolwich Equitable, I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to him by the Economic Secretary on 21 June at column *341*.

Additionality

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Prime Minister what arrangements exist for co-ordination between the Treasury, the Department of the Environment, the Scottish Office and the Welsh Office, on the question of additionality in respect of RECHAR funding from the European Community; and which Minister has the lead responsibility for policy regarding additionality.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has lead responsibility for all matters concerning the European Community structural funds.

Former Prime Ministers

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 27 March, *Official Report*, column *428*, whether income arising from a former Prime Minister's special position in public life was taken into account in assessing their eligibility for the allowance to former Prime Ministers for the additional costs which they are liable to incur from their special position in public life.

The Prime Minister: No. The full amount of the allowance is available to all former Prime Ministers.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 27 March, *Official Report*, column *428*, what is the former Prime Ministers' total annual allowance; whether it includes travel expenses *(a)* within the United Kingdom and *(b)* abroad; and if he will make a statement on the restrictions on the use of money under the scheme.

The Prime Minister: The maximum amount of the allowance available to former Prime Ministers during 1991-92 is £28,986 plus £2,899 for secretaries' pension contributions. Former Prime Ministers may draw on the allowance to offset the secretarial and other office expenses they incur because of their special position in public life, but not the cost of their travel either in the United Kingdom or abroad.

Mar Lodge

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will set up an interdepartmental working group to consider the future of Mar lodge.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has already established the Cairngorms working party to present options for the integrated management of the Cairngorms as a whole. Mar lodge estate is central to the area under consideration. The relevant Government Departments and agencies are represented on, or act as technical assessors to, the working party.

I understand, moreover, that the Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland and the Countryside Commission for Scotland are giving consideration to the future management of the natural heritage interest on the estate.

Cairns Group

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Prime Minister what consideration he has given to the communiqué issued following the meeting of Cairns group of ministers in Manaus, Brazil, on 9 July; if there is any action he will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The communiqué rightly points to the need to bring the Uruguay round of trade negotiations to an early conclusion, and the crucial importance of agreement on agriculture in order to do so. As the communiqué says, the need now is to move from technical discussions to decisions on the framework within which agricultural support and protection are to be reduced. I hope that the London economic summit this week will give a strong push to the Uruguay round, and that Heads of Government will remain personally involved, with the aim of reaching a successful conclusion this year.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Play Areas

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what guidelines he has issued to local authorities concerning the safety of children's play areas;

(2) what specific advice he has given to local authorities concerning the synthetic surfacing of children's play areas; and what standards are required.

Mr. Atkins: My predecessor the then Minister for Sport, commissioned the national children's play and recreation unit to prepare a booklet on playground safety for distribution to local authorities. The Department is also producing a booklet on safety in school playgrounds and related matters. Both will include advice on the safety of surfaces and will be published as soon as possible. I regard it as essential that playgrounds should be as safe as possible. Playground operators are required to consider actively how best to discharge their duties of care under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. In addition, non-statutory guidance exists in the form of British standards, BS 5696—play equipment intended for permanent installation outdoors—and BS 7188—methods of test for impact absorbing playground surfaces.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when his review of the future role and functions of Her Majesty's inspectorate is to be completed; and when, and in what form, it will be published.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have now received the report from the review team and am considering its recommendations. I shall announce my decisions in due course.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy for the publication of reports of inspections and other visits by Her Majesty's inspectors to grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The policy for the publication of reports on schools which have GM status is the same as for all other institutions. Only a proportion of the inspection visits made to schools by Her Majesty's inspectors are planned and carried out with the intention of producing a report for publication. Those that do not come within that category conclude with HMI providing an oral report of the findings to the head and chairman of governors, where he or she is able to attend. This policy is applied consistently to all schools, whether GM, LEA maintained or independent.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list *(a)* the inspections and *(b)* other visits made by Her Majesty's inspectors to grant-maintained schools since September 1989 giving details of the schools concerned and dates, and whether reports of the inspections or visits have been issued to the governors, or made public.

Mr. Eggar: The table lists details of HMI visits to grant-maintained schools between September 1989 and June 1991. At the end of this period, there were 62 schools operating with GM status. The frequency of HMI visiting reflects the newness of the status of these schools.

All visits to schools by HMI are for the purpose of inspection. However, only a proportion of these visits are intended to produce a report for publication. None of the visits listed in the table came into that category and I will not therefore be publishing reports of any of the visits. In all cases HMI's findings were reported orally to the head and to the chairman of the governors where he or she was able to be present.

Her Majesty's inspectorate visits to grant-maintained schools from September 1989 to June 1991

Grant-maintained school	*Her Majesty's inspectorate visits*		
Audenshaw	December 1989	February 1990	February 1991
Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar		January 1990	November 1990
Baverstock	February 1990	October 1990	February 1991
Heckmondwike	November 1989	January/June 1990	November 1990
London Oratory	September 1989	February 1990	February/March 1991
Old Swinford Hospital	November 1989	March 1990	November 1990
Queen Elizabeth's Grant-Maintained Grammar	November 1989	June 1990	March 1991
Queensbury	November 1989	May 1990	February 1991

Grant-maintained school	Her Majesty's inspectorate visits		
Skegness Grammar	November 1989	November 1990	
Small Heath	September 1989	June 1990	October 1990
St. James Church of England	September 1989 January 1990	October 1989 March 1990	December 1989 July 1990
Wilmington Girls Grammar	October 1989	February/October 1990	May 1991
King's	November 1989	June 1990	March 1991
Wilson's	November 1989	May 1990	March 1991
Castle Hall	October 1989	January 1990	January 1991
Hendon		June 1990	February 1991
Queen Elizabeth's Grant-Maintained Boys	November 1989	June 1990	May 1991
Colyton Grammar	November 1989	March 1990	October 1990
Bankfield High	January 1990	March 1990	March 1991
St. Francis Xavier's College		January 1990	November 1990
Cardinal Vaughan Memorial		June 1990	February 1991
Claremont High		April 1990	October 1990
Lancaster Royal Grammar		November 1990	
London Nautical		September 1990	
Netherthorpe		November 1990	
Ribston Hall		April 1990	
Southfield Girls		April 1990	January 1991
Southlands		June 1990	
Beechen Cliff		April 1990	
Long Field High		October 1990	February 1991
Bishopshalt		October 1990	
Bournemouth Grammar		October 1990	December 1990
Bridgewater Hall		January 1991	
Brindley Hall		February 1991	
Carre's Grammar		March 1991	
Ecclesbourne		March 1991	
Guildford		October 1990	
Marling		January 1991	
Pate's Grammar		January 1991	
Rickmansworth		March 1991	
Stroud High		October 1991	
Watford Boys' Grammar		March 1991	
Wolverhampton Girls' High		January 1991	
Bullers Wood Girls		March 1991	
Francis Bacon		January 1991	
Handsworth Boys' Grammar		March 1991	
Wymondham College		April 1991	

Grant-maintained school	Her Majesty's inspectorate visits
Crossley Heath	June 1991
Lancaster Girls' Grammar	June 1991
North Halifax High	April 1991
Stratford	April 1991

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list, for each grant-maintained school, the number of places and the number of pupils *(a)* at the date on which grant-maintained proposals were published or approved, *(b)* in January 1990 and *(c)* in January 1991.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 5 July 1991]:* The information requested by my hon. Friend is as follows:

Name of school	Indicated physical capacity	Pupils at application	Pupils at January 1990	Pupils at January 1991
Adams Grammar School	506	445	n.a.	457
Audenshaw High School	778	724	714	758
Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School	738	746	717	734
Bankfield High School	778	436	428	452
Baverstock Grant-maintained School	1,052	975	1,037	1,084
Beechen Cliff School	1,100	865	n.a.	760
Bishopshalt School	1,083	917	n.a.	957
Bournemouth Grammar School	941	882	n.a.	872
Bridgewater Hall School	1,398	1,265	n.a.	1,089
Brindley Hall School	881	995	n.a.	1,081
Bullers Wood School for Girls	1,006	942	n.a.	976
Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School	588	614	n.a.	629
Carre's Grammar School	627	385	n.a.	403
Castle Hall Grant-maintained School	567	382	394	434
Chalvedon School	1,696	1,284	n.a.	1,334
Claremont High School	1,307	888	n.a.	853
Colyton Grammar School	371	433	421	462
Crossley Heath School	790	690	n.a.	685
Ecclesbourne School	1,056	1,223	n.a.	1,196
Francis Bacon School	844	469	n.a.	441
Great Barr School	2,271	2,010	n.a.	2,005
Guildford County School	641	733	n.a.	740
Handsworth Grammar School for Boys	738	766	n.a.	772
Hardley Secondary School	941	729	n.a.	669
Heckmondwike Grammar School	600	565	584	614
Hendon School	1,085	841	805	820
King Edward VI Grammar School	572	540	n.a.	528
Kingsley Park Middle School	495	337	n.a.	331
Lancaster Girls Grammar School	651	642	n.a.	644
Lancaster Royal Grammar School	831	847	n.a.	864
London Nautical School	434	393	n.a.	391
London Oratory School	1,045	890	1,184	1,178
Long Field High School	460	392	n.a.	347
Marling School	881	735	n.a.	737
Netherthorpe School	725	553	n.a.	616
North Halifax High School	769	692	n.a.	640
Old Swinford Hospital	828	544	525	544
Pate's Grammar School	920	1,010	n.a.	977
Queen Elizabeth's Grant-maintained Grammar School	412	334	329	336
Queen Elizabeth's Grant-maintained School for Boys	957	1,054	1,036	1,074
Queensbury School	1,060	647	641	676
Reading School	771	651	n.a.	645
Ribston Hall High School	682	482	n.a.	405
Rickmansworth School	898	933	n.a.	961
Skegness Grammar School	808	567	539	568
Small Heath School	1,173	771	780	758
Southfield School for Girls	915	615	n.a.	598
Southlands School	930	542	n.a.	504
St. Francis Xavier's College	1,247	1,008	1,012	1,014
St. George's School	822	870	n.a.	864
St. James Church of England School, Bolton	778	657	655	687
Stratford School	1,195	765	n.a.	393
Stroud High School	881	735	n.a.	698
The Cornwallis School	1,280	805	n.a.	798
The Grammar School for Girls, Wilmington	553	451	415	426

Name of school	Indicated physical capacity	Pupils at application	Pupils at January 1990	Pupils at January 1991
The Kings School, Grantham	854	747	762	764
The Maplesden Noakes School	754	651	n.a.	715
Watford Boys Grammar School	1,055	1,032	n.a.	1,043
Wilmington Grammar School for Boys	550	352	n.a.	307
Wilsons School	747	730	753	745
Wolverhampton High School for Girls	593	563	n.a.	584
Wymondham College	1,483	831	n.a.	827

Key:
Column 1: indication of capacity as on the statement of capacity form submitted with proposal for grant-maintained status.
Column 2: number on roll at time of application.
Column 3: number on roll as submitted to the Department by the school on Form 7 in January 1990.
Column 4: number on roll as submitted to the Department by the school on Form 7 in January 1991.
n.a.—School not operating as Grant-maintained in January 1990.

Observatories

Dr. Bray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the outcome of the review of the future of the Royal Greenwich Observatory and the Royal Observatory Edinburgh; and whether he will make a statement on the future provision for research in astronomy in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Alan Howarth: A review of the respective roles of the two Royal Observatories, commissioned by the Science and Engineering Research Council, will be considered by the council at its meeting on 17 July. No final decisions will be taken before them. The SERC will continue to support a high-quality programme of research in astronomy. The allocation of funds for this and other areas of science within the overall resources available is for the council to decide.

Special Needs

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many pupils with special needs were in schools and colleges, by year group, from five to 18 years in each of the last five years.

Mr. Fallon: The table shows the numbers of pupils with special needs in schools and colleges in England for the academic years 1985-86 to 1989-90, the latest date for which information is available.

Pupils and students with special needs in schools and colleges in England

thousands

	Academic year				
	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
Maintained					
Primary[1]	18·1	19·3	23·2	26·0	29·2
Secondary[1]	11·9	14·0	17·7	21·2	25·1
Independent[1]	n/a	n/a	6·1	5·6	5·6
Special schools[2]					
age 5	3·7	3·7	3·6	3·8	3·6
6	4·1	4·3	4·2	4·2	4·3
7	5·0	5·0	5·3	5·2	5·1
8	5·9	5·8	6·0	6·3	6·2
9	7·3	6·7	6·7	6·9	7·2
10	8·5	7·9	7·3	7·2	7·6
11	9·9	9·3	8·8	8·2	8·2
12	11·3	10·4	10·0	9·4	8·8
13	13·0	12·1	11·3	10·6	10·1
14	14·2	13·5	12·6	11·7	10·9
15	14·3	14·4	13·5	12·5	11·6
16	4·5	4·3	4·3	4·2	3·8
17	2·9	2·9	2·8	3·0	2·9
18	1·7	1·9	1·9	1·9	2·0
Maintained colleges					
age 16	n/a	n/a	n/a	4·4	3·9
17	n/a	n/a	n/a	3·7	3·3
18	n/a	n/a	n/a	1·3	1·8

[1] Pupils with statements of special educational needs only. Age breakdown not available.
[2] Includes maintained and non-maintained special schools, general hospital schools and hospital special schools.
n/a = not available.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a list of infant and junior schools in each local education authority which have integrated units for children with special needs, together with their funding requirements under local management of schools; and whether each integrated unit receives all of the funding allocated to it under the local management of schools formula.

Mr. Fallon: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make it his policy to give local education authorities a statutory duty to provide places in full time education for pupils with special needs up to 18 years of age at least.

Mr. Fallon: At present, local education authorities are required to secure the provision of suitable full-time

education for pupils up to the age of 18, including those with special educational needs. For 16 to 18-year-olds, the Government intend that this duty will transfer to further education funding councils for England and Wales in a new independent further education sector. Our plans are set out in the White Paper "Education and Training for the 21st Century", Cm. 1536.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a list of all secondary schools in each local authority area which have integrated units or other provision for children with special needs, together with their funding requirements under local management of schools; and whether each integrated unit, or other provision, receives all of the funding allocated to it under the local management of schools formula.

Mr. Fallon: This information is not available centrally.

Support and Training Programme

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many applications were made for grants under the education support and training programme 1992-93; and how many were successful.

Mr. Fallon: The circular setting out the grants for education support and training programme for 1992-93 and inviting applications for grant support was issued on 1 July. Local education authorities in England are invited to submit applications by 18 October 1991.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he intends to issue guidance to head teachers, governors and parent teachers associations about responsibilities under the Data Protection Act; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: Guidance on the implications of the Data Protection Act for schools is currently being prepared and will be sent to all local education authorities and maintained schools in England as soon as possible.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Monofilament Fishing Nets

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food pursuant to his answer of 3 July, *Official Report*, column *162*, about the amount of evidence on the impact of monofilament nets on sea birds, if he will make a statement on his recent meeting with environmental groups on this matter.

Mr. Curry: My meeting on 4 July with Wildlife Link was focussed primarily on large-scale drift net fishing and the effect on small cetaceans and did not refer to sea birds.

Irradiated Spices

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects irradiated spices to be on sale in the shops; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I announced the issue of the first licence to irradiate spices and condiments on 12 June. The marketing of any products irradiated under the licence is a matter for manufacturers and retailers, not for the Government.

Monosodium Glutamate

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Aggriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made concerning the safety of monosodium glutamate as a food additive; and if he has any proposals to regulate its use.

Mr. Curry: The flavour modifier monosodium glutamate has been assessed by the Government's independent expert advisory committees and found to be safe for use in food. Conditions of use are set out in the Miscellaneous Additives in Food Regulations 1980, as amended. The substance is not permitted in foods specially prepared for infants and young children.

Abattoirs

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the abattoirs in England which slaughter fewer than 12 livestock units or cattle each week.

Mr. Gummer: It would not be appropriate to list the information requested in view of its commercial sensitivity. However, information on throughput derived from annual advisory visits by my veterinary staff to local authority licensed abattoirs is recorded in size bands. The 1990 figures for England are as follows:

Livestock units		*Abattoirs*
0–5	=	76
6–10	=	70
11–15	=	38

Veterinary Investigation Centres

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the nearest veterinary investigation centre to the Humber ports following the closure of the Lincolm veterinary investigation centre.

Mr. Maclean: Thirsk veterinary investigation centre.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consultations were carried out with local veterinary surgeons over the closure of Lincoln veterinary investigation centre.

Mr. Maclean: The review of the veterinary investigation service was an internal review. Initial discussions were held with the trade unions and during the review views were submitted from a number of interested parties including the British Veterinary Association and National Farmers Union. These views were carefully considered before any final decisions were taken. Subsequent to the announcement of the outcome of the review discussions have been held with the British Veterinary Association including a representative of the Lincolnshire division of the BVA. As I have explained, full discussions will be held with local veterinary surgeons on alternative arrangements for the submission of material to the veterinary investigation service and the proposed van service before the closure of the Lincoln VI centre.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the veterinary investigation centre quality control centre will remain at Lincoln veterinary investigation centre.

Mr. Maclean: The review of the veterinary investigation service recommended that the veterinary investigation service quality control unit currently accommodated at the Lincoln VI centre be relocated at an alternative site. The quality control unit will remain on the Lincoln site until the alternative accommodation is available next year.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give figures for all investigations the Lincoln veterinary investigation centre has carried out involving notifiable diseases.

Mr. Maclean: Responsibility for the investigation of notifiable diseases rests with the veterinary field service operating through the divisional veterinary officer and is not a responsibility of the veterinary investigation service.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many salmonella tests were carried out at Lincoln; and what proportion this was of all tests carried out by veterinary investigation centres.

Mr. Maclean: It is not possible to supply the specific information requested. The information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, I refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave to the hon. Member for South Shield (Dr. Clark) on 20 June, at column *258*, and on 1 July, at column *74*.

Animal Disposal, Lincoln

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consideration he has given to setting up a modern animal disposal facility at Lincoln with individuals or companies prepared to run one on a contract basis.

Mr. Maclean: My Ministry has contracts with a number of private companies for the incineration of suspect bovine spongiform encephalopathy carcases. In general, however, it is up to the agricultural sector, as with other industries, to deal with the waste it creates. A number of companies have plans to construct purpose-built incineration plants to handle fallen animals and other animal waste.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give details of the proposed van collection for dead animals and samples following the closure of the Lincoln veterinary investigation centre; whether the van will be refrigerated; whether it can carry full carcases; how many vehicles will be provided; and what response time farmers can expect from their initial request.

Mr. Maclean: The details of the proposed van service will be fully discussed with local veterinary surgeons before the closure of the Lincoln veterinary investigation centre.

Food Imports

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to publish his review on import penetration into the United Kingdom of food from overseas.

Mr. Gummer: The outcome of this review will be announced in due course.

BSE

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of the total number of cattle reaching slaughter houses come from herds where an indication of bovine spongiform encephalopathy exists.

Mr. Maclean: This information is not available.

Blue-eared Pig Disease

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which veterinary investigation centre carried out the preliminary work on the identification of blue-eared pig disease; and which other centres have experience in this field.

Mr. Maclean: In the period up to 13 June 1991 possible incidents of blue-eared pig disease were reported to the Winchester, Truro, Lincoln, Preston, Newcastle and Reading veterinary investigation centres who carried out the investigations which comprised the preliminary work on the identification of blue-eared pig disease. As from 13 June 1991, blue-eared pig disease was made a notifiable disease and the responsibility now rests with the veterinary field service operating through the divisional veterinary officer. The divisional veterinary officer and his staff are now responsible for carrying out the investigation of reported incidents and samples are sent to the central veterinary laboratory at Weybridge for examination.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. George: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to give special consideration to registered charities which deposited money with the Bank of Credit and Commerce International in the compensation scheme for the bank's investors.

Mr. Maples: As I said in the House on Monday 8 July, *Official Report*, columns 660-74, it would not be right or possible to make special arrangements within the deposit protection scheme for one group of depositors. The terms of the deposit protection scheme are set by part II of the Banking Act 1987.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consideration was given by the Bank of England when Price Waterhouse were appointed as fraud investigators at BCCI in 1987, to appointing a different company as auditors.

Mr. Maples *[holding answer 12 July 1991]:* I am advised that the Bank of England did not appoint Price Waterhouse as fraud investigators at BCCI in 1987. I understand that Price Waterhouse was appointed by BCCI itself as financial auditors for the whole group, with the encouragement of the relevant supervisors. It was this that facilitated the auditors' understanding of intra-group transactions and contributed to a fuller financial assessment of the group. This in turn facilitated the ultimate discovery of the fraud.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce a scheme to provide 100 per cent.

compensation for depositors in the Bank of Credit and Commerce International with individual accounts of up to £100,000 and small businesses employing up to 200 employees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maples *[holding answer 11 July 1991]:* I explained in my statement to the House on Monday 8 July, *Official Report*, columns 660-74, the arrangements that are in place for depositors and small businesses who had accounts with the Bank of Credit and Commerce International. There are no plans to change the present deposit protection fund arrangements.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the Bank of England first received information that the Bank of Credit and Commerce International was the subject of an organised fraud; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maples *[holding answer 11 July 1991]:* I understand that the Bank of England received information suggesting serious irregularities in the Bank of Credit and Commerce International at the beginning of this year and shortly afterwards commissioned a report under the Banking Act 1987. This report was received about two weeks ago.

Banks

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has received any representations about *(a)* the time taken for and *(b)* the efficiency of the transfer of funds between banks.

Mr. Maples: Yes, but very few.

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the level of depositors' balances in transit between one deposit taking institution and another which remains as uncleared funds at the close of each day's business.

Mr. Maples: Items in sterling in the course of transmission between one deposit-taking institution and another which are uncleared at the end of each day are estimated to be in excess of £10 billion.

Civil Service Expenditure

Mr. McWilliam: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of total Government spending was spent on the administration of the civil service in each year from 1979-80 to 1989-90; and what was the proportion spent on wages and salaries of civil servants.

Mr. Mellor: The precise information asked for is not readily available. Information on total central Government and general government, including local authorities, expenditure and on wages and salaries of central Government employees is included on the CSO database in the following series, identified by their database codes. The CSO database is accessible through the Library of the House.

ABAB—total general Government expenditure
ABAC—central Government own expenditure
GILN—central Government pay including employers' contributions

Data on central Government expenditure on running costs —that is, current expenditure on personnel, goods and other services used in Departments' administration—are given for the years since 1986-87, in table 4.10 of the Statistical Supplement to the 1990 Autumn Statement (Cm. 1520). Consistent data for earlier years could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Share Shops

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all the organisations which have responded to his request for views on high street share shops as a distribution method for privatisation issues and other equities.

Mr. Maude: I have received a number of proposals from the private sector for a new retail distribution arrangement. It is for the companies concerned to disclose their interest in this initiative.

Business Expansion Scheme

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many business expansion schemes have been floated in each year since they were introduced; how many of the companies are still trading; and how many failed to provide an exit route for investors after the expiry of five years.

Mr. Maude: Information is not available in the form requested.

The number of companies receiving business expansion scheme investment in each year where the year of investment is within five years of the date of incorporation is as follows. Information for 1990-91 is not yet available.

	Number
1983-84	514
1984-85	615
1985-86	600
1986-87	658
1987-88	703
1988-89	2,429
1989-90	[1]800

[1] Provisional

Building Societies

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the effect of the removal of clause 52 of the Finance Bill on the ability of the Inland Revenue to retain certain disputed tax paid by building societies.

Mr. Maples: Whether or not tax paid under the transitional provisions in the 1986 Building Societies Regulations is repayable would, in the absence of clause 52, depend on the particular facts of each case.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer pursuant to the replies to the hon. Member for Eltham, on 15 April, *Official Report*, columns *9-10*, 22 April, *Official Report* columns 300-1, and 8 July, *Official Report*, column *258*, if he will make clear to the House by Monday 15 July when and how Treasury Ministers first explicity informed the House that it intended to lay regulations that would have the effect of obtaining tax payments from building societies for the year 1985-86 for which payments had been made to the Inland Revenue satisfying in full the liability for that year; and if he will

give the range of estimate and the best estimate made by the Inland Revenue and the Treasury of the revenue effect at that time.

Mr. Maples: Authority for the Revenue to make regulations was included in clause 38 of the 1985 Finance Bill and referred to in the Revenue press release issued on 15 March 1985 which also referred to transitional provisions. The regulations were laid before Parliament on 14 March 1986 and included provisions for building societies to account for tax on payments of interest and dividends made in the period between the end of their accounting years in 1985-86 and 5 April 1986 which had not previously been brought into account for tax. No estimate was made of the revenue arising from tax on interest accruing between the end of societies accounting periods ending in 1985-86 and paid before the end of that tax year. However, at the time of the 1985 Budget it was estimated that the proposal to move from an accruals to a paid basis of accounting for tax on building society interest would reduce receipts of income tax in 1986-87 by about £25 million. This estimate assumed that all transitional payments of tax would be received in 1986-87.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his letter of 11 July, if he will list all other newspaper reports or any parliamentary or ministerial reports before 29 July 1985 that made explicit reference to a proposal to claim tax from building societies in relation to any period from their year end to the end of the financial year 1985-86, separate from the tax payment that had satisfied the liability for that full financial year.

Mr. Maples: This information is not readily available and could not be provided without disproportionate cost.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his letter of 11 July, if either the Treasury or the Inland Revenue responded in public at the time to *The Daily Telegraph* report, 29 July 1985, headed "Societies Fight £500 million Double Tax Demand" written by Richard Northedge.

Mr. Maples: I am not aware of any such response.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the three most significant causes for the increase between 1984-85 and 1985-86 in the tax receipts from building societies.

Mr. Maples: Tax receipts from building societies depend upon a number of factors including interest rates, tax rates and the level of deposits.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will, for the groups of building societies with their year end in each quarter, estimate the gains and/or losses, respectively, from *(a)* the transitional arrangements and *(b)* the change to the new tax system in 1986-87.

Mr. Maples: Available information is shown in the table:

Accounting periods ending	*Number of societies*	*Amount of tax that would have been due in 1986-87 if old system had continued* £ *million*	*Amount of tax due in 1986-87 under new system plus instalments of transitional tax not due till later* £ *million*	*Increase or decrease in tax payable under new system*	
				£ *million*	*as percentage of old*
April 6 to 30 August (end of first complete quarter)	6	8	13	+5	+62
September to November	7	340	432	+92	+27
December to 5 April	131	2,596	2,423	−173	−7
Total	144	2,944	2,868	−76	−3
of which instalments due after 1986-87			35		

The tax due from societies with accounting periods ending in September to November includes amounts subsequently repaid as a result of decisions by the courts and amounts which were withheld pending these decisions.

Data Protection

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what level of inquiries under the Data Protection Act 1984 the Inland Revenue expects in the next *(a)* one year, *(b)* five years and *(c)* 10 years.

Mr. Maude: The Inland Revenue has to date received very few inquiries under the Data Protection Act, with 20 in the last 12 months. The Department has no reason to expect the level to increase materially in the foreseeable future.

Special Tax Allowances (Piper Alpha)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the total cost in 1989-90 and 1990-91 of the revenue forgone in special tax allowances for companies associated with losses in the Piper Alpha platform disaster.

Mr. Maude: No "special" tax allowances—other than those available to other companies involved in the North sea—have been available for companies associated with losses in the Piper Alpha platform disaster. There was a concessional relaxation in the rules that would have required petroleum revenue tax instalments to be paid by reference to profits made before the disaster. Such instalments would in any event have been repaid.

Civil Service Pay

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what response his Department has given to the 1991 pay claim submitted by the National Union of Civil and Public Servants on behalf of its members; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The pay of staff represented by the National Union of Civil and Public Servants is set by negotiation under the terms of the pay agreement with that union. This year's offer was for a 7·8 per cent. across-the-board increase, plus other increases, amounting to 0·2 per cent., giving a total pay bill increase of 8 per cent. The offer has been accepted by the NUCPS following a ballot of their membership, and the new rates are now in payment.

VAT

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to implement a sliding rate of VAT registration threshold limits to reflect the number of employees and partners each business has; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have no plans to do so. VAT is a transaction-based tax. The registration threshold is based on the taxable turnover of a business and the United Kingdom Government are constrained by the provisions of the EC sixth directive which requires member states to operate a threshold based upon turnover.

Medicine Imports

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the value of medicine imports from eastern European countries in terms of finished products or bulk active ingredients.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Detailed statistics of United Kingdom imports are contained in the monthly and annual volumes of "Business Monitor—Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom", published by the Central Statistical Office; copies are available in the Library. Within that publication the country grouping of eastern Europe and USSR now comprises Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Albania and USSR. Before 1 January 1991 *Yugoslavia* appeared in the "Rest of Western Europe" grouping.

The figures required are shown under standard international trade classification (SITC) Division 54 "Medical and Pharmaceutical Products". The value of imports is recorded as follows:

	£
1 January 1990—31 December 1990	4,837,000
1 January 1991—31 May 1991	1,655,000

However, the phrase "bulk active ingredients" is not recognised within the structure of the nomenclature and statistics of trade in some chemicals which may be active ingredients in medicinal products will appear under other chemical divisions in the Overseas Trade Statistics.

Excise Duties

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to support the interests of manufacturers of Scotch whisky and British gin during his discussions on excise duties within the EC.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: In the further EC discussions due later this year on excise duty rates, my hon. Friend can be assured that my aim will be to secure arrangements which are acceptable both to the Exchequer and to the United Kingdom spirits industry.

Accounting Firms

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the accounting firms in which heads of the Government Accounting Service since 1980 have been partners.

Mr. Mellor: Following is the information:

Armstrong, Watson & Co;
Baker, Tilley & Co;
Price Waterhouse & Co;
KPMG Peat Marwick McLintock;

Holders of the post of head of the Government accountancy service retired from the firms of accountants in which they were partners before taking up the post.

Rateable Values

Mr. Knox: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total rateable value of industrial and commercial property in the Staffordshire Moorlands district on 1 April 1989, 1 April 1990 and 1 April 1991.

Mr. Maples: The information is as follows:

Industrial and Commercial Property as at 1 April	*Rateable Value £ thousands*
1989	2,387
1990	16,786
1991	16,940

Rateable values as at 1 April 1989 are based on the 1973 valuation list, those at 1 April 1990 and 1991 on the 1990 rating list. The 1990 rating list which came into force on 1 April 1990 contains properties valued as at 1 April 1988, whereas the 1973 valuation list contains properties valued as at 1 April 1973. These are also differences in coverage and, for certain types of property, differences in the method of valuation, between the 1973 valuation list and 1990 rating list.

GDP

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the gross domestic product per head for *(a)* Wales, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* the other regions of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maples: Provisional figures for 1989 have been published by the Central Statistical Office in "Economic Trends" No. 450, April 1991 at page 128, and also in the 1991 edition of "Regional Trends". Both publications are available in the Library.

Currency Exchange

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce legislation to prevent organisations operating currency exchange retail outlets in the United Kingdom from charging commission rates when exchanging Scottish banknotes for Bank of England notes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maples: We do not propose to introduce any such legislation.

Scottish Banknotes

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on commission rates charged when Scottish banknotes are exchanged for Bank of England notes within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maples: The charging of fees for the exchange of banknotes is a matter for the banks and their customers. Some banks will exchange Scottish banknotes free of charge whereas others find it necessary to recover costs of repatriation and other overheads connected with handling notes which are not regularly reissued.

Written Answers

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current minimum threshold sum used to justify declining to answer fully a written parliamentary question on the grounds of disproportionate cost.

Mr. Maples: The current advisory cost threshold beyond which an answer to a written question can be declined on the grounds of disproportionate cost is £250.

Foundation for Sport and the Arts

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, further to his written answer of 18 April, *Official Report*, columns *243-44*, if he will list in full the organisations or individuals with which ministers or officials in his Department have held meetings since 16 April with regard to establishing the proposed foundation for sport and the arts announced in his Budget statement; on what date such meetings took place; and what further meetings are planned.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 11 July 1991]:* I met representatives of the pools promoters on 4 and 13 June. My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Treasury discussed the foundation with the hon. Members for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) and for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) on 21 May. Treasury officials also met the pools promoters on 22 April and 24 April. No firm plans exist for further meetings.

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer further to his written answer of 28 March, *Official Report*, columns *516-17*, what suitable arrangements for monitoring and audit have been agreed for the proposed foundation for sport and the arts announced in his Budget statement.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 11 July 1991]:* Customs and Excise will be responsible for monitoring that the proceeds of the proposed cut in pool betting duty and the agreed contributions to the foundation from the pools companies actually pass to the trustees, by checking the accounts of the pools companies as part of their normal work in administering the pool duty.

Under the proposed trust deed, a copy of the auditors' annual report on the trust will be sent to the Minister of Sport. The Minister will also have the right to nominate an observer to attend all meetings of the trustees and to be supplied with all relevant papers.

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether *(a)* non-professional, *(b)* semi-professional or *(c)* professional football clubs outside the current structure of the four divisions of the Football League will be eligible to apply for financial help from the funds of the proposed Foundation for Sport and the Arts to which he referred in his letter of 31 May to the Secretary of the GM Vauxhall Conference.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 12 July 1991]:* Football clubs outside the Football League will be eligible to apply for financial help from the proposed Foundation for Sport and the Arts like any other athletic sport.

Banks (Regulation)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he has any plans to increase the Bank of England's powers to regulate banking where banks have their main offices in offshore islands; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has any plans to increase the Bank of England's powers to regulate banking where banks have their main offices in other EC member states; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maples *[holding answer 11 July 1991]:* There are no plans to increase the Bank of England's regulatory powers, but the Government and the Bank of England will be reflecting on any lessons which can be learnt from the BCCI case for the framework of regulation, both at home and internationally.

TRANSPORT

Vehicle Inspectorate

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list the new forms of alternative working patterns introduced into the vehicle inspectorate

since its establishment as an executive agency; and if he will publish a breakdown by grade of the numbers of staff taking up each new working pattern;

(2) how many staff were in post on the date that the vehicle inspectorate was established as an executive agency; and how many staff are in post now;

(3) if he will list those new facilities for staff including nurseries and healthcare schemes which have been introduced in the vehicle inspectorate since its establishment as an executive agency;

(4) how many appointments from the private sector have been made to the vehicle inspectorate at grade 7 or above since its establishment as an agency; and if he will list the post, grade and maximum salary payable including performance related element in each case;

(5) if he will give details of all group bonus schemes in operation in the vehicle inspectorate;

(6) what was the first degree obtained by the chief executive of the vehicle inspectorate; and from which university or polytechnic it was awarded;

(7) when the last annual report for the Vehicle Inspectorate Agency was published; and when the next one is due;

(8) if he will list the quality of service performance indicators adopted by the Driving Standards Agency since its establishment as an executive agency; and if he will identify separately those quality of service performance indicators already operative prior to agency status;

(9) if he will give details of all group bonus schemes in operation in the Driving Standards Agency;

(10) what was the first degree obtained by the chief executive of the Driving Standards Agency; and from which university or polytechnic it was awarded;

(11) when the last annual report for the Driving Standards Agency was published; and when the next one is due;

(12) how many staff were in post on the date that the Driving Standards Agency was established as an executive agency; and how many staff are in post now;

(13) if he will list those new facilities for staff including nurseries and healthcare schemes which have been introduced in the Driving Standards Agency since its establishment as an executive agency;

(14) how much was spent on events and publicity surrounding the launch of the Driving Standards Agency as an executive agency; and whether the cost was borne by his Department or the agency;

(15) if he will list the new forms of alternative working patterns introduced into the Driving Standards Agency since its establishment as an executive agency; and if he will publish a breakdown by grade of the numbers of staff taking up each new working pattern;

(16) how many appointments from the private sector have been made to the Driving Standards Agency at grade 7 or above since its establishment as an agency; and if he will list the post, grade and maximum salary payable including performance related element in each case.

Mr. Chope: The chief executive of the Driving Standards executive agency will be writing to the hon. Member.

Executive Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the maximum salary payable to the chief executive of the vehicle inspectorate, including performance related element; and what is the length of time of the chief executive's contract.

Mr. Chope: The chief executive of the Vehicle Inspectorate agency was initially appointed on a three-year contract from 1 August 1988 to 31 March 1991 which was renewed on 1 April 1991 for a further three years until 1 April 1994. The maximum salary that the chief executive could be paid in 1991-92, depending on performance, is £44,996 per annum, but a further general increase is expected on 1 August 1991. In addition he is eligible for special bonus payments amounting in total to a maximum of £10,000 over the current three-year period.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the maximum salary payable to the chief executive of the Driving Standards Agency including the performance related element; and what is the length of time of the chief executive's contract.

Mr. Chope: The chief executive of the Driving Standards Agency has been appointed from 2 April 1990 to 1 April 1993.

The maximum salary that the chief executive could be paid in 1991-92 depending on performance, is £41,681 per annum, but a further general increase is expected on 1 August 1991. In addition he is eligible for special bonus payments amounting in total to a maximum of £6,500 over the three-year period.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the maximum salary payable to the chief executive of the DVLA, including performance related element; and what is the length of time of the chief executive's contract.

Mr. Chope: The chief executive of the DVLA has been appointed from 2 April 1990 to 1 April 1995.

The maximum salary that the chief executive could be paid in 1991-92 is £48,000 per annum. In addition he is eligible for special bonus payments amounting in total to a maximum of £9,000 over the first two-year period. The special bonus payments which may be payable for the remaining three years of the appointment have yet to be determined.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how much was spent on events and publicity surrounding the launch of the vehicle inspectorate as an executive agency; and whether the cost was borne by his Department or the agency;

(2) if he will list the quality of service performance indicators adopted by the vehicle inspectorate since its establishment as an executive agency; and if he will identify separately those quality of service performance indicators already operative prior to agency status.

Mr. Chope: The chief executive of the Vehicle Inspectorate executive agency will be writing to the hon. Member.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list those new facilities for staff including nurseries and healthcare schemes which have been introduced in the driver and vehicle licensing agency since its establishment as an executive agency;

(2) how much was spent on events and publicity surrounding the launch of the driver and vehicle licensing agency as an executive agency; and whether the cost was borne by his Department or the agency;

(3) how many staff were in post on the date that the driver and vehicle licensing agency was established as an executive agency; and how many staff are in post now;

(4) if he will list the new forms of alternative working patterns introduced into the driver and vehicle licensing agency since its establishment as an executive agency; and if he will publish a break-down by grade of the numbers of staff taking up each new working pattern;

(5) how many appointments from the private sector have been made to the driver and vehicle licensing agency at grade 7 or above since its establishment as an agency; and if he will list the post, grade and maximum salary payable including performance related element in each case;

(6) when the last annual report for the driver and vehicle licensing agency was published; and when the next one is due;

(7) if he will list the quality of service performance indicators adopted by the driver and vehicle licensing agency since its establishment as an executive agency; and if he will identify separately those quality of service performance indicators already operative prior to agency status;

(8) what was the first degree obtained by the chief executive of the driver and vehicle licensing agency; and from which university or polytechnic it was awarded;

(9) if he will give details of all bonus schemes in operation in the driver and vehicle licensing agency.

Mr. Chope: The chief executive of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing executive agency will be writing to the hon. Member.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the maximum salary payable to the chief executive of the Vehicle Certification Agency including the performance related element; and what is the length of time of the chief executive's contract.

Mr. Chope: The chief executive of the Vehicle Certification Agency has been appointed from 2 April 1990 to 1 April 1993.

The maximum salary that the chief executive could be paid in 1991-92, depending on performance, is £38,610 per annum, but a further general increase is expected on 1 August 1991. In addition he is eligible for special bonus payments amounting in total to a maximum of £6,500 over the three-year period.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) when the last annual report for the Vehicle Certification Agency was published; and when the next one is due;

(2) how many appointments from the private sector have been made to the Vehicle Certification Agency at grade 7 or above since its establishment as an agency; and if he will list the post, grade and maximum salary payable including performance related element in each case;

(3) what was the first degree obtained by the chief executive of the Vehicle Certification Agency; and from which university or polytechnic it was awarded;

(4) how much was spent on events and publicity surrounding the launch of the Vehicle Certification Agency as an executive agency; and whether the cost was borne by his Department or the agency;

(5) if he will give details of all bonus schemes in operation in the Vehicle Certification Agency;

(6) if he will list the new forms of alternative working patterns introduced into the Vehicle Certification Agency since its establishment as an executive agency; and if he will publish a break-down by grade of the numbers of staff taking up each new working pattern;

(7) if he will list the quality of service performance indicators adopted by the Vehicle Certification Agency since its establishment as an executive agency; and if he will identify separately those quality of service performance indicators already operative prior to agency status;

(8) how many staff were in post on the date that the Vehicle Certification Agency was established as an executive agency; and how many staff are in post now;

(9) if he will list those new facilities for staff including nurseries and healthcare schemes which have been introduced in the Vehicle Certification Agency since its establishment as an executive agency.

Mr. Chope: The chief executive of the Vehicle Certification executive agency has written to the hon. Member.

Correspondence

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the hon. Member for Warwick and Leamington can expect a response to his letter of 5 April, proposing a meeting with a deputation about noise in the Shrewley and Hatton areas of Warwickshire emanating from the M40 motorway.

Mr. Chope: My hon. Friend will know that the meeting which he requested is being arranged.

British Rail

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been achieved by British Rail towards the targets set out in its commercial plan for divesting itself of surplus land.

Mr. Freeman: On 24 October 1983 the then Secretary of State published the objectives that he had agreed with the chairman of British Rail, which asked the board to continue to pursue a vigorous policy of property development and disposal. British Rail has been successful in divesting itself of its surplus land. Since 1 January 1984, British Rail has disposed of over 23,000 acres.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what record he has of or what representations he received from British Rail about its inability to recruit the most suitable applicants for posts in top and middle management or skilled scientific and professional grades owing to inadequate or non-competitive salaries.

Mr. Freeman: None. The British Railways Board is responsible for salaries and recruitment of its staff.

Motor Insurance

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it obligatory for evidence of third party motor insurance cover to be displayed in vehicle windscreens in the same way as vehicle excise duty.

Mr. Chope: No. Compulsory motor insurance in the United Kingdom focuses on the driver rather than a particular vehicle. A windscreen disc would not prove, therefore, whether a vehicle was being driven in accordance with the terms of a valid insurance policy.

Road Safety, Blackburn

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make decisions on recommendations from the Lancashire constabulary and Lancashire county council as to road safety on the A6119 Brownhill drive, Blackburn; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: As soon as possible after receiving the recommendations. I shall then write to the hon. Gentleman.

Road Inquiries

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list those people appointed as assessors to assist the panel inspectorate over the last five years; and if he will list their relevant qualifications;

(2) in how many trunk road inquiries since 1985 an assessor has been appointed to assist the inspector.

Mr. Chope: There have been 10 occasions since 1985 when an assessor has been appointed to assist the inspector conducting the inquiry into a trunk road scheme. The assessors and the inquiries in which they were involved are as follows:

Scheme	*Region*	*Year*	*Assessor*
East London River Crossing	LRO	1985-86	G. Heath, CTP, FRTPI, FBIM, JP
A406: East of Falloden Way to East of High Road Finchley	LRO	1986-87	G. B. Cummings, CEng, FICE, FIHT
A65 Burley Bypass	YHCPD	May 1987	P. J. Amblin, CEng, MICE, MIWES, MPTPI
A6(M) Stockport North/ South Bypass	NWCPD	November 1987/ March 1988	Professor E. A. Rose, MSc, Dip. Arch., ARIBA, FRTPI, FRSA
A34 Newbury Bypass	SECPD	1988	A. Langton, CEng., DipTP, MICE, MRTPI, MIHT
A3 Milford Bypass	SECPD	1989	Dr. George A. Goutty, JP, MA, MSc., MPhil., PhD AA Dip., DipTP, MRTPI, ALI
A406 Regents Park Road Junction Improvement	LRO	1988-89	E. R. Emery, VRD, CEng., MICE, MIHT, DipTE
A17 Wigtoft-Sutterton Bypass	EMRO	January 1990	J. R. Coward, MCD, BA(Arch.) Hons., RIBA
A638 Doncaster North Bridge Relief Road	YHCPD	1990-91	G. A. Goulty, JP, MA, MSc., MPhil., PhD, AAdip., ARIBA, ALI
East London River Crossing	LRO	1990-91	M. Astrinsky, RIBA, MRTPI, DipTP

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those public inquiries into trunk road proposals since 1985 which have involved consideration of the effect of the proposed scheme on *(a)* sites of special scientific interest, *(b)* national parks, *(c)* areas of outstanding natural beauty, *(d)* heritage coast, and *(e)* scheduled ancient monuments; and in which of these cases an assessor was appointed to assist the inspector to consider the environmental consequences.

Mr. Chope: The information on individual schemes is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. All schemes in the national trunk road programme have for many years been subjected to a very full environmental appraisal. Landscaping, ecological and other environmental aspects of scheme design are always important factors in route selection to ensure that the minimum of disturbance is caused by new roads to the surrounding environment. The advice of interested bodies such as English Nature, the Countryside Commission, English Heritage, the National Trust, the Landscape Advisory Committee and the Royal Fine Art Commission is sought and their views are made available to the public inquiry. Specialist advice is also sought wherever appropriate and if necessary specialist consultants are appointed.

Since 1985 specialist assessors have been appointed to assist inspectors at public inquiries into the following trunk road proposals where environmental or aesthetic factors were a major consideration:

East London River Crossing (1985-86 and 1990-91)
Burley Bypass
A6(M) Stockport North/South Bypass
A3 Milford Bypass
A17 Wigtoft Sutterton Bypass
A638 Doncaster North Bridge Relief Road

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many public inquiries there have been into trunk road proposals in each year from 1985 to 1991.

Mr. Chope: The information is as follows:

	Number
1985-86	41
1986-87	44
1987-88	29
1988-89	31
1989-90	40
1990-91	34

Motorways

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the latest available figures for the numbers of vehicles crossing over the central reservation of motorways and dual carriageways in the last year for which these figures are available.

Mr. Chope: Information is available only in cases where the vehicle was involved in an accident resulting in personal injury. In 1989, the latest year for which data are available, there were 111 such vehicles on motorways which left the carriageway offside and crossed the central reservation. The equivalent figure for dual carriageways was 742.

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what restrictions there are for the use of fast lanes on three lane motorways by coaches and lorries.

Mr. Chope: Coaches of over 12 m long and goods vehicles with an operating weight exceeding 7·5 tonnes are banned from using the outside lane of motorways.

A41 Bypass

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the cost of constructing the A41 bypass from the M25 to the junction to the west of Berkhamsted.

Mr. Chope: The A41 bypass is divided into two schemes, Kings Langley and Berkhamsted.

The contract for the construction of the Kings Langley bypass has been awarded to A. F. Budge (Contractors) Ltd. and is worth about £20 million. Tenders have been invited for the construction of the Berkhamsted bypass which has been estimated to cost £25·8 million.

Cyclists

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps the Government have taken recently to improve the safety of cyclists using public roads.

Mr. Chope: Recent initiatives are detailed in the Department's memorandum to the Transport Select Committee hearing on cycling. The Committee's minutes of evidence have now been published.

We are continuing to add to the body of published technical advice for local authorities on means of providing for cyclists, which now exceeds 30 traffic advisory leaflets and four more detailed local transport notes.

We are encouraging the use by local authorities of urban safety management techniques, which can make a significant contribution to reducing accidents to the most vulnerable road users such as cyclists. This effort has been underpinned by the introduction of more flexible road hump regulations, and an increasing number of authorisations for the use of 20 mph speed limits.

Our recent child safety campaign was designed to raise the awareness of the potential dangers to child cyclists on the road, and to encourage the wearing of cycle helmets. This has been supported by complementary campaigns by the private sector.

Stansted Airport

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy not to grant additional licences for the United States or other carriers for services from Stansted airport, in preference to or separate from such licences being available to all airports in the United Kingdom.

Mr. McLoughlin: No. While we aim to facilitate balanced development of services to all airports, we must retain the flexibility to respond to the specific circumstances of particular negotiations.

Air Routes (Competition)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has had to date about the need for increased competition on major air routes from Heathrow to western Europe.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has received a number of recent representations concerning aviation competition in Europe.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to conduct a further review of competition policy on western European air routes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has no present plans to undertake a review of competition policy on air routes in western Europe.

A primary United Kingdom objective in the liberalisation of air transport within Europe remains the creation of conditions in which fair and open competition between carriers can flourish. Progress towards this objective has already been achieved. Current EC regulations together with our bilateral arrangements presently provide the scope for more than one airline of each country concerned to serve the major western European routes.

We expect the EC Commission's proposals for the third stage in the creation of the single market to provide further opportunities for airlines by opening up all intra-Community routes to competition. It is for Governments to create these opportunities and for airlines to take them up.

Air Fares

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he proposes to take to reduce air fares on western European air routes operated on a bilateral basis by two national airlines.

Mr. McLoughlin: We believe that airlines should be free to set their own fares with a minimum of regulatory intervention. As a safeguard, however, European Community measures already exist which provide that fares may not be excessive in relation to the relevant costs. The introduction of the single European market in 1993 will provide greater freedom for setting fares responding to market forces, and we shall continue to urge that safeguards are provided against excessive fares.

Second Severn Crossing

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if falling interest rates result in any reduction in the total sum which was agreed with the concessionaire for the second Severn crossing in 1989; what was the prevailing relevant interest level at the time of that agreement; and what is its equivalent level today.

Mr. Chope: Under the concession agreement with Severn River Crossing plc, SRC bears the risk of changes in interest rates. Changes in rates, in either direction, do not affect SRC's tolls or revenue entitlement under the agreement. The concession agreement was executed on 29 October 1990, when the clearing bank rates was 14 per cent.; the rate is now 11 per cent.

Greater Manchester Relief Road

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to publish his Department's preferred routes for the greater Manchester western and northern relief road; and when he expects the public consultation process to start.

Mr. Chope: Public consultation on stage 2 of the relief road (M56-M62) is planned for the autumn. It is hoped to follow with consultation on route options for stage 3 (M62-M66) in the winter. Preferred route announcement would follow consideration of the consultation response at each stage.

Motorway Slip Roads

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many vehicles per day use the slip roads in each of the directions between the M53 and M56.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 12 July 1991]:* The information is as follows:

Slip road	*Number of vehicles*
M56 westbound to M53 northbound	9,533
M56 westbound to M53 southbound	9,618
M53 southbound to M56 eastbound	9,522
M53 northbound to M56 eastbound	9,939

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the slip roads joining the M53 and the M56 were originally constructed to the specified standard.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 12 July 1991]:* Yes. The opportunity has been taken to resurface these slip roads during the reconstruction of the main carriageway.

A259, Kent

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what improvements are planned for the A259 road in Kent over the next three years.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 11 July 1991]:* The national roads programme includes five schemes, at various stages of preparation, for improving most of the A259 trunk road in Kent. Subject to the satisfactory completion of the statutory procedures, I hope it will be possible to start construction of the Brookland diversion, within the next three years, and of bypasses to New Romney, St. Mary's Bay, Dymchurch and Hythe, together with an improvement at Walland Marsh in the mid to late 1990s. The regional programme provides for small-scale works, mostly aimed at improving traffic flow and/or safety, which can usually be implemented more quickly. Eleven such schemes on the A259 in Kent are at present firmly programmed for 1991-93.

Diesel Engines

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will make a statement about the potential benefits to the environment of encouraging the greater use of diesel engines in motor cars.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 10 July 1991]:* Compared with their catalyst petrol-engined counterparts, diesel cars are generally worse emitters of NOx and particulates, but better on carbon monoxide and CO_2. Given that diesel cars usually enjoy a 20 to 30 per cent. advantage in fuel economy, and that duty on diesel fuel is slightly less than on petrol, there is already an implicit encouragement towards diesels, particularly for high-mileage users.

EMPLOYMENT

Disablement Advisory Service

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his Department's policy towards the training and guidance given to individual disablement advisory service managers; and what plans he has to improve this guidance and to ensure national consistency and quality.

Mr. Jackson: Disablement advisory service managers currently undertake a six-month nationally designed training programme which includes a mix of distance learning, off-the-job training modules, a development workshop and personal development projects.

Written guidance about operational procedures is provided centrally. Further guidance is provided by the Employment Service's head and regional offices as required.

The training programme is currently being examined and will be revised to reflect the planned changes, which my right hon. and learned Friend announced on 16 April, to the services provided by the Department for people with disabilities. The training programme for managers in the new service will continue to be delivered to nationally defined standards. Written guidance will also be revised to reflect the roles and functions of the new assessment and counselling teams.

Officials will continue to monitor the effectiveness of the training programme and will establish competencies to enable them to measure the effectiveness of those providing the service. They will also devise a set of qualitative performance measures to ensure that those providing the new arrangements deliver a more professional and coherent service for people with disabilities.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what appeal procedure is available to disabled people who are dissatisfied with the decisions of the local disablement advisory service manager regarding aids and equipment for employment.

Mr. Jackson: Questions on operational matters in the Employment Service executive agency are the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the agency's chief executive, to whom I have referred this question for reply.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on his plans to restructure the disablement advisory service; how many staff were employed before the restructuring; and how many will be employed once it is completed.

Mr. Jackson: In a statement on 16 April my right hon. and learned Friend announced plans to restructure the way in which the Department provides employment services for people with disabilities. The plans include the formation of new, local teams incorporating the present functions of the disablement advisory service, disablement resettlement officers and the employment rehabilitation service's assessment teams. The aim of the new teams will be to provide a more professional, coherent service for people with disabilities. The service will operate to nationally defined standards, but in a way which will allow for the development of more flexibility in meeting local needs.

Information about the number of people employed within the disablement advisory service is not at present collected on a regular basis. The number of disablement advisory service personnel in post on 11 June 1990, the latest date for which information is available, was 181.

The resource currently used to provide the disablement advisory service will be transferred to the new teams. Added to it will be the resource currently used to provide the disablement resettlement officer service and the employment rehabilitation assessment service.

Officials are presently engaged in taking forward action to implement the new service.

Training Schemes

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list all current training schemes and measures to reduce unemployment; and if he will give any details of *(a)* the number of people participating at any one time and *(b)* the separate and overall expenditure in each case.

Mr. Jackson: Most of the current training schemes and Employment Service measures to reduce unemployment are detailed in the Employment Department's annual report (Cm 1506) published on 13 February 1991, copies of which have been placed in the House of Commons Library. Planned expenditure for 1991-92 on training schemes is also given.

Currently it is estimated that there are 157,000 adults and about 300,000 young people on Government training programmes. Around 50,000 people are assisted by enterprise allowance at any one time.

Information on the numbers currently participating on ES measures is not available. However, planned expenditure for ES programmes in 1991-92, together with the number of places available is as follows:

Programme	*1991-92 programme (£ millions)*	*Places/ numbers helped*
Jobclubs	27·5	156,000
Job Interview Guarantee	4·1	39,000
Restart Courses	8·1	90,000
Jobsearch Seminars	2·5	40,000
Travel to Interview Scheme	1·2	25,000
Jobshare	0·6	[1]132
Joblink (Pilot)	0·3	900
Programme Development Funds	3·0	[2]—
Employment Rehabilitation	8·6	43,700
Sheltered Employment Programmes (including Remploy)	121·5	20,900
Special Programmes for People with Disabilities	13·0	9,400

In addition to the sums shown above and those published in the annual report, further funding has been provided, as follows:

In February 1991 a further £120 million was made available for Employment Training.

In March 1991 an extra £55 million was also provided for the ES to maintain customer service standards and to provide an enhanced placings service, through job referral teams, for recently unemployed people who are job ready and do not need further advice on how to look for work.

On 19 June an extra £100 million was announced to provide a comprehensive package of measures including:

a new programme, employment action, which will help 40,000 people at a cost of £48·5 million;

Employment Training to be increased by a further £35 million to help a further 15,000 people;

an expansion of Employment Service measures to help 135,000 people through expansion of job clubs (places for extra 40,000 people), Restart courses and assessment/counselling activities (to help 95,000 people).

In total we are providing 840,000 opportunities this year and 900,000 opportunities next year to help get people back into work as quickly as possible. This represents the most comprehensive range of help and advice ever made available to the unemployed.

(1) This is the number currently being supported.

(2) Programme development funds are used by the ES to participate in and develop local initiatives to help reduce unemployment in areas of particular need. They are not directly linked to particular schemes or programmes.

(3) Table shows GB total.

Construction Training

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what training the TECs are providing in London and the south-east in plumbing, wall and floor tiling, roofing and slating.

Mr. Jackson: The information is not available in the form requested. It is a matter for individual TECs to design and deliver provision which meets the needs of the local labour market. I know, for example, that LETEC is providing training in plumbing and plans to introduce training in wall and floor tiling in the autumn.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of cash for construction training on employment training is spent in London and the south-east.

Mr. Jackson: The figures are not available in the format requested.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are waiting for a place at Laings and Mowlems construction industry courses in east London.

Mr. Jackson: Information of this kind is held by the TECs and I have asked the chief executive of East London TEC to write to the hon. Gentleman with this information.

Jobs (Travel and Subsistence)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will institute a study into the numbers of registered unemployed in receipt of travel and interview expenses to pursue work in other areas of the country who are subsequently offered employment, but are unable to accept it due to the lack of funds for travel to the place of work and subsistence, pending their initial pay packet.

Mr. Jackson: Questions on operational matters in the Employment Service executive agency are the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the agency's chief executive, to whom I have referred this question for reply.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assistance is available from (i) the social fund and (ii) other public sources for those on income support who, after securing employment in other areas of the country, require temporary financial assistance for *(a)* travelling expenses to reach their place of work and *(b)* subsistence pending their initial pay packet.

Mr. Jackson: The information is not available in the form requested. Many of the TECs in London and the south-east include the provision of construction training opportunities as one of their priorities. Nationally, the construction industry training board is providing over 10,000 places on youth training.

Graduate into Enterprise Project

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the differences between the graduate into enterprise project and employment training with particular reference to any formal and written agreement drawn up between trainees on each of the relevant schemes and their training managers or providers.

Mr. Jackson: The graduate into enterprise project comprises a series of programmes operated by Durham university business school in collaboration with other universities and polytechnics in the north-east. Including among these programmes are some, for example, graduate enterprise and graduate gateway, on which participants are supported by local training and enterprise councils through employment training. ET is for unemployed people and includes enterprise training for those wishing to become self employed. All trainees in ET must receive full information in writing about their individual training plan and the terms and conditions of training.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what the projected cost for training and enterprise councils when they are fully established was estimated at on 1 January; and what the current estimate for that cost is.

Mr. Jackson: At the beginning of the year, the administrative cost for TECs and remaining Employment Department area offices for 1991-92 was estimated at £124·3 million. It is expected that all TECs will be fully operational this year. This estimate still stands.

Barking Skill Centre

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what training is now taking place on the site of the Barking skill centre; and what uses the land and building have been put to.

Mr. Jackson: Barking skill centre was purchased by Astra Training Services Ltd. and is now in the private sector. Issues relating to training undertaken at the skill centre and what use the land and buildings located on the site are put to, are now matters for the owners.

Earnings, Scotland

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment pursuant to his answer of 10 June, *Official Report*, columns *435-38*, on employees earning less than £3·40 hourly, if he will provide the information given in percentage form in terms of the absolute number of employees affected in each category.

Mr. Jackson: The information requested is not available.

Rehabilitation Centres

Mrs. Heal: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has given any further consideration to the number of employment rehabilitation centres required in London and the south-east.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State announced on 16 April, in a written reply to a question from the hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans), *Official Report*, columns *157-59*, that employment services for people with disabilities are to be improved and developed.

It was also announced that greater use will be made of the voluntary sector and others to provide employment rehabilitation and that nine Employment Service centres of excellence, including one in London and the south-east, were to be established over, approximately, the next five years.

Operational responsibility for the development of the centres of excellence and for the range of employment services for people with disabilities rests with the chief executive of the Employment Service, Mike Fogden, to whom I have referred the hon. Lady's question for a more detailed reply.

Earnings

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will state separately for full-time workers, part-time workers and all workers (i) the number and (ii) the percentage earning less than £130 for *(a)* women, *(b)* men and *(c)* all workers, excluding overtime pay in (1) Wales, (2) each county in Wales and (3) Great Britain, for the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Jackson: The information available from the April 1990 new earnings survey is shown in the tables. The results of the April 1991 survey will be published this November and December.

Earnings in April 1990: New earnings survey

A. Full time employees on adult rates with weekly earnings excluding overtime less than £130

	Number in the sample			Percentage of total		
	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total
Wales	564	397	961	30·7	11·1	17·7
Clwyd	91	52	143	34·7	9·7	17·9
Clywd-West	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
Clwyd-East	58	36	94	34·9	9·0	16·7
Dyfed[2]	58	33	91	38·7	14·2	23·8
Gwent	86	69	155	33·5	11·3	17·8
Gwynedd	39	46	85	31·7	17·2	21·8
Mid Glamorgan	94	52	146	28·5	9·8	16·9
Powys	27	19	46	37·0	15·7	23·7
South Glamorgan	78	57	135	21·4	8·4	12·9
West Glamorgan[3]	91	69	160	33·0	11·3	18·0
Great Britain	10,056	6,308	16,364	23·0	7·6	13·0

[1] Sampling error too large or numbers too small for reliable estimate.
[2] Excluding Llanelli.
[3] Including Llanelli.
Source: New Earnings Survey 1990.

B. Part time employees on adult rates with weekly earnings excluding overtime less than £130

	Number in the sample			Percentage of total		
	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total
Great Britain	22,763	3,117	25,880	89·8	85·0	89·2

Source: New Earnings Survey 1990.

C. All employees on adult rates with weekly earnings excluding overtime less than £130

	Number in the sample			Percentage of total		
	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total
Great Britain	32,819	9,425	42,244	47·6	10·9	27·2

Source: New Earnings Survey 1990.

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will take steps to ensure that the results of industrial tribunals are notified to the appellants before being released to the media;

(2) if he will investigate the recent leaks of the results of industrial tribunals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: In accordance with the Industrial Tribunal (Rules of Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 1985 decisions are entered in the register and then sent to the parties. The register is open to the public, as required by the regulations. I am not aware of any problems arising from this procedure, but if the hon. Member has a specific case in mind perhaps he will let me have the details so that I can examine it.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

House of Commons Commission

40. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission if the Public Accounts Commission has considered the staffing implications of a requirement to examine the value for money spending of the House of Commons Commission.

Sir Peter Hordern: No. It is for the National Audit Office to identify its staffing requirements in the light of its programme of value-for-money studies. The Comptroller and Auditor General determines the actual programmes of value-for-money studies, and in so doing he takes account of the views of the Public Accounts Committee. The Comptroller and Auditor General is able to decide whether or not to include House of Commons Commission expenditure among his value-for-money studies.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

New Parliamentary Building

47. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make a statement on the criteria used in assessing the allocation of new accommodation in phase I of the new parliamentary building.

Mr. MacGregor: The New Building Sub-Committee resolved at its meeting on 21 May 1991 the allocation of offices in phase I as between Members of political parties.

Individual offices will be allocated to Members by the accommodation Whips of the Government and official Opposition parties on behalf of the Services Committee in the usual way.

Envelopes

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Lord President of the Council, pursuant to his oral answer of 3 June, *Official Report*, column 18, to the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), what reasons account for the delay in providing the European envelope facility due to be made available in June; and when it will be available.

Mr. MacGregor: Initial samples of envelopes provided for use by Members in correspondence to official destinations in the European Community were found not to be sufficently strong. I am assured that supplies of higher quality envelopes will be available from the Serjeant at Arms' stores on Monday 15 July.

Parliamentary Regional Sittings

Mr. Hind: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he has any plans to hold sittings of Parliament in regional centres other than London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: No.

HEALTH

NHS Trust Board

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many regional health authority, district health authority, and national health service trust board posts are due to be filled in the current round of appointments; how many appointments have been made to date; and what proportion of the appointees are women.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested is set out in the table.

We envisage that the second wave of NHS trusts will be established in the autumn. The appointment of chairmen and non-executive directors will be announced at the same time.

Current Appointment Rounds

Type of Appointment	*Next Review*	*Number*	*Appointments made*	
			M	*F*
Regional Health Authority Chairmen	31 July 1991	2	2	—
Regional Health Authority Non-Executives	31 October 1992	11	—	—
District Health Authority Chairmen	31 March 1992	108	—	—
NHS Trust Chairmen	30 November 1991	1	—	—
NHS Trust Non-Executives	30 November 1991	3	—	—

Basildon Community Health Council

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to increase the funding of the community health council for Basildon and Thurrock; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The funding of community health councils is a matter for the relevant regional health authority.

Partially Sighted Register

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what benefits are available to people on the partially sighted register.

Mr. Dorrell: People who are registered as partially sighted are entitled to free sight tests. Local authority social services departments have a duty to provide services to people who are partially sighted, whether or not they are registered, if there is an established need. A range of services or concessions for people who are partially sighted is available from opticians, libraries, voluntary organisations, transport authorities and other public and private bodies, some of which may make registration a condition of eligibility. There is no specific social security provision for people who are registered as partially sighted.

Food Businesses (Training)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he intends to use those powers available to him under the Food Safety Act 1990 to make regulations requiring training for those employed in food businesses.

Mr. Dorrell: I shall be making an announcement shortly.

Pharmaceutical Companies

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the impact on *(a)* profitability of pharmaceutical companies supplying medicines to the national health service and *(b)* the national health service drugs bill of the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The pharmaceutical price regulation scheme seeks to strike a balance between securing the supply of drugs to the national health service at an acceptable cost to the taxpayer and offering pharmaceutical companies a reasonable level of profitability on their NHS sales.

It is not possible to estimate the impact of the PPRS on companies' profitability or the NHS drugs bill since that would depend on what the level of drug prices might be or what other expenditure controls might exist in the absence of the agreement.

NHS Consultants

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average earnings level of an NHS consultant net of expenses.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The consultant's whole-time salary ranges from £34,960 to £45,130 with the majority of consultants being on the maximum point. In addition, approximately one third of consultants have distinction awards. The value of a distinction award ranges from £7,955 to £42,870 per year. Consultants may also be paid fees and allowances for work outside the basic NHS contract. The salary includes no allowance for expenses.

Waste Incinerators

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the minimum temperature needed for waste incinerators in national health service hospitals adequately to burn all waste, in particular that resulting from treatment to patients who suffer from serious infectious diseases.

Mr. Dorrell: Health authorities and NHS trusts are required to comply with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment's guidelines, issued under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, which specify operating temperatures for incinerators. The minimum temperature for new plant installed after 1 April 1991 is 1000 deg. C. Under the interim arrangement provided by the Act, existing plants may operate at a minimum temperature of 850 deg. C. for a maximum of five years, but I have stressed to NHS management the importance of meeting the higher minimum temperature standard as quickly as possible.

Dental Care

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how he is encouraging better dental care and dental hygiene among children in advance of completion of the consultation period on the health strategy Green Paper.

Mr. Dorrell: Under the new contract general dental practitioners are paid on a capitation basis for their child patients. This is designed to encourage dentists to place emphasis on preventative measures including advice on oral hygiene and a healthy diet.

The redesigned role of the community dental service is also intended to help improve dental health education and preventive measures.

More than £1 million has already been spent in support of oral health education projects since the publication of the White Paper "Promoting Better Health", and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 9 May that up to £750,000 would be available from the Department to support oral health education projects this year.

In addition, funding is provided to the health education authority which has a long-established programme of providing education to patients and children on matters relating to nutrition and dental health.

Medicine Imports

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many umbrella product licences for parallel imported medicines that can be exploited by all its members have been granted to the Association of Pharmaceutical Importers;

(2) whether he has any plans to discontinue issue of umbrella product licences for parallel imported medicines to the Association of Pharmaceutical Importers, as an alternative to issuing licences to individual importers.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Association of Pharmaceutical Importers is not a parallel import licence holder. Licences can be issued to any company or individual meeting the criteria laid down in the Medicines Act 1968; related regulations and European guidelines may provide for a product to be placed on the market by named distributors.

We have no present plans for changing these arrangements.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether all persons or organisations involved in the parallel importing of medicines hold wholesale dealers licences.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. Not all importers are wholesale dealers, but those that are should either hold a wholesale dealer licence or operate from premises which are registered as pharmacies.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many organisations hold product licences to engage in the parallel importing of medicines; and how many such organisations hold wholesale dealers' licences.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: As at 30 June 1991 there were 38 parallel import licence holders of which 32 held wholesale dealers' licences.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the premises of all parallel importers of medicines who hold wholesale dealers' licences have been inspected by the United Kingdom medicines inspectorate.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Yes, the premises of all wholesalers who are licensed to import medicines are inspected regularly.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many product licences have been granted for generic

medicines where the finished product of the active ingredient has been produced in former COMECON countries.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Indian and Chinese Medicines

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if his Department has any plans to commission research into the number of traditional Indian and Chinese medicines that are available in the United Kingdom without a product licence, and the number of people who have been treated with such products.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Medicinal products are evaluated for safety, quality and efficacy when an application for a product licence is made. This action would be taken on any such application in respect of a traditional Indian or Chinese medicine.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures the Medicines Control Agency is taking to evaluate and license traditional Indian and Chinese medicines.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Before a medicinal product can be marketed in the United Kingdom it must be covered by a product licence obtained under the Medicines Act 1968. All product licence applications, including any for traditional Indian or Chinese medicines, have to be evaluated for safety, quality and efficacy by the licensing authority before a product licence can be granted.

Rent Subsidies

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what powers health authorities have to subsidise the rents of tenants in their employment; whether such subsidy can be differentiated according to income; and whether such subsidy can exceed applicable levels of housing benefit.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In many localities successful recruitment and retention of NHS staff depends on authorities providing subsidised residential accommodation. The level of the subsidy will be a matter for each individual authority.

Some staff are required to occupy NHS accommodation as a condition of employment. Where this is so, authorities abate rent or lodging charges in accordance with centrally negotiated agreements.

With the lifting of Crown immunity on 1 April, staff who occupy NHS accommodation can now apply to their local authority for housing benefit in the same way as non-NHS tenants. Detailed guidance on all these matters was issued by the Department to all health authorities in March this year in HG(91)9, a copy of which is available in the Library.

The payment of housing benefit is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Abortion

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) in considering granting a licence for RU486 how many studies financed by the manufacturers Roussel Uclaf were considered by the Medicines Control Agency; by whom they were carried out; how large the samples were; what the results showed; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will publish the number of independent research projects commissioned by the Medicines Control Agency into RU486, the names of the research units involved and the results;

(3) how many of the studies commissioned by the Medicines Control Agency into RU486 included post-abortion syndrome studies and follow up studies on the mothers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Medicines Control Agency does not commission research projects into drugs. The MCA's role is to evaluate the data submitted in support of an application for a licence for a drug in respect of its safety, quality and efficacy for the indication proposed. For all new drugs, the MCA seeks the advice of the Committee on Safety of Medicines and its expert sub-committees. Section 118 of the Medicines Act 1968 precludes both Ministers and the MCA on grounds of commercial confidentiality from disclosing any information on data submitted by manufacturers in support of clinical trials or product licence applications.

I would, however, draw my hon. Friend's attention to the well-documented studies in the *British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology*, June 1990, Vol. 97, pages 480 to 486, and in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, 8 March 1990, Vol. 322, No. 10, pages 645 to 648, copies of which are in the Library.

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he is setting up a special fund along the French lines to provide damages for children born deformed because their mothers have taken RU486 but then refused to take prostaglandin; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. Both the licence holder's data sheet for Mifegyne, for use by the doctor, and the patient information leaflet stress the importance of completing the course of treatment.

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what financial provision he is making in the budgets of regional and district health authorities for legal costs and damages against the possibility of deformed victims of RU486 suing the national health service; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No such action is necessary.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the number of health authorities and hospital trusts that have received payments from the national waiting list initiative fund in the present financial year.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Allocations from the waiting list fund are made to regions, which in turn allocate sums to their constituent health authorities. Information is not available centrally on regions' allocation to districts except for the 80 target lists being investigated by Qa Business Services. The available information is shown in the tables.

Waiting list fund 1990-91

Table 1. Allocations to regions from main waiting list fund

Region	*Allocation (to 30 June 1991) (£000)*
Northern	375
Yorkshire	520
Trent	500
East Anglian	340
North West Thames	433
North East Thames	658
South East Thames	440
South West Thames	388
Wessex	380
Oxford	258
South Western	323
West Midlands	713
Mersey	575
North Western	475
Total allocation to regions	6,378

Table 2. Allocations to regions from £9 million reserved for target lists

Region	*District*	*Specialty*	*Allocation (to 30 June 1991) (£000)*
Trent	Sheffield	Trauma and Orthopaedics	123
North East Thames	Tower Hamlets	Oral Surgery	24
	Tower Hamlets	Trauma and Orthopaedics	24
	West Essex	General Surgery/Urology	9
	West Essex	Trauma and Orthopaedics	61
	City and Hackney	Ear, Nose and Throat	62
	North East Essex	General Surgery	63
South West Thames	West Surrey	Ophthalmology	31
	North West Surrey	Trauma and Orthopaedics	60
West Midlands	North Staffordshire	Trauma and Orthopaedics	50
Total allocations to target lists			507

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions his Department has held with the Yorkshire regional health authority about the authority's scheme with regard to the identification by general practitioners of patients on hospital waiting lists for more than 12 months; and what is the estimate of the likely cost of this scheme.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department has had no specific discussions with the regional health authority on this. However, I understand that as part of the drive to reduce long waiting times, the region has asked purchasing health authorities and GP fund-holders to check the details of patients who have been waiting over a year. The regional health authority has told the Department that the costs are minimal.

It is a key regional management task to ensure that purchasers know how many of their patients are waiting, at which hospitals and for how long, so that arrangements can be made, using the waiting list fund, to secure early treatment for long wait patients. The waiting list fund is expected to be used to reduce the number of long wait patients of both health authorities and GP fund-holders.

Creutzfeld-Jakob Disease

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the date on which his Department, his medicine control bodies or his public health services first became aware of a possible link between growth hormone and Creutzfeld-Jakob disease.

Mr. Dorrell: On 11 April 1985 the chairman of the health services human growth hormone committee informed the Department that he had learned from the United States of America of the death from Creutzfeld-Jakob disease of three patients who had received human growth hormone therapy. A meeting of the committee was arranged for 9 May. At that meeting it was reported that the Untied States Federal Drugs Agency had withdrawn the use of human growth hormone therapy on 19 April. The committee decided to withdraw the therapy from use in the United Kingdom; human growth assessment centres were notified immediately. Regional health authorities were informed of the decision and the background to it on 10 June 1985.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects the study into the incidence of Creutzfeld-Jakob disease he is funding to be completed; and if he will make it his policy to place it in the Library.

Mr. Dorrell: It will be necessary to continue the study into the incidence of Creutzfeld-Jakob disease (CJD) for a decade or more. The author, Dr. R.G. Will, is expected to make the full results available through the usual scientific channels. We have agreed to make an annual report on the incidence of CJD available to the House. The available data on suspected cases who died in 1990 shows that 10 have been confirmed as CJD with a further nine probable and 13 possible cases, most of which are awaiting the results of neuropathology. Reliable data on the previous incidence of CJD is limited, but there is no evidence to show it is increasing.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the policy of the blood transfusion service on the donation of blood by sufferers from Creutzfeld-Jakob's disease.

Mr. Dorrell: There is no evidence that Creutzfeld-Jakob disease can be transmitted in blood or blood products, but people who suffer from CJD or are at special risk of contracting the disease are not accepted as blood donors.

Performance-related Payments

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list for each year since its introduction the total amount of performance-related payments made to regional or district health authority staff and break this figure down to identify the amounts paid each year in respect of individual districts and regions.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally.

Nursery Places

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list those health authorities which provide nursery places for use by national health service staff and detail the number of nursery places available.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested regarding nursery provision is not collected centrally at present.

We anticipate some information being available by the autumn and I will arrange for details to be placed in the Library.

It is our understanding that somewhere in the region of half of health authorities have some provision at present.

Patients (Contracting)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance he has given to regional and district health authorities and trusts with regard to the action which should be taken when patients from a particular purchaser require elective procedures in excess of the agreed ceiling of in-year activity.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: General guidance on contracting was given in "Contracts for Health Services: Operational Principles" and "Contracts for Health Services: Operating Contracts"—copies of which are in the Library.

District health authorities will lay contracts which they judge will best meet the needs of local people within the resources available. Hospitals and other units will, as in the past, have to take management action, in close consultation with clinicians, to ensure that levels of activity do not run ahead of the resources available. They may, however, be able to agree with the purchaser an extension to the contract in year to cover additional services.

Medical Manpower

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to review future United Kingdom medical manpower.

Mr. Waldegrave: Following my announcement to the Joint Consultants' Committee earlier this year, I am setting up a new standing advisory committee, to advise on the future balance of medical manpower supply and demand in the United Kingdom and to make recommendations as to the appropriate medical school intake.

The Committee's terms of reference will be:

To advise the Secretary of State for Health on future developments in the balance of medical manpower supply and demand in the United Kingdom, taking account of resource assumptions and other guidance which the Secretary of State, in consultation with other Health Ministers, may give to the Committee; and

To make recommendations about the medical school intake including the balance between home and overseas students, and the timing of any changes, taking into account the resources available within the Universities Funding Council's aggregate funding and from overseas students' fees as well as the facilities for clinical students.

I have appointed Professor Colin Campbell, Vice Chancellor of Nottingham University, to be the first chairman of the Committee. The membership of the Committee will be announced shortly.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Duchy Visit

36. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to pay his next visit to the Duchy.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have no plans to do so.

37. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next intends to visit the Duchy of Lancaster in his official capacity.

38. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next plans to visit the Duchy of Lancaster.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have no plans to visit the Duchy of Lancaster in the immediate future.

Bolton

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make an official visit to Bolton; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have no plans to visit Bolton in the immediate future.

SCOTLAND

Nairn Bypass

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress there has been on the proposal for a bypass for Nairn.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We have no proposals for a bypass of Nairn. Works are currently under way to upgrade the road within the town by a local diversion at Nairn railway bridge.

Hospital Consultants

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many appeals have there been from hospital consultants under general Whitley council conditions of service, section 40, since 1961; and in each case, what was the time between the appeal board's decision and its announcement by him.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Records are available only from 1973. In that period there have been three appeals by hospital consultants under section 40 of the general Whitley council conditions of service. In only one case was

an independent appeal panel constituted and the time between the submission of the appeal panel's recommendations to the Secretary of State and the announcement of his decision was six months.

Tayside Health Board

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what funds are available to Tayside health board to pay travel costs for re-deployed staff.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Tayside health board receives an annual allocation of revenue to meet recurrent expenditure. In 1991-92 £204·066 million was made available to Tayside health board for this purpose. These resources are not allocated centrally to specific areas of expenditure and it is for the health board to decide how they should be deployed.

Meigle Cottage Hospital

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the cost per bed for keeping and treating an in-patient at Meigle cottage hospital for the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The cost of keeping and treating an in-patient for one week at Meigle cottage hospital for the last five years is as follows:

Year	*Actual cost per In-Patient Week*
1990-91	549·09
1989-90	517·96
1988-89	452·37
1987-88	410·61
1986-87	401·00

Greater Glasgow Health Board (Children)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each general dental practice within the Greater Glasgow health board area the number of children registered under capitation arrangements.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is not available centrally.

Blairgowrie Cottage Hospital

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the cost per bed for keeping and treating an in-patient in the acute ward/geriatric wing at Blairgowrie cottage hospital for the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The cost of keeping and treating an in-patient for one week at Blairgowrie cottage hospital for the last five years is as follows:

Year	*Actual cost per in-patient week* £
1990-91	383·82
1989-90	367·46
1988-89	337·42
1987-88	330·00
1986-87	333·00

Community Care

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the agencies and professional organisations which have been given details about the bridging finance awards that have been made under the announcement of 12 June concerning care in the community.

Mr. Lang: On 11 June 1991, each health board general manager was notified of the details of approved projects in their board area.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the successful bridging finance applications announced on 12 June to develop and expand care in the community, broken down by revenue and capital in each health board area and for each of the three years 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Lang: The information is included in the following table.

Bridging Finance for Community Care

£'s

	1991-92		*1992-93*		*1993-94*	
	Capital	*Revenue*	*Capital*	*Revenue*	*Capital*	*Revenue*
ARGYLL AND CLYDE						
Elderslie	195,000	22,000	125,000	254,000	0	168,000
Bute Day Hospital	185,000	175,000	0	175,000	0	175,000
Community MHT	2,100	126,416	0	126, 416	0	126,416
Inverclyde Phys Dis	150,000	0	0	0	0	95,577
Dumbarton and Dunoon	32,875	42,545	0	42,545	0	42,545
Total	564,975	365,961	125,000	597,961	0	607,538
AYRSHIRE AND ARRAN						
None at present						
BORDERS						
St. Mary's	47,100	86,250	0	103,250	0	16,750
Galashiels	50,000	0	0	0	0	0
Total	97,100	86,250	0	103,250	0	16,750
DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY						
Sheltered Housing	32,000	85,000	0	58,000	0	62,000

	1991-92		1992-93		1993-94	
	Capital	Revenue	Capital	Revenue	Capital	Revenue
Community Home	0	95,000	0	0	0	0
Total	32,000	180,000	0	58,000	0	62,000
FIFE						
None at present						
FORTH VALLEY						
Mental Illness	216,000	137,000	0	0	0	0
Mental Handicap	0	50,000	30,000	30,000	100,000	0
Total	216,000	187,000	30,000	30,000	100,000	0
GRAMPIAN						
Richmond Fellowship	24,000	0	0	0	0	0
Peterhead Supp Acc	5,000	0	0	0	0	0
Inverurie Supp Acc	10,000	0	0	0	0	0
Room to care	0	15,000	0	0	0	0
Aberdeen Supp Acc	80,000	39,123	80,000	45,995	80,000	45,995
Forensic Rehab	0	39,208	0	47,050	0	47,050
Rehab/Outreach	0	59,508	0	62,290	0	62,290
Rehab/Day centre	0	166,666	0	250,000	0	250,000
SAMH Supp Housing	20,000	19,583	0	23,500	0	23,500
SAMH Rehab	50,000	32,792	0	78,700	0	78,700
Woodlands Hospital	0	50,000	0	17,800	0	17,800
Moray	100,000	80,000	0	165,239	0	165,239
Manor	21,000	0	0	0	0	0
Total	310,000	501,880	80,000	690,574	80,000	690,574
GREATER GLASGOW						
Mental Handicap II	71,000	296,000	0	107,000	0	0
Comm MH Team Bases	150,000	0	0	0	0	0
Comm MHT Dom Ser	0	100,000	0	100,000	0	0
Mental Illness II	345,000	901,000	0	173,000	0	0
EMI	12,000	52,000	0	0	0	0
Comm MH Team Bases	50,000	0	0	0	0	0
Comm MHT Dom Ser	0	90,000	0	90,000	0	0
Total	628,000	1,439,000	0	470,000	0	0
HIGHLAND						
None at present						
LANARKSHIRE						
Mental Handicap	314,000	353,514	0	707,028	0	707,028
Mental Illness	120,000	95,200	0	190,400	0	190,400
Total	434,000	448,714	0	897,428	0	897,428
LOTHIAN						
Hopetoun House	0	15,000	0	20,000	0	20,000
Penumbra	375,000	64,000	375,000	64,000	0	0
Total	375,000	79,000	375,000	84,000	0	20,000
ORKNEY						
No schemes submitted						
SHETLAND						
No schemes submitted						
TAYSIDE						
Fresh Start	60,000	125,000	30,000	125,000	0	0
WESTERN ISLES						
Mental Handicap	45,000	112,700	0	0	0	0
Mental Illness	0	39,118	0	0	0	0
Total	45,000	151,818	0	0	0	0

	1991-92		1992-93		1993-94	
	Capital	Revenue	Capital	Revenue	Capital	Revenue
Total of all schemes	2,762,075	3,537,623	640,000	3,056,213	180,000	2,294,290
Total per year	6,299,698		3,696,213		2,474,290	
Grand Total			12,470,201			

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consultation took place on the proposals for bridging finance announced on 12 June to develop and expand community care.

Mr. Lang: In assessing applications for bridging finance from health boards, prior to allocation on 12 June 1991, the Government took into account the extent to which the proposals had been agreed with local authorities and voluntary agencies involved.

Tourist Signposting

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what progress has been made in the review of signposting for tourist purposes; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he expects to publish his Department's circular on tourist signposting;

(3) if he will publish a list of those individuals and bodies who were consulted and who submitted evidence to the body undertaking the review of signposting for tourist purposes;

(4) on what date did the review of signposting for tourist purposes commence; and what are the reasons for the delay in producing the circular.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A range of new signs for tourist attractions was first proposed in 1988 in the context of the review of the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 1981. The bodies who were consulted in Scotland included local roads authorities, the Scottish tourist board, the Highlands and Islands development board, police forces, motoring organisations, road safety organisations and bus and transport associations. Comments received were mostly from regional and islands councils, but also from the STB, the HIDB, the AA and bus interests. Subsequently, a review of tourist signposting was taken forward in seminars arranged respectively by the Scottish Office (in October 1989), the Scottish tourist board (in February 1990) and the Highlands and Islands development board, in conjunction with Highland regional council (in September 1990). Close to 250 delegates attended these seminars in total, representing the widest possible range of interests in the tourism sector.

As a consequence of all the input obtained from the exchanges of views at these seminars and thereafter, comprehensive guidelines have been drawn up in close consultation with the Scottish tourist board, the Scottish Confederation of Tourism and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. These guidelines will be sent out in draft for comment by the various interests in the very near future. It has been a long process, but the subject is complex and the views are many, and often conflicting.

Residential Care Allowance

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all those regional and island authorities that top up care costs for residents in receipt of residential care allowance and who stay in residential accommodation for people with learning difficulties.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is not held centrally.

Tranent-Macmerry Bypass

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the fatal accident on the Tranent-Macmerry bypass on 6 July; and if he will take further steps to warn motorists that that section of the A1 road is not a dual carriageway.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This appalling accident took place in the early morning of 6 July in darkness and fog on a stretch of the A1 between Tranent and Haddington. It is too early to draw conclusions as to the causes of the accident or the factors which may have contributed to its exceptional severity. A report on the accident will be made by the police to the procurator fiscal. The stretch of road in question has a good safety record with an accident rate well below the national average for a road of its type. The signs and road markings provided exceed national standards.

The steering group which I set up to carry out a programme of improvements to the A1 as part of a route action plan has been examining the whole length of the route between Edinburgh and Newcastle to identify accident remedial measures which might be taken. Their examination has included this and other single carriageway sections of the route. I am now asking the group to re-examine these sections in the light of this accident to consider whether there are any signing or other remedial measures which could further improve the safety of these sections and which could be implemented at an early date.

I have asked the police to advise me of any issues relevant to road safety relating to this section of the road which have become apparent from their investigation of the accident and I will, of course, give urgent consideration to any recommendations they may make.

My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport has already indicated that following the accident his Department will also be reviewing the requirements relating to the seating for passengers carried in vans.

Electoral Register

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is, for each year since 1975, the number of people on the electoral register in *(a)* Greater Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on the number of people on the electoral register in Scotland by parliamentary constituency is contained in the annual series "Electoral Statistics" compiled by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. Copies of the entire series since 1974 are available in the House Library.

A1

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the programme for dualling the A1 road from Musselburgh to Haddington and onwards to Dunbar, giving projected start and completion dates, and the relevant financial details from his Department's capital programme for roads.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Following our routes south of Edinburgh study, I announced that consultants would be appointed to prepare the A1 dualling scheme from Bankton (Tranent) to Haddington and the further

dualling to Dunbar. The necessary preparatory work is progressing well and we are on course to meet the commitment given for a start to construction of the Bankton to Haddington dualling scheme by the mid-1990s. I expect the consultants to report later this summer on selected route options. The consultants report on the further dualling scheme between Haddington and Dunbar is expected in the latter part of 1992. In view of the uncertainty surrounding the time needed to complete the necessary statutory procedures start and completion dates are not available at this stage in the preparation of the schemes. Scheme costs will depend upon the complexity of the works and the line followed which cannot be predicted with any certainty at this stage.

Erskine Bridge

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the cost of maintaining the Erskine bridge.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The latest published accounts show that the operating and maintenance costs of the bridge were £326,247 in 1989-90.

Mr. Graham: to ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much was taken in tolls on the Erskine bridge each year since the bridge was opened.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The latest published accounts are for 1989-90. The tolls collected each year since the bridge was opened are as follows:

Financial year	*Tolls collected £*
1971-72	194,775
1972-73	312,273
1973-74	359,570
1974-75	380,557
1975-76	417,495
1976-77	471,743
1977-78	524,666
1978-79	583,760
1979-80	525,059
1980-81	679,171
1981-82	843,467
1982-83	1,194,705
1983-84	1,257,592
1984-85	1,373,882
1985-86	1,394,421
1986-87	1,506,547
1987-88	1,627,605
1988-89	1,786,179
1989-90	2,360,403

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many staff are employed to collect the toll on the Erskine bridge; and if he will break it down by all staff grade involved.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There are at present 30 full-time and one part-time members of staff employed at Eskine bridge. They comprise the bridge manager, three administrative staff, six toll supervisors, 20 toll collectors and a part time handyman. Temporary toll collectors are also employed as necessary to cover for annual leave and sickness so as to maintain the service to the public.

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many letters the Government have received complaining about the Erskine bridge toll since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No record has been created and the information requested is not available.

Abattoirs

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the abattoirs in Scotland which slalughter fewer than 12 livestock units or cattle each week.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It would not be appropriate to list the information requested in view of its commercial sensitivity. However, information on throughput derived from annual advisory visits by state veterinary service staff to local authority licensed abattoirs is recorded in size bands. The 1990 figures for Scotland are as follows:

Livestock units	*Abattoirs*
0–5	9
6–10	2
11–15	Nil

Mar Lodge

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what response he has made to the letter from the director general of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, Dr. Martin Holdgate FRS, relating to Mar lodge; and if he will put copies of the correspondence in the Library.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have arranged to have copies of Dr. Holdgate's letter of 16 May to my right hon. Friend, and the Scottish Office Environment Department's reply of 5 June, placed in the Library.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland pursuant to his answer of 19 June, *Official Report*, column *279*, what further proposals he has received relating to the future of Mar lodge; and what response he had made.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: On 27 June I met representatives of the World Wide Fund for Nature, The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Chris Brasher trust who outlined their proposals for the purchase of the Mar lodge estate.

My response was that private ownership can and does provide for effective management of the natural heritage in Scotland. In this context, the proposal that the Government provide 50 per cent. of the purchase price of the Mar lodge estate is inconsistent with Government policy.

Student Support

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what measures he is now taking in order to provide financial support to students, following the ending of their entitlement to welfare benefits.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 12 July 1991]:* We are already providing such support through student loans and access funds. Loans and grants together provided an increase of 25 per cent. in the resources available to students in session 1990-91 and the loan element more than compensated the average student claimant for the loss of benefits. The average student's likely entitlement to

benefits was estimated to be about £327, whereas the average full year loan rate for session 1990-91 is £420. Eligible students who have not already done so can still apply for a loan for 1990-91 provided their completed application reaches the Student Loans Company Ltd. by 31 July.

For session 1991-92 the overall provision for student maintenance has been increased by a further 6 per cent. on average, giving a loan facility of £580 for students living away from the parental home.

In addition to student loans, discretionary assistance may be available in cases of need through the access funds which are administered by the individual academic institutions.

Red Deer

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many estates have killed *(a)* fewer than five, *(b)* six to 10, *(c)* 11 to 50, *(d)* 51 to 100, *(e)* 101 to 250, *(f)* 251 to 500 and *(g)* more than 500 red deer in each year from 1986 to 1990.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 9 June 1991]:* The information is as follows:

	1986-87	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
Less than 5	51	45	46	46
6 to 10	47	28	41	37
11 to 50	193	208	178	191
51 to 100	97	108	117	123
101 to 250	72	84	93	94
251 to 500	20	20	22	20
More than 500	3	3	5	7

Auchtermuchty Bypass

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the Auchtermuchty bypass.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 11 July 1991]:* I will be writing to the hon. Member very shortly in reply to his letter on this subject. I can state however that completion of the final elements of the necessary preparatory work on this scheme will be undertaken only when there is a reasonable prospect of early funding being available. The present indications are that this is unlikely to be the case within the next five years.

Trunk Roads

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what sums have been spent on trunk roads in each region in Scotland for *(a)* maintenance and *(b)* new building in the last 10 years for which information is available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 11 July 1991]:* The information is set out in the following tables:

Expenditure on trunk road maintenance
1 April 1980 to 31 March 1990

£ thousands

Region	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
Borders	764	1,247	1,825	1,618	1,227	1,371	1,145	1,307	1,640	1,565
Central	1,336	1,913	2,415	2,614	2,204	2,190	1,710	1,377	2037	2,254
Dumfries and Galloway	1,256	2,414	2,327	2,130	3,118	1,762	2,433	2,847	3,111	3,736
Fife	604	914	1,165	1,893	1,099	1,221	1,707	1,045	2,154	3,034
Grampian	1,635	2,739	1,982	2,291	1,800	2,402	3,344	3,313	2,812	3,075
Highland	3,163	3,977	4,148	5,530	5,528	6,783	7,561	7,093	8,797	9,063
Lothian	930	1,394	1,362	2,005	1,302	1,928	1,939	2,306	2,441	2,214
Strathclyde	6,140	11,115	8,346	10,692	9,663	9,766	10,324	12,140	13,360	15,707
Tayside	1,474	3,375	2,727	3,969	2,423	2,745	3,297	2,508	3,046	4,621

Expenditure on trunk road construction
1 April 1980 to 31 March 1990

£ thousands

Region	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
Borders	2,656	3,247	2,677	1,656	1,013	902	1,964	1,320	1,117	3,478
Central	2,901	6,565	4,784	2,351	1,321	923	1,672	2,424	2,078	10,374
Dumfries and Galloway	1,408	3,994	7,181	5,590	8,096	11,110	8,793	17,925	19,919	24,158
Fife	2,304	3,789	3,857	5,303	6,014	6,163	4,030	2,499	7,940	8,304
Grampian	8,009	4,839	4,016	8,580	16,603	5,744	2,147	10,714	17,170	16,613
Highland	21,922	24,499	15,309	11,783	11,408	5,234	9,238	16,008	14,237	14,085
Lothian	286	783	1,143	881	4,900	12,320	12,246	4,208	3,035	5,761
Strathclyde	4,482	9,805	16,904	20,377	16,354	23,589	17,293	22,681	20,248	23,651
Tayside	27,416	15,525	26,098	15,274	17,718	21,045	21,239	16,095	3,353	7,128

Anti-speeding Measures

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to monitor the effects of the measures recently taken to reduce speeding through Gateside, Fife.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 11 July 1991]:* Accident prevention measures at Gateside were completed within the last month. Speed checks were carried out prior to commencement of the works and further checks are currently taking place. In addition, as before and after accident analysis will be carried out 6 months following the implementation of the works.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will bring forward proposals to permit local authorities to reduce speed limits in the neighbourhood of schools.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 11 July 1991]:* The Road Traffic Bill contains provisions to allow the introduction of variable speed limits in appropriate circumstances. This would enable, for example, an authority to reduce the speed limits outside a school during those times when children are arriving and leaving. In addition, a consultation paper was issued by the Scottish Office earlier this year about the introduction of 20 mph speed limit zones. It is envisaged that 20 mph zones would be most effective in residential areas and in the vicinity of schools. Guidance on both these initiatives will be given to local authorities as soon as practicable.

Cupar Bypass

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the Cupar bypass.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 11 July 1991]:* We have no proposals at present for a bypass for Cupar. Fife regional council has conducted a traffic study of the town and its findings are expected this autumn. A traffic management scheme providing medium term measures to reduce the traffic problems in Cupar is currently being prepared by Fife regional council.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Departmental Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the maximum salary payable including the performance related element to the chief executive of each agency in his Department; and what is the length of time of each chief executive's contract.

Miss Widdecombe: Taking each agency in turn, the details are as follows:

Resettlement Agency

Salary, exclusive of London weighting, £33,970. An annual pay review is due in August 1991, details of which are not yet available. Additionally, if all targets are met, a bonus of up to 7·5 per cent. of salary at end of year two, and up to 10 per cent. of salary at end of year three. There is no fixed length of contract.

Information Technology Services Agency

Salary, exclusive of London allowance, £48,380—rising to £49,300 in December 1991. Additionally, if all targets are met, an annual bonus of up to 12·5 per cent. of salary. The length of contract is three years from 2 April 1990.

Benefits Agency

Salary £75,250 rising to £76,650 from December 1991. Additionally, if all targets are met, an annual bonus of up to 12·5 per cent. of salary. The length of contract is five years from 1 April 1991.

Contributions Agency

Salary £44,996. An annual pay review is due in August 1991, details of which are not yet available. Additionally, if all targets are met, an annual bonus of up to 12·5 per cent. of salary. The length of contract is three years from 1 April 1991.

Pension Age

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) pursuant to his answer of 2 June, *Official Report*, column *112*, to the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) what assessment he has made of the implications for the state earnings-related pension of the Barber judgment in the European Court of Justice;

(2) whether he will establish a consultative committee to consider equalisation of the state pension age.

Miss Widdecombe: The Barber judgment concerned an occupational pension scheme, but I refer the hon. Member to the statement made by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, on 26 June at columns 997-1006.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what response he has made to the House of Lords European Communities Select Committee inquiry of Session 1988-89 into equal treatment in pensions and other benefits.

Miss Widdecombe: Our response is set out in the reply to the 10th report from the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities Session 1988-89 on equal treatment for men and women in pensions and other benefits (Cm. 1038).

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what progress has been made towards equalisation of the state pension age.

Mr. Widdecombe: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement made by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, on 26 June at columns 997-1006.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what studies he has commissioned from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys into equalisation of the state pension age; and when he expects the results to be available.

Miss Widdecombe: No studies have been commissioned from OPCS which deal specifically with the equalisation of state pension age, but research has been commissioned into retirement behaviour. The results of this research are due to be published later this year and will provide information in areas relevant to the equalisation of state pension age, such as trends in retirement age and the reasons for early and late retirement.

Housing Benefit

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he has any plans to review the procedure whereby housing benefit paid on behalf of tenants directly to landlords for accommodation provided can be subject to clawback at a later date when the tenant has ceased to be eligible to receive housing benefit but has not so informed the landlord;

(2) if he has any proposals to review the application of regulations 99 to 102 of the Housing Benefit (General) Regulations 1987.

Miss Widdecombe: Regulations 97 to 105 of the Housing Benefit (General) Regulations 1987 are currently under review. The need for amendments will be considered carefully in the light of the findings.

Income Support

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will modify income support regulations to enable the calculation of housing costs to take into account compulsory mortgage-related insurance premiums.

Miss Widdecombe: We have no plans to do so. Under present rules an amount may be included in the assessment of income support for mortgage interest payments, but no help is given with capital repayments or with the premiums on endowment policies taken out to repay the capital loan. This reflects our policy of helping people keep the roof over their heads without the benefit system being used to acquire a capital asset. No specific amounts are included for house insurance, but income support personal allowances are intended to cover normal day-to-day living expenses such as these.

Jobs (Travel and Subsistence)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, what assistance is available from (i) the Social Fund and (ii) other public sources for those on income support who, after securing employment in other areas of the country, require temporary financial assistance for *(a)* travelling expenses to reach their place of work and *(b)* subsistence pending their initial pay packet.

Mr. Scott: A new employee may be able to obtain help from his employer with expenses on taking up employment.

Work-related expenses are outside the scope of the social fund. However, a crisis loan may be considered for living expenses to tide a person over until he receives his first wage, where there are no other means of preventing serious risk to health or safety.

Residential Care Allowance

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to make adequate provision for those who qualify for residential care allowance-mental handicap rates after the introduction of the care in the community changes planned for 1993.

Miss Widdecombe: We intend to preserve the present scheme of special income support limits for existing claimants who are resident in most homes when the new funding structure is introduced on 1 April 1993. As now, under those arrangements there will be limits to the level of benefit available for different types of care. Subject to the normal qualifying conditions, those whose fees are at or below the limit will have their charges met in full. Existing arrangements for reviewing the level of the limits will continue.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate how much it would increase public expenditure totals in his Department's budgets for expenditure in the year 1992-93 if he were to increase the residential care allowance mental handicap levels of income support available to people with learning difficulties in residential homes by 15 per cent.

Miss Widdecombe: Expenditure would depend on the number of claimants in receipt of the mental handicap limit and the level of that limit at the time. Information about expected numbers of income support customers as well as expenditure, is published in the public expenditure White Paper (Cm 1014). It has never been the practice to make separate forecasts about any individual group within the planning totals.

War Injuries

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will take steps to change the existing legislation governing eligibility for pension as a result of war injuries to enable discretion to be exercised, in exceptional circumstances, where former service men or service women who were wounded on active service make late claims, to allow those claims to be backdated to the date of their original injury, where the circumstances suggest that they were not made aware of their entitlement to claim when their injuries were sustained.

Miss Widdecombe: Awards of war disablement pensions are normally paid from the date of claim. Where a person is invalided from the armed forces a claim for war pension is automatically instituted. There is no onus on the individual to claim in such circumstances. When people are otherwise discharged from the armed forces the onus is on them to claim any war pension to which they think they may be entitled; on discharge they are provided as a matter of routine with information about claiming a war pension.

War pensions legislation already provides discretion to award war pension from a date earlier than the date of claim, where the circumstances of the case are considered to be exceptional. Awards may not, in any case, be paid before a service man or service woman leaves the armed forces.

Social Fund

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications for loans from the social fund have been *(a)* made and *(b)* granted on Merseyside to (1) individuals on state income support, (2) individuals in receipt of disability allowance, (3) individuals who receive a pension higher than the state income support level and (4) others for each of the last three years of operation of the fund.

Mr. Scott: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Income Support

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what factors contributed to the change in the number of people receiving income support in comparison with supplementary benefit.

Mr. Scott: Many factors will have contributed to the change but paragraph 26 of the departmental report (Cm 1514), a copy of which is available in the Library, identifies the fall in unemployment as the main reason. This confirms the view expressed at the time of the reforms, that the rate of unemployment was a key factor.

ENERGY

United Kingdom Continental Shelf

4. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest estimate of the potential level of capital funding on the United Kingdom continental shelf over the next two years.

Mr. Moynihan: A recent report of company intentions for capital investment showed that expenditure could increase by a third to £4·7 billion in 1991 and £4·8 billion in 1992.

Power Lines

6. **Mr. Ted Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his policy on routing overhead power lines underground in environmentally attractive areas.

Mr. Wakeham: It is the Government's policy that the routing of overhead power lines should have full regard to the preservation of amenity. That is why the Electricity Act 1989 places environmental duties on those responsible for proposing and building overhead lines and on myself in considering applications for consent.

British Coal (Productivity)

17. **Mr. Lester:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the change in British Coal's productivity since 1979.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: From 1978-79 to 1990-91 British Coal's output per manshift increased by over 109 per cent.

27. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next intends to meet the chairman of British coal to discuss productivity in British Coal.

Mr. Wakeham: I meet the chairman of British Coal on a regular basis to discuss all aspects of the coal industry, including the remarkable improvements they have been making in productivity.

Oil and Gas Exploration

18. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his oral answer to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow on Monday 17 June, *Official Report*, column 9, how many production licences were awarded in *(a)* 1990 and *(b)* in the current year so far; and what is the number currently being negotiated.

Mr. Moynihan: As I indicated to the hon. Member in my answer of 17 June, important safety considerations are considered not at the initial licence award round but at the development project, annex B, or production plans stage of the licence.

In 1990, 18 development projects were approved by my Department; 12 projects have been approved up to the middle of June this year. Several other projects are presently under consideration.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list all blocks of the United Kingdom continental shelf which have held a presumption against oil and gas licensing on the grounds of fisheries interests.

Mr. Moynihan: Before deciding which blocks to offer in offshore licensing rounds, my Department consults the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department and national fishermen's organisations for advice on fishing matters.

In recent rounds, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department and its predecessor, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland, have advised that certain blocks in the following quadrants should not be offered for licensing:

3, 8, 9, 11 to 14, 17, 18, 20 to 22, 30, 34, 40 to 43, 48, 52, 97, 99, 100, 107, 109, 110, 112 to 114.

It would not be appropriate to list the individual blocks concerned as fish stocks and fishing patterns vary over time within these areas. Blocks in these and other quandrants have been licensed, by agreement with the relevant fisheries Department, with conditions and restrictions on oil and gas activity to safeguard fishing interests.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list all blocks within the United Kingdom continental shelf not submitted for licensing for oil and gas exploration on grounds *(a)* of interference with shipping and navigation, *(b)* of nature conservation and *(c)* other reasons.

Mr. Moynihan: We do not hold the information in the form requested. It is often the case, especially in areas close to the coast, that the concerns and priorities of differing interests are taken together in considering the exclusion of a block or blocks from licensing rounds.

Electricity Generation

19. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the development of new generating capacity outside the duopoly.

Mr. Wakeham: The Government welcome the proposed entry of the independents into the new competitive electricity market. The introduction of competition will increase the pressure on those in the market place, both to produce electricity more efficiently, and to serve their customers to the best of their ability.

Mining Industry

20. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will discuss the funding structure and organisation of the mining industry with the chairman of British Coal.

Mr. Wakeham: I meet the chairman of British Coal on a regular basis to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

Wind Energy

21. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the average annual level of investment into the research and development of wind energy *(a)* between 1974 and 1979 and *(b)* since 1979.

Mr. Moynihan: Prior to 1979-80 Government expenditure on wind research and development was directed at a few low-cost preliminary studies, with total expenditure amounting to about £146,000. In addition there was expenditure on IEA research and development

projects, including renewables, amounting to about £4 million. Since 1979 average annual expenditure on the wind programme has been £3·2 million.

Sizewell B

22. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the progress of the construction of the Sizewell B nuclear power station.

Mr. Wakeham: I am pleased to say that progress of the construction of the Sizewell B project is now about eight months ahead of the committed 72-month programme and remains within the estimated cost to completion.

Staff Relocation

23. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what stage his consideration of the relocation of Department of Energy staff out of London has reached; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: My Department is currently carrying out its annual relocation review as required by the public expenditure survey committee. The results will be available next year.

Poole Bay (Oil Reserves)

25. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the value of the oil reserves known to be under Poole bay.

Mr. Moynihan: The operator estimates that recoverable reserves within the Poole bay licence are some 100 million barrels of oil. At current prices this would be worth around £1·2 billion.

Coal Imports

26. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions he has had with National Power and PowerGen concerning coal imports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: I have discussions from time to time with National Power and with PowerGen on all issues of mutual interest. Decisions on coal purchases, whether from United Kingdom or imported sources, are a matter for the parties involved.

Offshore Oil and Gas

28. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many jobs in Scotland are supported, both directly and indirectly, by the offshore oil and gas industries.

Mr. Moynihan: Direct and indirect employment in 1990 by the offshore oil and gas industry in Scotland was 97,400.

Energy Consumption

29. **Dame Peggy Fenner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the annual average consumption of energy in the United Kingdom *(a)* between 1974 and 1979 and *(b)* since 1979.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The annual average total final consumption of energy in the United Kingdom on a heat supplied basis was:

(a) 58·5 billion therms between 1974 and 1979
(b) 56·8 billion therms between 1980 and 1990

At the same time the United Kingdom's gross domestic product rose from an annual average level for the years 1974 to 1979 of £267 billion to an annual average level of £311 billion for the years 1980 to 1990. This combination reflects a substantial and welcome improvement in energy efficiency between the two periods.

Kuwait (Oil Well Fires)

30. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on action taken to extinguish oil well fires in Kuwait as a result of his visit.

Mr. Wakeham: My visit to Kuwait reflected the Government's deep concern regarding the situation and demonstrated out willingness to support the continuing efforts of United Kingdom industry to become involved in the fire fighting process.

Those efforts continue.

Fuel Efficiency

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what further proposals he has to encourage efficient fuel use in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The home energy efficiency scheme was started earlier this year. A domestic publicity campaign will be launched with the Department of the Environment in the autumn; energy efficiency advisory services are being introduced by the gas and electricity companies; some 80 Government seminars have been organised to promote energy efficiency throughout the public and private sectors.

Oil and Ethylene Pipelines

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many applications he has received to lay oil and ethylene pipelines in England and Wales in the last 12 months; how many have been granted; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Only one application for an oil pipeline has been received by my Department in the last 12 months. One application for an ethylene pipeline was granted in the same period.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what consultations he had with the Securities and Association concerning his delayed settlement of commission owing to Diameter Stockbrokers for services rendered in the course of the flotation of the electricity supply industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My Department's independent auditors, Touche Ross, had written to Diameter seeking information to support Diameter's claim for selling commission in respect of the regional electricity companies' flotation. An official of the Securities and Futures Association then subsequently contacted my Department drawing attention to Diameter's financial position: following further urgent discussions with Diameter, a payment was made available to them the same day.

Electricity Use

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what figures he has for the consumption of electricity in *(a)* March 1991 and *(b)* the most recent month for which information is available.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Data on the consumption of electricity are collected on a quarterly basis only. The latest figure available for total electricity consumption from the public supply system in the United Kingdom is 78·78 TWh for the first quarter of 1991.

Figures for the amounts of electricity available for consumption through the public supply system, that is, before excluding transmission, distribution and other losses, are collected monthly. Figures for March 1991 and May 1991, the most recent month for which information is available, are as follows:

	TWh
March 1991[1]	31·13
May 1991[1]	21·91

[1] It should be noted that the figure for March covers a five-week period, whereas the figure for May covers a four-week period.

These data are routinely published in the monthly statistical bulletin *Energy Trends*, copies of which are available in the Library. The July edition, containing the above data, will be published on Thursday 25 July.

Coal Privatisation

Mr. Eadie: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many meetings he has had with the advisers he appointed to advise him on the privatisation of the coal industry; and what was the involvement of the chairman of British Coal at such meetings.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I and my right hon. Friend are having regular meetings with my advisers on coal privatisation, and also with the chairman of British Coal.

DEFENCE

RAF Stornoway

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further new military facilities are planned at RAF Stornoway; and what is the timescale for their construction.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Future military construction at RAF Stornoway is under consideration in the light of discussions with NATO authorities.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what alterations have been made in the past two years to the plans for future use of RAF Stornoway for military exercises.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Exercise plans for RAF Stornoway are formulated each year, but the only change to the general pattern over the last two years has been a decision not to activate the airfield for military flying earlier this year in the light of our commitments in the Gulf.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what military exercises are planned for RAF Stornaway during the remainder of 1991.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Routine air defence exercises are planned to take place at RAF Stornoway from 9 to 20 September and from 10 to 23 November 1991.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his assessment of the effect of cancellation of the hardened aircraft shelters project on the capability of RAF Stornoway to support *(a)* realistic peacetime training and *(b)* war operations.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 20 June 1991, at column *318*. No decision has been taken to cancel this project.

Artillery Range, Hebrides

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the reasons for the recent period of inactivity at the Royal Artillery range, Hebrides.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The recent short-term reduction in live fire activities at the Royal Artillery range, Hebrides was due to the rescheduling of training periods as a result of the Gulf conflict. The range used this time to complete maintenance projects.

Civilian Guard Force

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the planned establishment of the proposed Ministry of Defence guard force;

(2) what is the estimated annual equipment budget for the proposed Ministry of Defence civilian guard force; and from which subheads of which votes these funds will be taken;

(3) what is the estimated total annual running cost of the proposed Ministry of Defence civilian guard force; and from which subheads of which votes these funds will be taken;

(4) what is the estimated annual personnel cost of the proposed Ministry of Defence civilian guard force; and from which subheads of which votes these funds will be taken.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when his Department's new guard force is planned to come into operation; how many staff will be employed; on what terms and conditions; and at what estimated annual cost.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As I announced on 26 April 1991, at columns *572-73*, in an answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates), the new Ministry of Defence guard service will come into being on 1 April 1992.

Its initial strength will be drawn from some 3,000 civilian personnel in existing patrolling, watching and similar grades including the present Ministry of Defence headquarters guard force. The ultimate size of the service is uncertain at present because account will need to be taken of the consequences of "Options for Change" on the number of locations to be guarded in the longer term.

The terms and conditions on which the guard service personnel will serve are currently being negotiated. It is estimated that the annual running costs of the new service, predominantly personnel, but including clothing and some equipment, will be about £37·5 million but there are compensating savings notably in personnel costs of existing staff who will be assimilated into it.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated cost of setting up the proposed Ministry of Defence civilian guard force; and from which subheads of which votes these funds will be taken.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The estimated cost of setting up the MOD guard service is £2·5 million in the current financial year. This falls within vote sub heads 1A1, 1B1, 1C1, 1D1, 1D2, 1E1, 1G1, 1L2 and 1L9 and relates to the formation of an implementation team to plan the adminstration and training of the service, and to the provision of clothing and equipment in readiness for its introduction on 1 April 1992.

Salisbury Plain

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much has been paid in each of the last 10 years in compensation for damage caused by his Department's activities to property on, or in the vicinity of, Salisbury plain.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The following amounts of compensation have been paid in each of the last 10 years by the MOD in respect of claims arising from training and manoeuvre activities in the vicinity of Salisbury Plain. Information relating to any other type of claim could not be provided without incurring disproportionate cost.

Years	£
1981-82	4,847
1982-83	2,121
1983-84	7,645
1984-85	8,837
1985-86	32,887
1986-87	6,504
1987-88	4,278
1988-89	8,215
1989-90	5,642
1990-91	2,223

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what compensation has been paid to members of the public for damage caused to property by the firing of AS90 guns on Salisbury plain.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Only one incident giving rise to claims can be specifically traced to the firing of the AS90 gun on Salisbury plain. That incident gave rise to two claims. One has been settled for £150·65; the other is still being negotiated.

RAF Waddington

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what planning applications have been placed with the relevant local authority for new construction at RAF Waddington in the last five years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In the past five years 23 planning applications have been submitted to the local authority, North Kesteven district council, in respect of new construction at RAF Waddington. These are listed in the table.

August 1986	Erection of storage building
October 1986	Construction of fuel store
October 1986	Siting of portacabins
November 1987	Erection of hangar
February 1988	Extension to existing building
April 1988	Erection of radar building
November 1988	Erection of 16·3 metre high mast
January 1989	Erection of safety equipment store
November 1989	Construction of new shower/toilet block
November 1989	Construction of new office building
November 1989	Modifications to barrack block
December 1989	Extension to car park and installation of improved lighting
January 1990	Refurbishing of officers mess
May 1990	Installation of new fuel store
September 1990	Construction of office building
October 1990	Use of land for storage of servicemen's private caravans
November 1990	Erection of new security fences/gates
January 1991	Construction of new telecommunications building
April 1991	Erection of traffic control barriers and guard huts
May 1991	Construction of pump house
May 1991	Erection of security fence
July 1991	Construction of new shower block
July 1991	Erection of security fence

Main Battle Tank

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the total cost to date of the studies carried out by his Department to evaluate the tanks in competition for the replacement of the Chieftain tank; and from which subheads of which votes these funds will be taken.

Mr. Alan Clark: This information could be assembled only at disproportionate cost.

Accommodation

Sir Alan Glyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what guidelines his Department has issued to local authorities on the priority to be given to rehousing service men after leaving the services, particularly for those who are on the waiting lists of garrison towns.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will answer shortly.

London Custody Service

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why he has decided to replace guards provided by the London custody service with his Department's own guard force at London buildings.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The MOD has reduced its use of the London custody service because recruitment in its own guard force has improved and we prefer those guarding our buildings to be members of MOD and trained and equipped to our standards. There are also savings to the defence budget.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the cost to his Department of security guards provided by the London custody service during each of the past five years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The cost to the Ministry of Defence of security guards provided by the London custody service during each of the past five years has been as follows:

	£
1986-87	3,607,597·66
1987-88	4,529,811·46
1988-89	4,841,283·26

	£
1989-90	5,205,886·35
1990-91	5,873,158·60

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those Ministry of Defence buildings at which it is planned to replace the London custody service by his Department's new guard force indicating the starting date for each change, and the numbers to be employed at each building.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: London custody service guards were replaced by MOD guards at 3-5 Great Scotland Yard in 1990. Those at Northumberland house and the Old Admiralty buildings will be replaced on 1 October. For security reasons, it would not be appropriate to reveal the numbers of guards at each location.

Low Flying

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number of low-flying sorties over the United Kingdom in each month from January to date.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: For the number of low-flying sorties carried out in January 1991 I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 8 March 1991 at column *332*. The number of low-flying sorties carried out in the United Kingdom in each month from February to May, the most recent date for which figures are available, is as follows:

	Number
February	7,471
March	10,814
April	12,300
May	12,556

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all past, current and planned RAF participation in low-flying training exercises overseas during 1991, specifying the number and types of aircraft in each case.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: To date in 1991, the RAF has participated in the following overseas exercises involving an element of low-flying training:

Exercise	*Country*	*Dates*	*Number and type of aircraft*
Snow Falcon 91-1	Norway	2-16 March	6 Harrier GR5
Ager	Norway	11-15 March	4 Tornado GR1
Red Flag 91-X	USA	27 March-8 June	10 Harrier GR5
Blue Moon	Denmark	2-3 April	4 Jaguar
			4 Tornado GR1
Ardent Ground	Portugal	29 April-10 May	6 Jaguar GR1a
Snow Goose 91-2	Norway	1-14 June	6 Jaguar GR1a
Brown Falcon	Denmark	12 June	8 Jaguar
			8 Harrier GR5

Exercises in the central region involving RAF participation are not included.

As in previous years, further overseas exercises are planned, but it would be premature to give detailed information at this stage.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many applications for low-flying avoidance area status have been received by his Department since 1 January.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I regret that such applications are not recorded separately and it would require disproportionate effort to identify them. Since 1 January, however, some 250 temporary or permanent avoidance arrangements have been made.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many complaints about low-flying in each of the last five years came from addresses located within *(a)* low flying area 16, *(b)* low flying area 13, *(c)* low flying area 17 and *(d)* low flying area 12.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The numbers of inquiries or complaints about low-flying training which my Department received in each of the last five years from addresses located within low flying areas 12, 13, and 16 and 17 were as follows:

	Low flying area			
Year	*12*	*13*	*16*	*17*
1986	132	23	213	445
1987	117	11	304	400
1988	136	21	341	449
1989	238	32	592	836
1990	270	42	498	754

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many complaints about low flying were received in each month since March 1990 from addresses in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* England and *(c)* Wales.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The numbers of inquiries or complaints relating to military low flying training which my Department received over the period 1 March 1990 to 30 June 1991 from addresses in England, Scotland and Wales were as follows:

Month	*England*	*Scotland*	*Wales*
1990			
March	366	96	84
April	303	67	39
May	546	80	119
June	477	118	147
July	930	107	226
August	775	143	192
September	344	71	35
October	414	70	107
November	206	106	19
December	98	40	38
1991			
January	74	17	15
February	28	8	11
March	96	30	25
April	228	38	49
May	463	72	84
June	274	52	95

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number of low-flying movements authorised at less than 250 ft in each of the tactical training areas in each month from January 1991 to date.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The numbers of movements authorised for flying below 250 ft within the three United Kingdom tactical training areas between January and May 1991, the most recent date for which figures are available, were as follows:

	Northern Scotland	Central Wales	Borders
January	111	39	180
February	107	12	127
March	12	2	324
April	7	0	0
May	45	0	8

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date notification of the disestablishment of the Humberside low-flying transit area was sent by his Department to *(a)* hon. Members and *(b)* local authorities in the area; and if he will list the parliamentary constituencies and local authorities concerned.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: As the hon. Member will be aware, when significant changes are made to the United Kingdom low flying system, hon. Members whose constituencies are affected are given appropriate notification.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to measure the noise levels generated by aircraft using afterburners at low level.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The report on the "External Noise of MoD Military Aircraft", a copy of which was placed in the Library of the House in November 1987, contains some such data but there are no plans for further work. As set out in my predecessor's answer of 12 June 1990, at column *140*, to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), aircraft are instructed to use reheat as little as possible overland at low level and use would be unusual unless required for flight safety reasons.

Tornado Crews

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the minimum altitude authorised for peacetime training flying by RAF Tornado GR1 crews from Muharraq, Bahrain, in the period following the Gulf war.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The normal minimum authorised altitude for flying training by RAF Tornado GR1 crews based at Muharraq following the Gulf conflict was 250 ft. A small number of sorties were, however, authorised down to 100 ft to enable designated aircrews to maintain currency in operational low-flying techniques.

Aircraft Noise

67. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to make changes to his policy of purchasing any dwelling in the vicinity of a military airfield found to be subjected to noise levels greater than 125 dB(A) from military aircraft.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is planned to review the MOD's aircraft noise compensation policy in relation to military airfields once the current programme of noise surveys has been completed. The review should take place next year and will take into account the practical effects of applying existing policy since the programme began in 1985.

Tornado Exercise

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the title of the exercise in which RAF Tornado GR1 participated in Alaska in June 1990; how many aircraft took part; and if he will provide details of any subsequent or planned RAF participation in exercises in Alaska.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Four Tornado GR1 aircraft deployed to Alaska in June 1990 for a training exercise, titled Distant Frontier. The possibility of a further such exercise is under discussion with the United States authorities.

Tornados (Goose Bay)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many RAF Tornado GR1s are currently deployed to Goose bay, Canada; on what date they deployed there; and what is their expected date of departure from Goose bay.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: None.

Army Manpower

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the nominal manpower establishment, *(b)* the actual manpower strength, *(c)* the percentage of nominal establishment achieved, *(d)* the number of recruits becoming available each year and *(e)* the rate of retention of recruits and trained soldiers, for each infantry regiment in the British Army for which such information is not classified.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I will write to the hon. Member.

"Options for Change"

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans which are currently being made by his Department to assist in meeting demand for housing for personnel and their families who cease to be entitled to his Department's housing as a result of redundancy under "Options for Change".

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The extent to which redundancies may be necessary as a result of the force reductions announced in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates" on 9 July, is still being examined. The housing implications of any redundancy programme will be taken into account as part of this work.

HMS Endurance

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 8 July, *Official Report*, columns *283-84*, to the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) if he will announce the result of the structural survey on HMS Endurance before Parliament adjourns for the summer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The survey results should be available in the near future. When the work is complete we will have to assess its conclusions before reaching any decisions. We will make an announcement on the future of Endurance as soon as we are in a position to do so.

HMS Illustrious

Mr. Robert Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the contract between Devonport Management Ltd. and his Department for the refit of HMS Illustrious is to be signed; and when work will begin.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: A final decision is to be taken as soon as possible.

Gurkhas

Mr. John Browne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date his highness the Sultan of Brunei signified his agreement to meet the costs of two Gurkha battalions; and for how long the agreement will apply.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A Gurkha battalion has been stationed in Brunei since independence in 1983 under an agreement whereby the full cost of the battalion is met by the Government of Brunei. This agreement is subject to periodic review and renewal.

Foot Guards

Mr. John Browne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his estimate of the annual cost of maintaining a Foot Guards battalion in London.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) on 11 July, *Official Report*, column *487*.

Infantry Manpower

Mr. John Browne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list, by individual battalion tasks, the present infantry deployments of the British Infantry, including Gurkhas, and the changes in tasks he envisages following his proposed cuts in infantry manpower.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave him on 11 July, *Official Report* column *492*) and to that given to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) also on 11 July, *Official Report*, column *487-89*.

Royal Fleet Auxiliary

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the cost effectiveness of the present arrangements for running the Royal Fleet Auxiliary; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Like all aspects of MOD business, the cost effectiveness of the RFA is kept under review. The RFA continues to provide afloat support to the Royal Navy effectively and efficiently.

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what role was played by the Royal Fleet Auxiliary in the build up of forces during Operation Granby, during hostilities in the Gulf region, and in related operations such as the Kurdish relief efforts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to chapters 1 and 2 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1991", volume 1, Cm. 1559-1.

Eleven Royal Fleet Auxiliary ships were tasked on Operation Granby in a variety of roles, including supply, medical support and heavy engineering. The ships involved were:

Orangeleaf—which was already supporting the Armilla patrol and was subsequently relieved by Bayleaf
Onia
Argus
Diligence
Resource
Fort Grange
Sir Galahad
Sir Percivale
Sir Tristram
Sir Bedivere

The outstanding support provided by the RFA was instrumental in the success of Operation Granby.

RFA Resource subsequently made a significant contribution to the Kurdish relief effort and Fort Grange has provided support in the Bangladesh relief operation.

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to change the management or manning of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary; whether it is his intention to retain the Royal Fleet Auxiliary as an essentially civilian part of the British merchant navy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no plans to change the current manning of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary by Merchant Navy personnel. Future management arrangements are under review as part of the MOD's continuing efforts to maximise efficiency. No decisions have been taken, and any proposals affecting staff will be the subject of consultation with the trade unions in the usual way.

Rail Vehicles and Connections

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many *(a)* electric locomotives and *(b)* diesel locomotives were owned by his Department in (i) 1979, (ii) 1985 and (iii) the latest year for which figures are available;

(2) how many rail freight vehicles were owned by his Department in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1985 and *(c)* the latest year for which figures are available;

(3) how many of his Department's depots were provided with rail connections in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1985 and *(c)* the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The figures are as follows:

	1979	*1985*	*1991*
Electric locomotives	3	3	3
Diesel locomotives	176	139	106
Rail freight vehicles	142	130	130
MOD depots with rail connections	38	38	21

Departmental Freight

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of his Department's freight within Great Britain is consigned by *(a)* road and *(b)* rail.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The vast majority of the Department's freight is consigned by road. A detailed breakdown of the proportions of freight moved by road and rail could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Recruitment

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the recruitment figures for each of the regiments within the Prince of Wales division for each of the last five years; and whether any regiments have not done any recruitment in this period because they were already at full complement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the table. None of the regiments in the Prince of

Wales Division were fully manned during this period. However, the allocation of recruits to regiments is influenced by the overall manning priorities of both the whole Army and the infantry.

Prince of Wales's Division officer and soldier[1] intakes to trained strength 1987 to 1991

	1987		1988		1989		1990[3]		1991[3,4]	
	Officers	*Soldiers[2]*	*Officers*	*Soldiers*	*Officers*	*Soldiers*	*Officers*	*Soldiers*	*Officers*	*Soldiers*
The Devonshire and Dorset Regiment	6	—	4	84	1	61	5	70	5	24
The 22nd (Cheshire) Regiment	6	—	2	58	3	85	5	103	1	48
The Royal Welch Fusiliers	4	—	7	65	5	66	5	56	3	37
Royal Regiment of Wales	8	—	4	43	10	72	8	100	4	43
The Gloucestershire Regiment	3	—	3	64	4	51	5	39	7	34
The Worcestershire & Sherwood Foresters	7	—	3	85	2	74	4	80	3	32
The Royal Hampshires	1	—	1	64	6	45	5	42	4	23
The Staffordshire Regiment	3	—	7	90	8	62	—	83	2	41
Duke of Edinburgh's Royal Regiment	7	—	8	63	5	41	6	36	—	15

[1] Soldier figures include apprentices and young soldiers and juniors.
[2] Soldier figures unavailable for 1987.
[3] Recruiting capped for officers and soldiers.
[4] Latest figures to 30 June 1991.

Royal Navy Rugby Union

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the full cost to his Department of the Royal Navy rugby union and how many full or part-time posts there are within the Royal Navy rugby union.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The cost to the Department of the Royal Navy rugby union is in the region of £30,000 per annum. A retired officer acts as part-time secretary. He is assisted part-time by a service chief petty officer.

Rehousing

Sir Alan Glyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what guidelines his Department has issued to local authorities on the priority to be given to rehouse service men after leaving the services, particularly for those who are on the waiting lists of garrison towns.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 9 July 1991]:* I have been asked to reply since my Department is responsible for issuing guidance to local housing authorities about the treatment of personnel leaving the services. It is for the local authority to decide what priority to give to rehousing service personnel, having considered the circumstances of each individual case. We advise local housing and service authorities to offer appropriate advice and assistance to service personnel well in advance of discharge. Local authorities are asked to act upon a certificate of impending homelessness issued by a senior officer up to six months before discharge.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 16th July 1991.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Value Added Tax

Mr. Lord: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, following the meeting of European Community Finance Ministers on 24 June, it remains his intention to continue the existing VAT zero rating of printed matter.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Economic and Finance Council has agreed that, for a transitional period to December 1996, member states that currently apply zero rates of VAT will be able to retain them provided they are in accordance with current Community law. United Kingdom zero rates are therefore safeguarded.

While this agreement is without prejudice to what happens after the transitional period, the Government have always stressed the importance of the existing United Kingdom zero rates and will continue to oppose any proposals which would not allow for the permanent retention of our ability to apply them.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the public expenditure in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, respectively, for each year since 1985.

Mr. Mellor: Data on identifiable general Government expenditure in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in the years 1985-86 to 1989-90 are given in table 2.7 of the "Statistical Supplement to the 1990 Autumn Statement"—Cm. 1520.

Resources (Allocation)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what basis it is determined what amount of new money should be allocated to Wales when new money is made available for Government expenditure in England; and if he will make a statement on the policy for allocation of such resources which has been followed by the Government over the past five years.

Mr. Mellor: Provision for central Government expenditure in Wales falls into two main categories: programmes within the so-called Welsh block and those outside it. Provision for programmes outside the block —agriculture, fisheries and food, industry and employment—is a matter for negotiation in the public expenditure survey in the normal way. Provision for programmes within the block is largely determined by the application of a formula to the increments accruing to comparable programmes in England. Decisions about the allocation of resources within the overall total are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Building Societies

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much of the tax raised by the transitional regulations on building societies appears in each of the financial years in the published Inland Revenue statistics.

Mr. Maples: The following amounts were included in published Inland Revenue statistics. They do not reflect credit allowed under regulation 12.

	£ million
1986-87	79
1987-88	21
1988-89	1
1989-90	13

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will calculate for a building society starting business on 1 May 1982, paying or crediting interest in the period between 1 January and 5 April, up to April 1986, the total period of business, the total period on which interest would be taxed if clause 50 is enacted and the excess period of taxation.

Mr. Maples *[holding answer 1 July 1991]:* I am not aware of any building society starting business on 1 May 1982.

Inland Revenue (Nottingham Headquarters)

Mr. Soley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the revised cost estimates of the new Nottingham headquarters building for the Inland Revenue; and what are the anticipated annual savings to the Treasury.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 15 July 1991]:* The project to build a new Inland Revenue centre in Nottingham is currently being reappraised. Until a decision on the future of the project has been taken, revised cost estimates are not available.

Training

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will review the circumstances whereby payments made in respect of training supplied by a person who is not under direct contract with a training and enterprise council or local enterprise company are subject to value added tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 15 July 1991]:* I have no current plans to do so. Vocational training supplied by persons not contracted to training and enterprise councils or local enterprise companies is exempt if it is provided otherwise than for profit; otherwise it is chargeable with the standard rate of VAT. This has been the tax treatment of vocational training for many years.

CIVIL SERVICE

Occupational Health Service

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service (1) how many staff were in post on the date that the Occupational Health Service was established as an executive agency; and how many staff are in post now;

(2) if he will list those new facilities for staff including nurseries and health care schemes, which have been introduced in the Occupational Health Service since its establishment as an executive agency;

(3) what group bonus schemes are in operation in the Occupational Health Service; and if he will state the cash amount per person awarded in the last year for which figures are available, and the conditions attached to its award;

(4) if he will list the new forms of alternative working patterns introduced into the Occupational Health Service since its establishment as an executive agency; and a break-down by grade of the numbers of staff taking up each new working pattern;

(5) what appointments from the private sector have been made to the Occupational Health Service at grade 7 or above since its establishment as an agency; and if he will list the post, grade and maximum salary payable including any performance-related element.

Mr. Renton I am advised that the chief executive of the OHS has replied to the hon. Member.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will state the maximum salary payable to the chief executive of the Occupational Health Service, including any performance-related element, and the length of time of the chief executive's contract.

Mr. Renton: The chief executive of the Occupational Health Service is on the standard civil service grade 3 pay range and is eligible for the performance-related element appropriate to that grade. His contract is for three years.

Civil Service (Morale)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what further initiatives he is planning to raise morale in the civil service.

Mr. Renton: Our aim is to have an efficient, effective and well-motivated civil service. Managers in departments and agencies continually work to achieve this.

Civil Servants

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how many civil servants, at what grades and identified by United Kingdom departments, are *(a)* currently and *(b)* in each of the last three years on secondment to European Community institutions.

Mr. Renton: In April 1991, the latest comprehensive figures, 91 civil servants were on secondment. At 1 April 1990, the number was 52. Information on the two previous years is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The grades of the secondees were:

Grade	*Number*	
	April 1991	*April 1990*
5	10	4
6	6	3
7	40	19
SEO	9	9
HEO/HEO(D)	14	9
EO	3	—
Other (specialists etc)	9	8

The secondees came from the following departments

Department	*Number*	
	April 1991	*April 1990*
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food	9	7
Cabinet Office	3	2
Crown Prosecution Service	1	—
HM Customs and Excise	14	11
Ministry of Defence	1	—
Equal Opportunities Commission	1	—
Department of Education and Science	1	—
Department of Employment	10	3
Department of Environment	6	2
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	3	2
Department of Health	1	—
Northern Ireland Office	1	—
Northern Ireland Civil Service	8	2
Overseas Development Administration	2	1
Scottish Office	4	3
Department of Social Security	1	1
Department of Trade and Industry	18	14
Department of Transport	4	3
HM Treasury	1	—
Treasury Solicitor's Department	1	—
Welsh Office	1	1

WALES

A470

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many outstanding objections exist to the present line of the A470 Pentrebach to Cefn Coed, Merthyr Tydfil.

Sir Wyn Roberts: We have not yet published the draft orders that will invite objections to the proposals.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will list the outstanding statutory procedures and preparation required before the construction of the A470 Pentrebach to Cefn Coed can begin.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Line, side roads and compulsory purchase orders have to be drafted and published in the local press and London *Gazette*. Any objections received are considered and invariably on schemes of this size, a public inquiry held. Following receipt of the inspector's report, the orders may be made, at which stage, tenders for the construction works may be invited.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will outline the current timetable for the completion of procedures and preparation for the construction of the A470 Pentrebach to Cefn Coed, Merthyr Tydfil.

Sir Wyn Roberts: As indicated in the February 1991 supplement to "Roads in Wales", construction is scheduled to begin before April 1994, subject to completion of the statutory procedures and the availability of finance. We anticipate that draft orders will be published later this year.

Dentistry

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what criteria his Department specifies that community dental officers should employ to decide as to whom in the general dental service patients should be referred.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Criteria and arrangements for referrals by the community dental service are a matter for local determination.

Engineering Courses

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many students are enrolled on Business and Technical Education Council engineering courses for Methyr Tydfil and Rhymney.

Mr. David Hunt: In 1989-90 there were 23 students at Merthyr college and 78 students at Ystrad Mynach college following Business and Technical Education Council engineering courses.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the current waiting lists for admissions in each of the main specialties in West Glamorgan and Neath hospitals respectively; and what are the comparable figures in each of the last three years.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Information on the numbers of patients waiting for in-patient admissions in five specialities, general surgery, including urology, ear, nose and throat, traumatic and orthopaedic surgery, ophthalmology, and gynaecology, at Neath general hospital and West Glamorgan as a whole is published in the "Welsh Hospital Waiting List Bulletin" series. Neither of the other two hospitals in Neath, Cymla and Tonna, treat patients in these specialties. The bulletins are published twice a year giving figures as at March and September and copies are in the Library of the House.

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the current waiting lists for patients to have their final consultation with consultants in each of the main specialties in West Glamorgan and Neath hospitals respectively; and what are the comparable figures in each of the last three years.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: This information is not available centrally.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Poverty

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how his Department assesses which developing countries are using their resources most effectively to tackle poverty; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The relevant criteria are whether there is economic growth in which poor people are sharing and which is creating income and livelihoods for them; whether policies and institutions are conducive to private sector and individual development and to employment and self-employment for the poor. Recipient Government priorities, as demonstrated by the pattern and effectiveness of public expenditure, are also important. Expenditure on basic social and economic services should enable sustainable progress to be made in providing a wide spread of the population with access to basic schooling, health and family planning services, safe water and access roads.

Good Government

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how he intends to assess, when implementing his policies on good governance, whether developing countries have excessive military expenditure.

Mrs. Chalker: The Government will assess the level of military expenditure in individual developing countries in the context of their domestic and regional situations and taking account of their public expenditure and wider economic policies.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how his Department monitors the performance of countries on the criteria set out for good government.

Mrs. Chalker: The Government refer to a range of information on individual country policies and performance including reports from British diplomatic posts, reports by non-governmental organisations and assessments by international and regional organisations.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which countries have received more support from Her Majesty's Government because they have improved their performance on good government criteria.

Mrs. Chalker: Countries that are receiving increased support include some of the world's poorest countries in sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere, which are implementing reform programmes relating to economic policy and the organisation of government. We also intend to increase support to some of the emerging democracies of Latin America.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Telephone Message Services

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many prosecutions have been proceeded with by British Telecommunications, OFTEL or ICSTIS against operators of premium rate overtly sexual telephone message services.

Mr. Redwood: ICSTIS—the Independent Committee for the Supervision of Standards of Telephone Information Services—has taken effective action by closing down more than 350 premium rate telephone services so far this year because of their offensive nature. There have been no prosecutions against providers of such services so far.

Insolvency Service

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many reports and complaints of the unfit conduct of directors were submitted to the Insolvency Service in 1990; in how many cases legal proceedings were undertaken; and how many disqualification orders against directors were made in 1990.

Mr. Redwood: During 1990 the Insolvency Service received 4,062 reports alleging aspects of unfit conduct by

directors of insolvent companies. Proceedings were commenced in 488 cases, disqualification orders were made against 286 persons and at 31 December 1990 a total of 527 cases were waiting to be heard by the courts.

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in how many court cases the Insolvency Service has been successful.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 15 July 1991]:* I refer the hon. Member to my answer on 20 June, *Official Report*, columns *283-84*. I would point out however that the figure of 672 given in the second line of the second paragraph of that answer was wrongly printed and should have been 627.

In addition to the criminal matters detailed in that answer the Insolvency Service had, at 30 June 1991, obtained 1,009 disqualification orders against individual directors of failed companies.

Retail Grocers

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his answer of 4 July, *Official Report*, column *177*, what examination the Director General of Fair Trading has made in respect of companies in the retail grocery sector of *(a)* gross and net margins relative to overall retail margins in the United Kingdom and to retail grocery sector margins in other EC countries, *(b)* prices paid to suppliers, and *(c)* return on capital employed and on net assets, relative to the figures for the overall retail sector in the United Kingdom and for the retail grocery sector in other EC countries.

Mr. Redwood: In keeping the retail grocery sector under review the director general has regard to all the factors set out by the right hon. Member. He last examined the position earlier this year. As I said in my answer of 4 July, he has no evidence at present of abuse that would justify a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was learned from his Department's inquiry into Barlow Clowes about the use made by Barlow Clowes of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International and about the properties of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International's role in that case.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 15 July 1991]:* The Companies Act inspectors appointed to investigate the affairs and membership of James Ferguson Holdings plc and the affairs of Barlow Clowes Gilt Managers Limited have not yet submitted their report.

Accounting Practices

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has drawn to the attention of the Accountancy Standards Board the treatment of merger and acquisition costs in company accounts and the opportunities for comparison between company performance in this matter to be made by investors.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 15 July 1991]:* No. The treatments of the costs in acquisitions and mergers are covered by two exposure drafts issued by the Accounting Standards Committee in 1990. In due course, the Accounting Standards Board will be considering the exposure drafts and the comments received in formulating its own proposals. If the hon. Member has any observations to make, I suggest that he provides them to the board.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether the Director General of Fair Trading has completed his report on the application of bodies to become qualifying and supervisory bodies under part 1 of schedule 14 to the Companies Act 1989.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 15 July 1991]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) on 18 April, (*Official Report*, column *222*). I expect to receive shortly the director general's reports on the amendments which the applicants have made to their rules and guidance.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to introduce legislation to require auditors to declare in company reports to shareholders whether they also offer tax advice to the company.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 15 July 1991]:* None.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether it has been the practice of his Department to refer criticisms of auditors in his inspectors' reports to the Auditing Practices Committee and its successors.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 15 July 1991]:* No. The Auditing Practices Committee had no regulatory functions in respect of auditors whose conduct was criticised by inspectors, nor does its successor body the new Auditing Practices Board.

PRIME MINISTER

Citizens Charter

Mr. Burt: To ask the Prime Minister if he will ensure that the forthcoming White Paper on the citizens charter addresses the resource implications for advice agencies.

The Prime Minister: The White Paper on the citizens charter will be published later this summer, but I would remind my hon. Friend that the Government already provide considerable funding for advice agencies.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 16 July.

Mr. MacGregor: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is hosting the economic summit.

ENERGY

Electricity Industry

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the turnover, in the last year before privatisation, of each of the electricity distribution companies.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: This is a matter for the companies. However, this information is contained in the companies' annual reports and accounts for the year ending 31 March 1990, copies of which were placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what record he has of or what representations he received from the electricity supply and distribution industries, before their privatisation, about their inability to recruit the most suitable applicants for posts in top and middle management or skilled scientific and professional grades, owing to inadequate or non-competitive salaries.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: In the run-up to privatisation I received representations that, in order to recruit the most suitable applicants, certain appointments of PLC designate directors were necessary at salaries above the then existing scales in the industry, and a number of appointments were so made. The salary entitlements of executive directors were set out in the prospectuses.

North Sea

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will make a statement about North sea developments.

Mr. Wakeham: I have today agreed to make a royalty refund under certain circumstances to the Columba—Ninian B and D terraces—licensees, making the first use of my discretionary powers under section 41(3) of the Petroleum and Submarine Pipeline Act 1975 to facilitate North sea development.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Gabon

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the annual cost of maintaining a post in Gabon; and what is the estimated net savings of closing it.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The total cost of maintaining a post in Libreville, Gabon was approximately £420,000. Estimated annual net savings of closing the post are £330,000.

Flags (10 July)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the flags, and the countries they represent, which were flying on 10 July on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office building, Whitehall, in order from the left hand side of the Whitehall elevation.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The flags displayed on the FCO building in Whitehall on 10 July were national flags and the union flag. In order from the left hand side of the Whitehall elevations they were:

Australia, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Botswana, United Kingdom, Brunei, Canada, Cyprus, Dominica, United Kingdom, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guyana, India, Jamaica, Kenya.

TRANSPORT

Taxis (Rear Seat Belts)

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the European countries which require rear seat belts to be worn in taxis where these are fitted.

Mr. McLoughlin: Information is not available about seat belt wearing requirements in all European countries. Six of the twelve European Community countries require rear seat belts to be used, but no details are available of specific requirements for vehicles used as taxis.

Cross-channel Ferries

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many complaints he has received in the last six months of cross-channel ferries leaving port with their stern doors open.

Mr. McLoughlin: Only one complaint referring to cross-channel ferries leaving port with their stern doors open has been received in the past six months. That complaint referred to observations made prior to March 1987.

Motor Coaches

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will establish a system of monitoring the timetable of long distance motor coaches and their actual times of departure and arrival.

Mr. McLoughlin: No. Long-distance coach services were deregulated by the Transport Act 1980 and their times of arrival and departure are a matter for the operators concerned.

A167

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the number of *(a)* accidents, *(b)* fatalities and *(c)* injuries and the factors for the accidents, if known, on the A167 between the Cock o' the North roundabout and the Sniperley roundabout for each year since 1980; and the number of commercial and private vehicles involved.

Mr. Chope: The accident figures for the period 1980 to 1990 are listed in the table. It should be noted that traffic using this section of road has increased by over 30 per cent. during the period. The information requested about the factors leading to each individual accident can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Year	*Fatal*	*Serious*	*Slight*	*Total*	*Commercial vehicles*	*Private vehicles*
1980	—	4	—	4	—	5
1981	—	1	6	7	3	9
1982	1	1	5	7	1	13
1983	—	2	9	11	1	19
1984	—	3	9	12	6	19

Year	Fatal	Serious	Slight	Total	Commercial vehicles	Private vehicles
1985	—	2	7	9	6	15
1986	—	4	10	14	4	24
1987	—	1	4	5	2	9
1988	—	5	12	17	5	26
1989	—	1	12	13	1	27
1990	—	1	19	20	4	36
TOTAL	1	25	93	119	33	202

Traffic Accidents

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many traffic accidents for the last 12 months for which figures are available were tyre related; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The Department does not have comprehensive information on traffic accidents in relation to tyre defects. However, during the year 1988-89 the vehicle inspectorate investigated some 1,600 accidents. Tyre defects were considered to have contributed towards less than 1 per cent. of these accidents.

Red Routes

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his evaluation of the effect on traffic speeds, volume, road safety, pollution and small businesses, of the priority route scheme on the Archway road, Holloway road and Upper street since January; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him on 3 June 1991, *Official Report*, column *116*.

Dock Workers (Redundancy)

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the original estimate of contributions towards payments to former registered dock workers made redundant under the terms of the Dock Work Act 1989; what has been the total cost to date of such contributions; what is the current estimate of the final total cost; in how many cases payments of 100 per cent. have been made consequent upon a liquidation and at what cost; and what recoveries have been made from liquidators.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 15 July 1991]:* The explanatory and financial memorandum to the Bill which became the Dock Work Act 1989 estimated that the dockworkers' compensation scheme might cost £25 million over three years. It also made clear that no precise forecast could be given. To date, the actual cost to the Government has been £128 million. The final cost is not expected to exceed £141 million. In 18 cases, where employers were in liquidation or receivership, the Department has met the full cost of compensation at a total cost of £33 million, of which nearly £0·5 million has so far been recovered.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment Training

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what change in the number of Government-sponsored places there has been for retail, computer, office skills and information technology training in 1990-91 and 1991-92 in east London.

Mr. Jackson: Provision of training in east London is a matter for East London training and enterprise council. I understand that the number of training places available in these occupational areas is about the same in 1991-92 as the previous year.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what sums of money have been contributed from the European social fund towards employment training for the years 1989, 1990 and 1991; and what percentage contribution to the total costs of ET this represents for each year.

Mr. Forth: European social fund contributions towards ET were as follows:

	£ million
1989	81·7
1990	144·5
1991	161·48

Employment training expenditure is determined by financial year and a direct comparison is therefore not possible. The most recent figures are as follows:

	£ million
1989-90	1,097
1990-91	1,066
[1]1991-92	915

[1] Estimated

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what the average unit cost is for employment training per trainee/week.

Mr. Jackson: It is estimated that the overall gross Exchequer unit cost for employment training in Great Britain in 1991-92, including trainee allowances, will be some £119 per trainee per week.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what average unit cost is assumed for the additional employment training places which were announced on 19 June.

Mr. Jackson: Changes to training and enterprise council and local enterprise company business plans,

including payments per trainee week and per output, as a result of the additional £35 million made available for employment training on 19 June are currently the subject of renegotiation.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what consideration has been given to uprating employment training allowances in line with increases in the retail prices index; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The training allowance paid to non-employed employment training—ET—trainees is equivalent to their previous entitlement to benefit plus a training premium of £10. The benefit element of the ET trainee allowance is increased each year in line with increases in social security benefits which are linked to the retail prices and Rossi indices.

Training and enterprise councils and local enterprise companies are also responsible for other trainee allowances, such as travel, lodging and child care.

Since its beginning in September 1988, more than 1 million people have been trained on ET. The Government are satisfied that the allowances paid to trainees offer sufficient incentive for individuals to take up training.

Genetic Modification Sites

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the number of sites licensed under the procedures of the Advisory Committee on Genetic Modification; what is the distribution of these sites by region; and what is the number of visits carried out each year by the Health and Safety Executive to these sites.

Mr. Forth: There are currently 372 active centres that have notified the Health and Safety Executive of their intention to undertake work on genetic modification. The distribution of these centres by HSE regions is as follows:

	Number
Midlands	48
Wales and South West	24
North East	36
North West	25
Scotland	51
Home Counties	72
London and South West	116

During the calendar year 1990 inspectors from HSE's technology division visited 100 of these centres to carry out site inspections. The number of centres visited in calendar years 1989 and 1988 were 77 and 89 respectively.

Pop Concerts

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects the guidance of the Health and Safety Executive on pop concerts and similar events to be available.

Mr Forth: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 7 February, *Official Report*, column *238*. Regrettably, there have been some delays in the preparation of this guidance, but it is now hoped that a draft will be available for consultation in the early autumn this year.

Crown Suppliers (Remploy Factories)

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the value of orders placed by the Crown Suppliers with Remploy factories in each of the past three years of the Crown Suppliers' existence; and what currently is the annual value of orders placed by Government Departments and agencies, previously purchased through the Crown Suppliers, with Remploy factories.

Mr. Jackson: The value of orders placed by Crown Suppliers with Remploy factories in each of the last three years of Crown Suppliers' existence was

Year	*£ million*
1988-89	7·4
1989-90	6·6
1990-91	3·6

No figures are available either centrally or in Remploy itself on the annual value of orders placed by Government Departments and agencies with Remploy factories, which would previously have been purchased through the Crown Suppliers.

Employment Contracts (Jurisdiction)

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he proposes to introduce the regulations to transfer jurisdiction from courts to industrial tribunals over claims by dismissed employees in respect of alleged breaches by their employers of their contracts of employment.

Mr. Forth: Further consideration will be given to this matter when the House of Lords has given its decision in a case which is expected to clarify existing industrial tribunal jurisdiction under the Wages Act 1986.

Construction Training

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what change in the number of places for construction industry training on employment training in east London has taken place in 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Jackson: Provison of ET in east London is a matter for East London training and enterprise council.

Holloway Job Club

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if the Employment Service guarantees the funding of the Holloway job club.

Mr. Jackson: Questions on operational matters in the Employment Service executive agency are the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the agency's chief executive, to whom I have referred this question for reply.

Youth Training

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he received the statement on youth training schemes by the British Printing Industry Federation; what assessment he has made on its implications for training and enterprise councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. and learned Friend, the Secretary of State for Employment, has received no formal notification of future withdrawal from YT from the British Printing Industry Federation, the BPIF. I am however aware of the British Printing Industry Federation's letter to the *Financial Times* of 8 July in which it expressed its intention to cease operating as a YT managing agent in 1992. Responsibility for contracting for youth training in England and Wales rests with the training and enterprise councils, which have the authority and resources to apply local solutions to local needs. The implications for TECs if BPIF withdraws from YT would be a matter for individual TECs to address in the light of local demand for training in printing occupations.

Chest Diseases

Mr. Cabom: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what research projects have been undertaken or funded by the Health and Safety Executive since 1975 in relation to emphysema, chronic obstructive airways disease, asthma and chronic bronchitis and in particular to the incidence of each disease amongst *(a)* coal miners and ex-coal miners and *(b)* foundry workers and ex-foundry workers.

Mr. Forth: The majority of research into emphysema, chronic obstructive airways disease, asthma and chronic bronchitis in coal miners, ex-coal miners, foundry workers and ex-foundry workers in the United Kingdom has been sponsored by the relevant industry in collaboration with the European Coal and Steel Community which is now conducting its fifth programme of medical research into occupational ill health. The HSE is consulted about the contents of this research and is closely following the programme's progress. On this basis the HSE has not directly funded any separate research projects.

However, the HSE has recently undertaken a review of research on chronic non-malignant respiratory disease in ferrous metal manufacturing and production workers and has also commissioned a wider ranging review of the health effects of airborne substances in the ferrous foundry industry. The results are expected to be available early next year.

Full details of HSE's research are listed in their "Programme of research and related services" which is published annually. Copies are available from the House of Commons Library.

Training

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to regionalise the management and development of the vocational training programmes which are supported by the European social fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The training and enterprise councils—and the local enterprise companies in Scotland—already have responsibility for the delivery of vocational training programmes such as employment training and youth training and they carry out this task so as to take full account of local circumstances and needs.

Employment Action

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether travel costs for individuals who participate in employment action will be reimbursed.

Mr. Jackson: Training and enterprise councils and local enterprise companies will have the discretion to offer travel costs to participants on employment action. The arrangements will be similar to those that apply for employment training.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Contributory Benefits

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what criteria are used to identify the relevant tax years for the purposes of processing a claim for any contributory benefit.

Mr. Hanley: For unemployment, sickness and invalidity benefit, the relevant tax years are the last two complete tax years before the start of the benefit year. The benefit year which starts on the first Sunday in January is determined by the first day of a period of interruption of employment.

For retirement pension, the relevant tax years are those in the working life from the year in which age 16 is reached to the tax year ending immediately before pension age which is 65 in the case of a man and 60 in the case of a woman.

For widows' benefit, the relevant tax years are those in the working life of the late husband which run from the year in which he reached age 16 to the tax year ending immediately before he died or reached age 65 whichever is the earlier.

RU486

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what guidelines he has issued to medical practitioners on the use of RU486 in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 8 July 1991]:* None. The product licence recently granted in respect of the drug known as RU486 does not extend to Northern Ireland, and therefore it will not be available in the Province.

Police Authority

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the names of new members of the Police Authority for Northern Ireland were the subject of consultation with the Government of the Republic of Ireland in accordance with the provisions of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 12 July 1991]:* It is policy not to disclose whether any views have been put forward under article 6 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement on the composition of public bodies.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Foreign Prisoners

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many foreign national prisoners who have been granted home leave have returned to prison after home leave in the last five years;

(2) how many foreign national prisoners have *(a)* requested, *(b)* been granted and *(c)* been refused home leave in each of the last five years.

Mrs. Rumbold: This information is not readily available.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who makes the decision on home leave for foreign national prisoners.

Mrs. Rumbold: As in the case of other applications for home leave, it is for the governor to decide, on the recommendation of the home leave board, whether the request can be approved.

Electoral Registration

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he proposes to increase resources available for electoral registration in October.

Mrs. Rumbold: Central Government support for local authority expenditure on electoral registration is provided through the revenue support grant system. There is no provision for increasing that level of support in the current financial year.

Firefighters

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is his policy on the future role of retained firefighters; and if he will make a statement; (2) what proposals he has to ensure that retained firefighters play a part in the overall provision of fire and rescue services.

Mr. John Patten: We are committed to the continuation of the retained fire service in England and Wales. Retained firefighters perform a vital and extremely cost-effective role in the provision of fire cover, particularly in the more rural areas. We have encouraged fire authorities to make arrangements for whole-time firefighters to undertake retained duties in their spare time if they so wish. This will help to ensure that the retained fire service continues to play an important part in the provision of fire cover in England and Wales.

Prisoners

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he is taking to ensure that all prisoners are able to exercise their entitlement to a fortnightly visit.

Mrs. Rumbold: This is being monitored by area managers—who have to seek my right hon. Friend's approval for any temporary reduction in the visiting allowance—as part of their line management responsibilities.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those prisons which do not allow prisoners more than one visit a month.

Mrs. Rumbold: Convicted prisoners are normally able to receive at least two visits every four weeks, and sometimes more, at all establishments except Swansea.

Political Asylum

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what response he has made to the letter from the hon. Member for Nottingham, North concerning the request of Mr. Gabrielle Purendea, currently held in Exeter prison, for political asylum.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I shall be writing to the hon. Member shortly.

Prison Officers

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department why rest days are now counted for the purpose of assessing whether a prison officer has suffered more than 365 days of absence through illness over a period of four years; and whether the counting of rest days in this way is applied retrospectively to the period before the introduction of fresh start.

Mr. Rumbold: The rules governing sick absence and pay for civil servants, including prison officers, are detailed in the civil service pay and conditions of service code. Under these rules, the first six months of sick absence—182 days—during any period of 12 months are on full pay thereafter pay drops to half rate. This is subject to a maximum of 12 months—365 days—sick absence in any period of four years or less.

During a period of sick absence, all days, including Saturdays, Sundays, public and privilege holidays and rest days, count. However if they occur at the beginning or end, they are not included or reckoned.

These rules were not altered in any way by the introduction of fresh start pay and working arrangements in 1987.

Woolf Report

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the timetable for full implementation of each of the measures announced in his statement on 25 February following publication of the Woolf report on prison disturbances.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend's response to the Woolf report, in the form of a White Paper on the future direction of the prison service in England and Wales, will review the progress of all the measures referred to in his statement of 25 February. The extension of arrangements for financially assisted visits was introduced on 1 April; opportunities for home leve were increased from 7 May; the abolition of routine censorship in all except dispersal prisons came into force on 16 May; the increase in the level of visits for convicted prisoners took effect from 17 June; and the programme for installing cardphones in all establishments which do not already have them is scheduled to be completed in May 1992.

Car Thefts

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to recommend stronger penalties for those who steal cars and then use the vehicle recklessly.

Mr. John Patten: We have no plans at present to increase the maximum penalty of six months' imprisonment for taking a motor vehicle without the owner's consent. When those who have taken a car are convicted of reckless driving, they are liable to up to two years' imprisonment, or five years, if they have caused a death.

Homosexuals (Isle of Man)

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) by what date he expects homosexual activity to be decriminalised in the Isle of Man;

(2) what consultations have taken place with the Isle of Man Government over the wording of the Sexual Offences Bill currently before Tynwald; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will make a statement on the consequences of the action of the Manx Parliament in amending the Sexual Offences Bill to remove clauses decriminalising homosexual activity on the Isle of Man.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Isle of Man Government sent the Home Office drafts of its Sexual Offences Bill, including clauses providing for the decriminalisation of homosexual activity between consenting adults in private, as part of the usual consultative procedures. The Bill remains subject to possible amendment in Tynwald, where consideration is expected to resume after the island's general election in November.

If the island were demonstrably to refuse or to fail to amend its law satisfactorily, Her Majesty's Government would have no alternative but to introduce the requisite legislation in Parliament at the earliest suitable opportunity.

Mr. Karamjit Singh Chahal

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a further statement concerning the case of Mr. Karamjit Singh Chahal.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to him on 25 June at columns *405-6*.

Shop Squatting

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the growth of illegal shop squatting and the speed of repossession procedure; and what response he is making.

Mr. John Patten: We have received a number of representations from hon. Members and others about squatting in vacant shops and problems with the speed of repossession. The effectiveness of the remedies available under the civil law is a matter for my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor, but I understand that accelerated procedures are available to deal with squatters.

We are currently reviewing the criminal law as it affects the unlawful occupation of premises, including shops, and my right hon. Friend will announce the outcome of this review in due course.

Child Sex Offences

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons were convicted of child sex offences in the last year for which figures are available; and, of these, how many were allowed bail prior to trial, how many pleaded guilty and how many pleaded not guilty.

Mr. John Patten: Information on the number of persons convicted of child sex crime in England and Wales is given in the table. It is only possible from the information held centrally to identify sex offences where the victim is know to be aged under 16. Reliable information is not available centrally on the numbers given bail prior to trial or how they pleaded.

Number of persons convicted of child sex offences, 1989
England and Wales

Offence	*Convictions*
Buggery with a boy under the age of 16 or with a woman or an animal	183
Attempt to commit buggery with a boy under the age of 16 or with a woman or an animal	26
Indecent assault on a male aged under 16 years	406
Indecent assault on a female aged under 16 years	1,657
Unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl aged under 13 years	96
Unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl aged under 16 years	262
Incest with a girl under 13 years	100
Inciting girl under 16 years to have incestuous sexual intercourse	5
Householder permitting unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 16 years	3
Person responsible for girl aged under 16 causing or encouraging her prostitution, etc	1
Abduction of unmarried girl aged under 16 years	13
Gross indecency with children	219

Mr. Paul Vickers

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when he proposes to reply to recent correspondence from the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central about the sentence of Mr. Paul Vickers;

(2) when he expects to conclude his review of the further medical evidence on Paul Vickers's sentence submitted by Mr. Vickers solicitors in October 1990;

(3) whether he has concluded his inquiries into the review of the sentence of Paul Vickers referred to in the answer given to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) on 1 November 1988, *Official Report*, column *576*.

Mr. John Patten: Dr. Vickers' solicitors made representations on his behalf in August 1988 suggesting that his conviction was unsafe. I wrote to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central on 6 August 1990 informing him that these representations did not provide sufficient ground to justify my right hon. Friend intervening in Dr. Vickers' case. The further representations made by Dr. Vickers' solicitors in October 1990 are under consideration and my right hon. Friend hopes to reach a decision on Dr. Vickers' case shortly. I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as a decision has been reached.

Medical Advisers

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the scale rate of fees for pathologists and other medical advisers called in to advise his Department in the years 1988-89 to 1990-91, and currently; what sums have been expended by his Department on this in these years; what internal audit procedures there are to ensure timeliness and value for money in the tendering of such advice; and whether any such audit procedures were put into action in these years.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The information is not available centrally in the form requested. I shall write to the hon. Member.

Regional Public Services

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many regions the police service in England and Wales is divided into; what area is covered by each region; and if he will publish a map showing the relevant areas.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There are eight regions, divided along force boundaries. A map is being placed in the Library.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many regions the fire service inspectorate in England and Wales is divided into; what area is covered by each region; and if he will publish a map showing the relevant areas.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Brigade inspections in England and Wales are carried out by four regionally-based territorial inspectors. Details of the inspection areas covered by each region are given in the table. I have placed a map showing these areas in the Library.

London Area
- Bedfordshire
- Buckinghamshire
- Cambridgeshire
- Essex
- Hertfordshire
- Leicestershire
- Lincolnshire
- London (coordinator)
- Norfolk
- Northamptonshire
- Suffolk
- Wiltshire

Northern Area
- Cleveland
- Cumbria
- Derbyshire
- Durham
- Greater Manchester
- Lancashire
- Northumberland
- Nottinghamshire
- Tyne and Wear
- North Yorkshire
- South Yorkshire
- West Yorkshire

Southern Area
- Avon
- Berkshire
- Cornwall
- Devon
- Dorset
- Gloucestershire
- Hampshire
- Humberside
- Kent
- Oxfordshire
- Somerset
- Surrey
- East Sussex
- West Sussex
- Isle of Wight
- Isles of Scilly

Western Area
- Cheshire
- Clwyd
- Dyfed
- Mid Glamorgan
- South Glamorgan
- West Glamorgan
- Gwent
- Gwynedd
- Hereford and Worcester
- Merseyside
- Powys
- Shropshire
- Staffordshire
- Warwickshire
- West Midlands

Regional Public Services

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many regions the civil defence service in England and Wales is divided into; what area is covered by each region; and if he will publish a map showing the relevant areas.

Mr. John Patten: For many civil defence purposes England and Wales are divided into nine regions. These cover, broadly, north-east England, the east midlands, East Anglia, London, south-east England, south-west England, Wales, the west midlands and north-west England. I am placing a map in the Library.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many regions the prison service in England and Wales is divided into; what area is covered by each region; and if he will publish a map showing the relevant areas.

Mrs. Rumbold: The regional tier of the prison service of England and Wales disappeared as part of the reorganisation of management structures which took place on 25 September 1990. The service is now divided into 15 geographical areas each including seven to nine prison establishments. A copy of a map depicting these areas has been placed in the Library.

Category A Prisoners

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review security arrangements under which category A inmates are held in prisons.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have asked Mr. G. H. Lakes CB MC, former deputy director general of the prison service and Mr. R. Hadfield QPM, Chief Constable of the West Midlands, to conduct a security audit of arrangements for holding and managing category A prisoners in Her Majesty's prisons and to report to me as soon as possible.

ENVIRONMENT

Pentachlorophenol Contamination

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking to ensure the reduction of pentachlorophenol concentrations in rivers in the constituency of Rossendale and Darwen.

Mr. Heseltine: Environmental quality objectives have been set for all inland waters in relation to discharges of

dangerous substances, including pentachlorophenol and its compounds. So far as is practicable, those objectives must be achieved at all times.

Applications and reviews relating to consents for trade effluent discharges containing PCP to sewers have to be referred to me for my determination. On the advice of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, conditions are being set requiring the use of the best technical means available to minimise as soon as practicable the adverse effects of such discharges.

Letting Statistics

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how the level of letting in public and private rented sectors is estimated; and if he will provide a breakdown of the constituent components of the total flow of lets on a yearly basis from 1980 to 1990;

(2) how many estimated private dwelling lets there were in each year from 1980 *(a)* in England and *(b)* in Great Britain.

Mr. Yeo: Total lettings of local authority dwellings, including transfers by existing tenants, are reported each year by local authorities in their housing investment programme returns.

Since 1986-87 housing associations have reported lettings annually to the Housing Corporation. For earlier years they can be estimated from the Labour Force Survey.

Lettings by other private landlords are also estimated from the Labour Force Survey.

Estimates of the number of lettings in England are given in the table:

thousands

	Local authorities	*Housing associations*[1,2]	*Other private*[1]
1980-81	[3]440	65	380
1981-82	415	[4]. .	[4]. .
1982-83	439	70	420
1983-84	429	60	470
1984-85	429	65	430
1985-86	437	80	410
1986-87	430	77	480
1987-88	426	70	520
1988-89	410	72	480
1989-90	390	76	540

[1] Source of housing associations estimates (for years prior to 1986-87) and other private lettings (all years) is the Labour Force Survey. LFS is a sample survey, and so some of the year-to-year fluctuations in numbers may be the result of sample variability. The LFS will tend to understate the number of lettings by private landlords because what is recorded is whether the household had been at the address for under 12 months; the estimate does not allow for any multiple moves in the previous 12 months.

[2] Housing association lettings from 1986-87 onwards are based on returns to the Housing Corporation. Internal transfers by tenants have only been reported from 1989-90 and figures for 1986-87 to 1988-89 include estimates of these lettings.

[3] For 1980-81 includes estimate of non-secure and mobility lettings which were not included on local authority returns.

[4]. . Not available.

For information about Scotland and Wales I refer the hon. member to my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales.

Crown Suppliers

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the assets sold or used to reduce the closure costs of Crown Suppliers contract furnishing.

Mr. Yeo: The following assets were sold during the closure of Crown Suppliers Contract Furnishing.

Freehold Property—Wellington House
Surplus Computer Equipment—Microcomputers, Terminals and Printers
Stores Equipment—Fork Lift Trucks
Contract Furnishing Stocks
Miscellaneous Office Furniture and Equipment
Two Antique Clocks
Intellectual Property rights—IKON range

The published costs of closure include only the differences between amounts realised and the book value of the assets.

Canary Wharf

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps the London Docklands development corporation is taking to ensure employment of local people at Canary Wharf.

Mr. Portillo: LDDC, in conjunction with the London borough of Tower Hamlets and London East TEC, is developing a programme of customised training to develop the skills of local people to match identified employment opportunities. Schemes like the Tower Hamlets construction training centre are specifically aimed at helping local people to gain employment in construction schemes in London docklands.

Property Services Agency

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish for each of the last 10 years the number of complaints he has received on the Property Services Agency from *(a)* hon Members, *(b)* members of the public and *(c)* registered companies.

Mr. Yeo: Such statistics are not available centrally and could not be brought together without disproportionate costs. PSA Services investigates any complaint received and, where appropriate, takes action to improve the quality of services it offers.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will arrange for an auditor's report to be prepared for him on the payment practices of the accounts department of Property Services Agency Services, Heol Pentre, Felen, Morriston, Swansea.

Mr. Yeo: No. The payment systems of all PSA offices are subject to regular cyclical audits by both the Comptroller and Auditor General and by the Department's own internal audit division. Reports of internal audits are available to the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek to reduce delays before the Property Services Agency Swansea office sends the invoices from creditors to the Property Services Agency accounts office at Hastings.

Mr. Yeo: From the autumn of 1991, it is planned for the payment of all PSA Building Management creditors in

South Wales to be made by the Manchester office. This represents the implementation of the new decentralised bill payment and accounting system to improve the bill payment service offered.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will ensure that the Property Services Agency pays interest to any creditor when payment has been delayed beyond 28 days from the receipt of an invoice for work completed.

Mr. Yeo: There is no general entitlement in law to interest on the late payment of contract debts, and it is not the normal practice of the Government to pay interest in respect of such debts unless the circumstances of a particular case give rise to a legal entitlement.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of civil actions for damages initiated against the Property Services Agency for non-payment and delays in meeting its liabilities to clients.

Mr. Yeo: Records are not maintained centrally of any civil actions against PSA Services for the non-payment of bills and delays in meeting its liabilities to clients. I am not, however, aware of there being any current ones.

Housing Departments

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will introduce legislation to permit local authority housing departments to operate as independent charitable trusts;

(2) how many representations he has received in favour of local authority housing departments being permitted to opt for charitable trust status.

Mr. Yeo: Local authorities may already transfer their housing stock to any stable organisation that is independent of the local authority, and able to demonstrate a long-term commitment to the needs of existing and future tenants. Fifteen authorities have so far transferred their stock to registered housing associations and one authority to an industrial and provident society. No applications have so far been made for transfer to independent charitable trusts.

Poplar Baths Training Centre

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much the London Docklands development corporation has spent on Poplar Baths training centre.

Mr. Portillo: LDDC has contributed £1·2 million towards the cost of the Tower Hamlets construction training centre.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the employment aims of the London Docklands development corporation; and what changes there have been in those aims since 1988.

Mr. Portillo: LDDC's education, enterprise and employment programme aims to support and encourage the development of existing and new business and facilitate ready access to a skilled work force; and in collaboration with education and training providers, TECs and the LEAs, to improve education, training and employment opportunities for people living in or near the UDA and assist them to enter the employment market.

Since 1988, the number of permanent jobs in the UDA has increased from around 40,000 to 53,000 with more jobs in construction. LDDC has contributed £7·6 million to the provision of training over the period April 1988 to March 1991, supporting an estimated 15,000 training places.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what resources have been committed by the Government since 1 April 1986 to promote the provisions of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985.

Mr. Portillo: The circular issued by my Department in 1986 (DoE Circular 6(86)) drew to the attention of local authorities the provisions of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985.

Since then, it has been for local authorities to decide what resources they need to allocate to ensure that they fulfil the duties placed on them by the Act.

Irish Peatlands

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the Conservation of Irish peatlands to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Trippier: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 9 December to 13 December.

Council Tax

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the council tax is proposed to be a tax for the purpose of section 28 of the Data Protection Act; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The interpretation of the Data Protection Act 1984 on this point will be a matter for the Data Protection Registrar, and ultimately for the courts, in the light of the legislation establishing the council tax.

Concrete Batching Plant

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to be able to announce the results of the public inquiry into the proposal to construct a concrete batching plant at Monnery road, London N19; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: It is hoped to issue a decision very shortly.

Holcombe Moor Training Area

Mr. Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will quantify the costs of the public inquiry into the application by the Ministry of Defence for an extension of its dry training area on Holcombe moor, Bury, in 1988.

Mr. Yeo: The Department's costs of employing the inspector to conduct the inquiry and to write his report were about £10,000.

Sewage Treatment Works

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will be writing to those people who objected to the applications for time-limited discharge consents for sewage treatment works.

Mr. Trippier: My Department has now written to those who made objections to the applications made by the then water authorities, setting out the decisions taken, and explaining the reasons for those decisions. I have placed a copy of the letters in the Library. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales intends to write shortly to those who objected to applications made by the then Welsh Water Authority.

Detailed information about the individual consents granted is already available on the public registers held in the National Rivers Authority's regional offices. Summary information concerning all the applications submitted was contained in Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution 1989-90 annual report published last year. Around 15 per cent. of the applications submitted were rejected, or were withdrawn by the applicants, and many were granted only subject to tighter conditions than the water authorities had sought.

Time-limited consents were granted in connection with the water industry's current £1·2 billion improvement programme. The latest figures available from the National Rivers Authority demonstrate that significant improvements have been made in the operational performance of sewage treatment works throughout England and Wales. In 1990, the proportion of works complying with their current consents was 92 per cent. Time-limited consents are superseded by long-term performance measures as the improvements work through. The proportion of works which already meet these long-term measures has risen from 77 per cent. in 1986, and 83 per cent. in 1988 to some 88 per cent. in 1990.

The National Rivers Authority is continuing to monitor the performance of sewage treatment works and has the necessary enforcement powers to take action against works that fail to meet fully the requirements of their consents. The Director General of Water Services is also monitoring the progress being made by the companies towards the timely completion of their improvement programmes so that customers' interests are fully protected.

Advertising Campaigns

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Emvironment if he will list the advertising, promotional or public relations companies employed by, or on behalf of, his Department who are involved in the campaigns given in his answer of 4 July, *Official Report*, column *182*.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 11 July 1991]:* My Department and the Department of Energy have not yet selected any companies to carry out the work in respect of the home energy efficiency campaign. An announcement will be made soon. My Department has not yet selected a company for the duty of care campaign.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the commencement dates and duration of each of the publicity campaigns given in his answer of 4 July, *Official Report*, column *182*.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 11 July 1991]:* My right hon. Friend and I propose to launch the home energy campaign this autumn. It will continue until 1994. The duty of care campaign will commence in November 1991 and continue until the end of the current financial year.

London Custody Service

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those public buildings currently guarded by the London custody service *(a)* on a 24-hour basis and *(b)* during silent hours, indicating the numbers employed at each.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 15 July 1991]:* On security grounds, I am unable to release details of the buildings served by the London Custody Service or the number of guards at each location. However, I can advise that the London Custody Service currently services 17 buildings on a 24-hour basis using 137 guards and 90 buildings on a silent hours basis using 455 guards. The staff figures exclude reserves and inspectors.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the sums received in respect of the London custody service together with the total expenditure for each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 15 July 1991]:* The following figures are derived from the London custody service's memorandum trading accounts for the past five years.

Year	*Expenditure (£)*	*Receipts (£)*
1986-87	10,582,135	10,854,012
1987-88	11,092,774	11,105,993
1988-89	11,451,805	11,532,647
1989-90	12,015,201	12,256,055
1990-91	12,959,623	13,135,296

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many staff are currently employed by the London custody service; and on what terms and conditions.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 15 July 1991]:* The London custody service operates on a repayment basis underpinned by a memorandum trading account. All clients are billed for the service they receive and charges are calculated to recover full costs.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what basis other Government Departments and public bodies are charged for the services of the London custody service.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 15 July 1991]:* As at 10 July 1991, the London custody service employed 11 non-industrial staff and 720 industrial staff. All employees are civil servants.

Beccles Maltings

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to complete determination for listed building consent to demolition of the Beccles Maltings, reference E1/73535/4/2/4.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 15 July 1991]:* The application for listed building consent to demolish the Maltings at Beccles has been referred by the Department to English Heritage for advice on whether the application should be called in for the Secretary of State to decide or left for decision by the local planning authority. There has been some delay in dealing with the case while English Heritage has obtained a structural engineers' report on the building and sought the views of the national amenity societies on the proposed demolition.

This information is now with English Heritage and the Secretary of State expects to receive a recommendation on call-in shortly. I will write to the hon. Member when the recommendation is received.

Departmental Failures

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the failures of his Department in the past 12 months.

Mr. Heseltine: I have failed to persuade the Labour party to put the interests of citizens and consumers above the interest of trade unions and producers.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the total amount of housing benefit in each financial year paid by local authorities in *(a)* England and *(b)* Great Britain to council tenants since the scheme began;

(2) what is total Government expenditure on housing benefit on a financial year basis in *(a)* England and *(b)* Great Britain;

(3) what is the total amount of housing benefit reimbursed *(a)* to local authorities and *(b)* private tenants in each financial year in (i) England and (ii) Great Britain in respect of rent rebates granted to council tenants since the beginning of the scheme.

Miss Widdecombe: I have been asked to reply.

The table sets out housing benefit expenditure for central and local government from 1983-84 to 1990-91:

£ million

	1983-84 outturn	*1984-85 outturn*	*1985-86 outturn*	*1986-87 outturn*	*1987-88 outturn*	*1988-89 outturn*	*1989-90 outturn*	*1990-91 estimated outturn*
Government Expenditure (all housing benefits):								
England	3,053	3,399	3,762	4,094	4,288	4,066	4,299	3,734
Great Britain	3,600	4,001	4,459	4,869	5,150	4,936	5,046	4,430
Local Authority Expenditure:								
England								
rent rebate (council tenants)	1,659	1,789	1,902	1,979	2,028	2,168	2,301	2,590
rent allowance	483	614	784	877	892	912	1,094	1,417
rate rebates	1,044	1,159	1,251	1,389	1,425	1,157	1,212	0
Great Britain								
rent rebate (council tenants)	1,980	2,145	2,296	2,420	2,506	2,714	2,882	3,192
rent allowance	536	687	881	998	1,030	1,051	1,258	1,610
rate rebates	1,218	1,354	1,479	1,635	1,701	1,373	1,263	0

SCOTLAND

Youth Training

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* applications and *(b)* available places for youth training there have been in Strathclyde this year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information sought is not collected centrally. It is unlikely to be available from any source in the form requested, partly because there is no standard application process and partly because provision is calculated on the basis of the number of trainee weeks available rather than the number of places.

Agency Nurses

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the expenditure of the national health service in Scotland, identified by health board, on employing agency nurses in each of the last five years in *(a)* cash and *(b)* constant prices.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is not held centrally.

Charities

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the statutory requirements covering the preparation and presentation of accounts by charities in Scotland; and what information he has on the charities which have failed to meet these requirements in the last two years, five years and 10 years respectively.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Section 4 of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1990 empowers the Secretary of State to make regulations concerning the preparation and presentation of accounts by charities which are recognised bodies under the provisions of that Act and which are not companies. Section 4 has not yet come into force.

There is no prior statutory requirement for Scottish charities to keep accounts.

Braille Examination Papers

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what arrangements his Department is making to ensure that blind and partially sighted students have adequate access to the standard grade and higher examination process; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what arrangements are being made by his Department to ensure that examination papers for higher grade examinations are available in Braille.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is already the practice of the Scottish Examination Board to modify its stipulated arrangements for candidates who, because of visual impairment, are unable to satisfy the normal requirements. The facilities provided can include the services of a reader and/or scribe and the availability of examination papers in Braille.

Flood Warnings

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to introduce a statutory requirement for river purification boards to provide advance flood warnings covering both river and coastal areas; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: River purification boards and islands councils already have powers under the Agriculture Act 1970, as amended by the Local Government and Planning (Scotland) Act 1982, to provide and operate flood warning systems in their areas after consulting the chief constables and local authorities in whose areas it is proposed to exercise these powers. This procedure ensures that decisions about flood warning systems are taken by those best able to consider local needs and I have no plans to alter the statutory basis of these arrangements.

Mental Illness Services

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, by health board, *(a)* the sums spent on capital projects in psychiatric hospitals in Scotland, and *(b)* the revenue expenditure on mental illness services in Scotland, for the last three years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money is being made available to new schemes to be funded under the specific grant for mental illness for 1992-93; and if he will make a statement about the future of the scheme.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government's spending plans provide for an increase to £5 million in the provision of the mental illness specific grant scheme in 1992-93. This will, along with all Government spending plans, be reviewed in the course of this year.

The scheme is set to run for an initial three years and extension of the scheme will be subject to review at the end of that period.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide the latest available figures on the level of registered supported accommodation for people affected by mental illness by health board area and per 100,000 population.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information is not held in the form requested.

Craigtoun Hospital St. Andrews

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the future use of Craigtoun hospital, St. Andrews.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 11 July 1991]:* Fife health board has forwarded a proposal to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to close Craigtoun hospital, St. Andrew's which is currently being considered. As with all hospital closures, the board's proposals will be considered on their merits and views of the public and other interested parties taken into account in reaching a decision.

Working with St. Andrew's GPs a study is currently under way at St. Andrew's memorial hospital to determine the most appropriate use of beds. The outcome of this study will be known in September when we will be in a position to consider further the proposals to close Craigtoun hospital.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Executive Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what was the first degree obtained by the chief executive of the Resettlement Agency; and from which university or polytechnic it was awarded;

(2) what was the first degree obtained by the chief executive of the Contributions Agency; and from which university or polytechnic it was awarded;

(3) what was the first degree obtained by the chief executive of the Benefits Agency; and from which university or polytechnic it was awarded;

(4) what was the first degree obtained by the chief executive of Information Technology Services Agency; and from which university or polytechnic it was awarded.

Miss Widdecombe: The chief executive of each of the Department's executive agencies will write to the hon. Member with the information requested and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Pension Age

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what recent representations he has received from the United Kingdom Federation of Business and Professional Women regarding equalisation of the state pension age.

Miss Widdecombe: We have received two letters.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list those organisations and individuals which have made representations on equalisation of the state pension age since 1 January.

Miss Widdecombe: Since 1 January 1991 we have received representations from the following organisations:

Age Concern
Asda Stores Ltd.
Association of British Insurers
British Aerospace
British Hardware Federation
BP
Campaign for Equal State Pension Age
Comet Group PLC
CBI
Co-operative Union Ltd.
Dolland and Aitchison Group PLC
Electrical Engineering Federation
Equal Opportunities Commission
European Federation for Retirement Provision
Help the Aged
ICI
Joint Working Group
Life Insurance Council
Marks and Spencer PLC
Mars Confectionary
National Association of Pension Funds
Nat West Bank
Noble Lowndes and Partners
Occupational Pensions Board
The Retail Consortium
Royal Insurance
J. Sainsbury
Social Security Advisory Committee
Spar (UK) Ltd.
Specialeyes PLC
TUC
United Kingdom Federation of Business and Professional Women
R. Watson and Sons

In addition, 150 letters have been received from hon. Members and 124 from members of the public.

Water Bills

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what benefits are now available to those in receipt of invalid care allowance and disability benefits in respect of assistance with water bills.

Mr. Scott: There is no specific social security benefit available to help people pay their water charges. However, income support is an income-related benefit for people not in full-time work whose income is below a certain level. It is intended to cover all normal day-to-day living expenses and beneficiaries are expected to budget for their water charges in the same way as any other commitment.

Industrial Injuries

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will add reactive dyes to the list of substances which are held to be asthma causing in respect of claims for industrial injuries disablement benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: We shall be laying regulations shortly which will extend the coverage for occupational asthma under the industrial injuries scheme. Nine further named agents, including reactive dyes, will be added to the prescribed list of sensitising agents encountered at work.

Independent Living Fund

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security under the proposals for the future of the independent living fund, how the present arrangement whereby direct payments are made to severely disabled people to make their own personal assistance arrangements will continue after 1993.

Mr. Scott: I refer my hon. Friend to the announcement I made during consideration of Lords amendments to the Disability Living Allowance and Disability Working Allowance Bill, on 21 May at col 794. We are still considering the form the successor body may take.

Severe Disablement Allowance

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what review he has undertaken of the different residency rules for severe disablement allowance compared to attendance allowance, mobility allowance or disability living allowance; what plans he has to unify the residency qualifications; what other plans he has to review the severe disablement allowance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to review residency rules for severe disablement allowance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: We recognise that there has been some criticism of the residence qualifying condition for severe disablement allowance, which is more stringent than those which apply to other non-contributory benefits for sick and disabled people. The general issue of the acceptable length of residency conditions is being considered by the European Court of Justice. We believe that it would be sensible to be informed by their view before reaching any conclusions on the test for claimants generally.

In the meantime, regulations were laid before the House on 4 July which will help members of the armed forces and their families with the residence condition. We believe that this approach is wholly justified in advance of any more general consideration of the test. We have no current plans to conduct a wider review of severe disablement allowance.

Occupational Diseases

Mr. Cabom: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps are being taken to review the list of prescribed diseases and the occupations for which they are prescribed, as defined by the Social Security Act 1975 and subsequent amendments, to harmonise with the European Schedule of Occupational Diseases (Annex I) and with the Additional List (Annex II), in relation to European Commission recommendation of 22 May 1990 (90/326/EEC) for the adoption of a European schedule of occupational diseases.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) on 10 June at columns *396-97*.

Benefit Provision

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) of 26 July 1990, *Official Report*, columns *494-95*, when he now expects to be able to publish the results of the research into the way in which benefit provision for 16 and 17-year-olds is working.

Mr. Jack *[pursuant to the reply, 30 April, column 161]:* I have today placed a copy of the report on 16 and

17-year-old applicants for severe hardship payments in the Library. The research focuses on the very small proportion of 16 and 17-year-olds, 0·4 per cent., who are not in full-time education, work, or youth training and who claim income support under the severe hardship provision.

The research was commissioned in July 1990 by the DSS to gather more data on young people who claim under the severe hardship provision, their understanding of and attitudes towards the benefit system and their experience of training and the labour market.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment is also publishing today a report "Finding Youth Training Places for 16 and 17 Year Old Applicants for Severe Hardship Payment".

Almost two thirds of those interviewed during the MORI research said that they found youth training useful. The report also shows that severe hardship payments are, as intended, going to those young people seeking YT places who are most at risk: and in particular that the system provides a safety net both for those who have to live independently and to those at risk of homelessness or the break-up of the family.

The research coupled with the Department's own monitoring has been taken into account in putting in hand further improvements in the arrangements for dealing with claims from young people, which build on those already announced in November 1989 and March 1990. Accordingly the Government are implementing the following measures:

(1) The service to 16 and 17-year-olds in Benefits Agency offices is being improved by:

Making a specific assistant manager in each district personally responsible for service to 16 and 17-year-olds.

Further staff training to reinforce the importance of 16 and 17-year-olds being handled positively and sympathetically both at reception and in the course of their personal interview.

Ensuring that interviews with young people are conducted in private, wherever possible.

Introducing priority handling for claims and strengthened procedural guidance.

A review of the leaflets and other information available to 16 and 17-year-olds.

(2) Measures have already been taken to improve the procedures for arranging YT placements, including the introduction of guarantee liaison arrangements in each TEC, with contractual obligations on TECs to investigate individual cases. All those in receipt of severe hardship payments for more than eight weeks are now automatically referred to the TEC under the liaison arrangements. This procedure is to be further strengthened by referring at an earlier stage those young people whose personal circumstances make it particularly important to find a place quickly: care leavers, rough sleepers, pregnant girls.

(3) The Employment Service will improve the guidance to unemployment benefit offices on handling claims for income support.

The Children Act 1989, which comes into force with effect from October 1991, makes clear the duty on local authorities to prepare children for the time when they leave their care and simplifies the existing powers and duties of local authorities to care for children formerly in their care. These provisions recognise the importance of helping children to become established in the community.

However, concern has been expressed about some children leaving care who claim income support under the severe hardship provisions: this creates an uncertainty which can cause difficulty in making positive plans for the future. Accordingly we intend to introduce legislation to give eligibility for income support to all those 16 and 17-year-olds who live independently on leaving care while continuing in full-time non-advanced education. And we further intend to make income support available for a period of up to eight weeks to all 16 and 17-year-olds leaving care who have to live independently and who are registered for work and YT.

Those 16 and 17-year-olds who have been sleeping rough in London will already have benefited from and will continue to benefit from the bed spaces being made available by the Department of the Environment under its rough sleepers initiative. Of these, 180 hostel bed spaces are specifically earmarked for young people.

These measures, taken with the improvements already made, will ensure the effective operation of the safety net that the severe hardship provision provides to those most at risk while seeking a YT place without detracting from the positive options of education, work or training which are pursued by the vast majority of young people in this age group.

HEALTH

Plastic Surgery

14. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, if, when he next meets the chairman of the North West regional health authority, he proposes to discuss the provision of plastic surgery in the north-west region.

Mr. Dorrell: When I meet the chairman of North Western regional health authority this evening I shall congratulate him on his region's record in undertaking record numbers of treatments in plastic surgery and on the decision to appoint additional medical consultant and teaching staff.

Operations (Waiting Lists)

16. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of patients awaiting operations in the Wessex regional health authority area wait for longer than one year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: At September 1990, the latest date for which information is available on numbers awaiting operations, 23 per cent. of patients waiting for an operation in the Wessex region waited over a year.

Bexley Health Authority

17. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to pay an official visit to Bexley health authority to look at health provision.

Mr. Dorrell: I have no plans to visit Bexley health authority at present.

Diabetics

19. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will consider introducing national health service prescription of injection pen needles for diabetics requiring insulin treatment.

Mr. Dorrell: I am considering whether injection pen systems including needles for diabetics requiring insulin treatment should be available on prescription. The pricing and cost implications of various systems are under examination.

NHS Trusts

20. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to obtain information on the salary increases of the national health service trust general managers together with a job description; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are no plans to collect this information. However, annual accounts will include details of the salary of the highest paid board member. This would normally be the chief executive.

22. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps the Government are taking to monitor the development of NHS trusts.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We are appointing local monitoring officers in five regions to assist the existing finance team of the NHS management executive in ensuring that NHS trusts meet their financial duties.

23. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospitals have applied for trust status at the latest available date.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In England, 107 hospitals and other units have applied for NHS trust status for April 1992.

24. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many applications have now been submitted for self-governing status for hospitals and other NHS units.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To date, 107 hospitals and other units have applied to become NHS trusts in April 1992.

28. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will require regional health authorities to give a favourable response to requests from hon. Members and others for public debate on proposals for the establishment of particular NHS trusts.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Each national health service trust application is the subject of consultation under the terms of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990. It is up to regional health authorities to decide whether public debates would be appropriate.

Deprivation Formulae

21. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what approval formulae was used by health authorities to take account of relative levels of local deprivation; how these are tabulated into sums of money; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Our guidance invites regional health authorities to consider allowing for social deprivation when they fund their districts. A number of them do so, using several approaches. Details of the monetary effect of allowing for social deprivation are not held centrally.

Waiting Lists

25. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about progress in implementing initiatives to reduce waiting lists.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The waiting list initiative is progressing well. The number of patients waiting over one and two years is continuing to fall and we intend to secure further major reductions in the year ahead.

GP Fundholders

26. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he next plans to meet the chairman of the BMA to discuss general practice fund holding; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We regularly meet representatives of the medical profession, including the BMA. My hon. Friend will welcome the announcement which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was able to make recently of the agreement with the General Medical Services Committee to set up a joint working group on NHS review issues including the evaluation of GP fundholding.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will establish for community health councils rights of access to information on, and for monitoring of, the manner in which Exchequer money allocated to fundholding general practitioners for the purpose of purchasing services is used, similar to those afforded community health councils in relation to expenditure by district health authorities as purchasing authorities.

Mr. Dorrell: District health authorities retain overall purchasing responsibility for all patients, including those on the lists of fundholding GPs. This provides the mechanism for the community health council to raise any concerns or questions it may have.

Organ Donor Scheme

27. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the current results of the organ donor scheme.

Mr. Dorrell: The best measure of the effectiveness of the organ donor scheme is the number of transplants performed. According to information provided by the United Kingdom transplant support service the number of transplants, including corneas, performed in the United Kingdom in 1990 was 4,938. This represents an 11 per cent. increase over 1989.

Further expansion of the transplant programme, to which this Government are committed, depends entirely on the availability of donor organs. We warmly welcome the "Transplants in Mind" initiative being taken this year by voluntary organisations, with the support of the Department of Health, to raise public awareness. It is very important that everyone is aware both of the success of organ transplantation and of the need to make a positive decision, involving the family, about becoming a donor.

NHS Reforms

29. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he next plans to meet the BMA to discuss health service reforms.

Mr. Waldegrave: I met the BMA earlier this week. We have not set a date for our next meeting.

Preventive Medicine

30. **Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps have been taken to encourage family doctors to focus on preventive medicine.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) on 18 June at column *134*.

In-patients

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the cost per bed of keeping and treating an in-patient in West Hertfordshire hospital for the last three years for which figures are available and what is the average for the North West Thames region;

(2) what is the cost per head of keeping and treating an in-patient in Watford General hospital for the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Dorrell: Since 1987-88 the financial returns submitted by health authorities have focused on the cost of treating patients by specialty on a district basis. The overall cost of in-patient care by hospital is therefore not held.

NHS Drugs

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the estimated figure for savings on the national health service drugs bill in 1989 attributed to more economical prescribing by general practitioners following the introduction of prescribing analyses and costs data.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: From 1979 to 1988 the net ingredient cost of drugs—the cost before any discounts and pharmacy costs and fees—prescribed by GPs increased by an average of 13 per cent. each year. In 1989 this increase was reduced to 8 per cent., representing an estimated saving of around £80 million relative to the previous trend. The introduction of PACT has been a major factor. Encouragement to cost-effective prescribing will be maintained by the indicative prescribing scheme.

Pharmaceuticals

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the estimated percentage increase in cost to the national health service drugs budget of the European Commission's proposed regulation on patent term restoration for medicinal products; and how any such increase would be affected by the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The precise cost would depend on the number and sales value of products benefiting in the future from extended protection. An estimate based on historical data, in a study commissioned by the industry, suggests the net effect could rise to around 1 per cent. of the drugs bill. The industry accepts that the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme could be used to mitigate the effect. However, as an indirect profitability control, on its present basis, it would be unlikely to produce an exact offset.

Postgraduate Medical Education

Mr. Irvine: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his assessment of the combined effect of article 1(3) and article 9(1) of the draft European Community directive on the advertising of medicines upon the funding of post-graduate medical education by the pharmaceutical industry.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave him on 18 June at column 141.

Hospital Food

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will exclude better food from the extra services for which national health service patients may be charged; if he will ensure that all food served to all patients is of *(a)* good quality, *(b)* varied and *(c)* suitable for their medical condition; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Health service managers are responsible for offering good quality, varied meals which meet the nutritional requirements of patients. As part of their income generation initiative health authorities are encouraged to offer additional services to patients. The provision of an à la carte menu offering a wider choice and luxury food items for a charge is a good example of this.

Fertility Treatment

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average cost of a course of fertility treatment for a woman to become pregnant.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally.

Prescribing Costs

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will issue guidelines on who has the responsibility to meet prescribing costs once a national health service patient has been discharged from an *(a)* national health service directly-managed unit to a fund-holding general practitioner practice, *(b)* national health service directly-managed unit to a non-fund-holding general practitioner practice, *(c)* self-governing trust to a fund-holding general practitioner practice and *(d)* self-governing trust to a non-fund-holding general practitioner practice.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The general principle is that the doctor who has clinical responsibility has prescribing responsibility.

Protocols may also be made between consultants and general practitioners to care for particular categories of patients on a shared-care basis.

Cervical and Breast Cancer

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what policies have been introduced to reduce the death rates amongst women from cervical and breast cancer since 1979.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) on 21 February at columns *241-42*.

NHS Funding

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list for the current financial year, how much funding has been made available to the national health service to *(a)* meet the real cost of inflation, *(b)* meet the specific costs of medical inflation, *(c)* target towards reducing inequalities in public health and health care provision, *(d)* allow for positive health measures through health promotion and education and *(e)* allow community care proposals to be fully implemented.

Mr. Dorrell: Expenditure on the NHS in England for all purposes this year is expected to amount to some £26·6 billion. This represented a real-terms increase of nearly 5 per cent. over spending last year, and of 51 per cent. over spending in 1978-79. We do not identify sums separately for the purposes listed.

Mental Health Services

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will issue guidelines to all district health authorities acute mental health services to provide a service for people with mental health problems, similar to the service currently provided by accident and emergency departments for people with medical problems.

Mr. Dorrell: It is for district authorities to assess the psychiatric needs of their populations and to provide, in the light of available resources, a range of mental health services to meet those needs, including emergency services in whatever form is deemed to be most suitable to the locality.

Artificial Limbs

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average life of an artificial limb before it requires complete replacement.

Mr. Dorrell: Five years.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many artificial legs are supplied annually by the national health service.

Mr. Dorrell: Approximately 16,600 per annum.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which companies supply artificial legs to the national health service and what proportion of this market each company holds.

Mr. Dorrell: The names of the companies and the proportion of the market each holds is as follows:—

	Per cent.
Chas A Blatchford & Sons Ltd	28
F H Cousins & Son (Leeds) Ltd	2
Dorset Orthopaedic Co Ltd	2
John Drew (Midlands) Ltd	4
LIC Care Ltd	9
Oxford Prosthetics Ltd	4
Prostech Ltd	3
Prosthetics UK Ltd	2
Rehabilitation Services Ltd	5
Hugh Steeper Ltd	12
James Stubbs & Sons Ltd	3
Technology World Incorporated (UK) Ltd	12
Vessa Limited	14

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the cost to the national health service, on an annual basis, of the provision and service of artificial legs.

Mr. Dorrell: The cost to the National Health Service of the provision and service of artificial legs in 1989-90 was £31·401 million and in 1990-91 it was £33·236 million.

Community Health Councils

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to provide funding for community health councils which would allow a standardised level of service across England and Wales *(a)* related to the population served taking into account the distribution of areas of high dependency and *(b)* containing a standardised element for the training of community health council staff and members.

Mr. Dorrell: Regional health authorities, as establishing authorities, are responsible for the funding of community health councils. CHCs essentially provide a local service, and RHAs are therefore best placed to make funding decisions taking account of local needs. We see no reason, and have no plans, to change this policy.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will abolish the upper age limit of 70 years for appointment to community health councils.

Mr. Dorrell: There is no regulation limiting the age of a community health council member. Guidance issued to health authorities advises that appointing bodies should not appoint people over 70 unless there is a special reason, but it has no statutory force.

Menopause

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, further to his answer of 2 July, *Official Report*, column *117*, what provision is made under the national health service for treatment of severe menopausal symptoms.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Health authorities are responsible for assessing local health care needs and ensuring a comprehensive range of services for local people, including menopause services. Treatment of menopausal symptoms in any individual remains a matter for the clinical judgment of the doctor concerned.

Family Planning

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the change in real terms since 1979 on spending on family planning facilities.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Estimated total expenditure on NHS family planning services in England was £94·6 million in 1988-89, the latest year for which figures are available. This represents an increase in real terms of 33 per cent. since 1979.

Private Ambulance Services

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will introduce legislation (i) enabling the setting up of a registration and/or regulatory body to lay down and enforce standards governing *(a)* staffing, *(b)* training, *(c)*

vehicles and *(d)* equipment of all private ambulance services and (ii) requiring that these standards should be no lower than those applying to health authority ambulance services.

Mr. Dorrell: There are no plans to introduce such legislation.

Mental Illness

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish, in respect of his Department's circular HC(90)24, details of the way in which the specific grant is being utilised nationally; what steps have been taken to ensure that it is not being used to support or replace the appointment of staff or the provision of services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The social services inspectorate issued a document in November 1990 "Mental Illness Specific Grant Monitoring Arrangements" setting out fully the way the inspectorate intends to undertake the monitoring, and the information and action required from each social services authority.

The social services inspectorate will produce a report of its findings of the use of the grant, including the social care services which have been developed for people with mental illness including those with dementia, in relation to national objectives as outlined in "Caring for People" and to the care programme arrangements as referred to in HC(90)23. Copies of both the report and the circular are available in the Library.

Public Consultation

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the *(a)* national health service trusts, *(b)* district health authorities and *(c)* regional health authorities which have (i) commenced or (ii) are about to commence negotiations with community health councils leading to the adoption by regional and district health authorities and trusts of codes of practice on public consultation.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not held centrally. NHS trusts are not required to consult directly with community health councils, but have been encouraged to establish informal relations with them. Guidance has been issued to health authorities on the principles of consultation. It is for the regional health authorities and district health authorities themselves to ensure that these principles are adhered to.

Drugs Research

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the terms of reference of the research being carried out by Professor Conrad Harris and funded by the Department in relation to his indicative prescribing scheme; where this research is being undertaken; what account is taken by the project of the generics of the drugs; how many representatives of drug companies are working as part of this research team; and how much of the funding of the project comes from drug manufacturers.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The remit of the research is to analyse patterns of prescribing in general practice and to develop indicators to provide the NHS with information about the normal range of prescribing for certain types of drugs. The research is being undertaken at the department of general practice at Leeds university. No representatives of drug companies are working as part of the research team. The project is wholly Government funded. Generic prescribing is one of the factors which the team may address during its research.

Women NHS Employees

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what change there has been in the number of women employed by the national health service as (1) consultants and (2) general practitioners since 1979; and what proportion of the totals women now form.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The latest available information on the number and proportion of female consultants and general practitioners in England is given in the table. Medical staffing in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is the responsibility of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland, for Wales and for Northern Ireland.

	1979	*1989*
Hospital consultants (medical and dental) numbers	1135·4	2027·7
Female consultants as proportion of the whole percentage	10·3	14·4
General medical practitioners (GMPs) numbers	3,865	6,886
Female GMPs as a proportion of the whole percentage	16·8	24·8

Health Authorities (Elections)

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will bring forward proposals for the direct election of regional and district health authorities.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are no such plans. Regional and district health authorities are responsible for ensuring that the health needs of the local population are assessed and met at local level. The direct election of members of these authorities would not materially aid that process.

Births

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the estimated national percentage of women whose deliveries were conducted by *(a)* a hospital doctor, *(b)* a general practitioner, *(c)* a midwife and *(d)* other, for each year between 1985 and 1991.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information along the lines requested was collected for the first time in 1988-89 and the latest available figures are for 1989-90.

The estimates given in the table are derived from incomplete data and, particularly in the case of 1988-89, should be regarded as approximate.

Person conducting delivery—percentages *England*

	1988-89	*1989-90*
Hospital Doctor	22	24
General Practitioner	[1]0	[1]0
Midwife	72	72
Other	1	2
Not Known	4	2

[1]Less than 0·5 per cent.

Source SMI2: Hospital Episode Statistics

Cervical Smear Tests

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list for every month since March 1990 the district health authorities not reaching the one month target for cervical cancer test turnround time; and if he will state the time taken in each of those authorities.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not available in the form requested. At June 1991, 31 district health authorities reported that they were not meeting the one-month target for processing cervical smear tests. These were as follows:

Regional Health Authority	*District Health Authority*	*Number of weeks*
Northern	S. W. Durham	6·0
Yorkshire	Bradford	6·0
Trent	South Derbyshire	6·5
East Anglian	Cambridge	6·0
North East Thames	Mid Essex	7·0
	Waltham Forest	9·0
	Basildon and Thurrock	5·0
South East Thames	Brighton	8·0
	Tunbridge Wells	6·0
	Bromley	8·0
Wessex	Bath	8·5
North Western	Stockport	13·0
	Tameside	7·0

Medicines Commission

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to receive the annual report of the Medicines Commission for 1990.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received the report and copies have today been laid before both Houses of Parliament in accordance with the requirements of section 5(2) of the Medicines Act 1968.

Bound volumes have been placed in the Library containing the 1990 reports of the Medicines Commission, the Committee on Safety of Medicines, the Veterinary Products Committee, the British Pharmacopoeia Commission, the Committee on the Review of Medicines and the Committee on Dental and Surgical Materials.

We are glad to pay tribute to the valuable work done by the distinguished members of the Medicines Act advisory bodies and thank them warmly for the time and effort which they contribute to the public interest in this most important field.

Leukaemia

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made in following up the advice on chemicals of the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment contained in recent reports on leukaemia incidence in young people resident in west Cumbria and other areas.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department of Health referred both the recommendation and the advice to the Committee on Mutagenicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COM).

Its study into the chemicals used at Dounreay and Sellafield is nearing completion and I will arrange publication of the results in due course. A summary of its advice on whether there is evidence that potential exposure to chemicals may result in malignancies in the first generation offspring follows.

The results from a limited number of laboratory animal studies suggest that paternal exposure to certain mutagenic chemicals and radiation can result in malignancies in their first generation offspring. Although the limited data available from humans exposed to cytotoxic agents used therapeutically have not indicated any such effect, the committee nevertheless felt it prudent to assume that a chemical that has been shown to be mutagenic in germ cells in laboratory animals has the potential to induce malignancies in the first generation offspring.

Regarding the excess leukaemias at Sellafield COM considered possible mechanisms that could be involved if the effects were indeed a consequence of the mutagenic effects of a chemical. It was difficult to explain the observed incidence by any known mutational mechanism, but the committee felt that there was a need for a better understanding of the mechanistic basis of tumour induction following paternal exposure. They advised that further work was needed, involving both radiation and chemicals, in particular urethane.

The Government are grateful to COM for this advice and will implement its recommendations.

A copy of the full text of the Committee's statement has been placed in the Library.

DEFENCE

Household Cavalry (Hunts)

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many officers and men of the Household Cavalry and of what rank and trade were involved in the transportation of horses to the *(a)* Quorn hunt, *(b)* Belvoir hunt and *(c)* Cottesmore hunt in January, February and March.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A lance-corporal, who is a trained horse box driver, and a trooper, who accompanies the horses to ensure their welfare and safety, were involved in transporting horses to the three hunts during the periods mentioned.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for how many duty hours members of the Household Cavalry were involved in foxhunting, including transportation to and from fox hunts, in October 1990, November 1990, December 1990, January 1991, February 1991 and March 1991.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information is not available in the form requested and could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Ministry of Defence horses have been injured while hunting in the last five years; and if he will provide details of the regiments, the hunt and the injury.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Minor injuries to horses are not uncommon in any form of arduous training, including hunting, but are not separately recorded. There is no record of serious injury to Ministry of Defence horses attributable to hunting.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the costs incurred by the Household Cavalry in hunting with the *(a)* Quorn, *(b)* Belvoir and *(c)* Cottesmore hunts in 1990 and 1991; and how many riders and horses were involved.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No additional costs to public funds were incurred as a result of members of the Household Cavalry taking part in these hunts. Forty-three riders and 25 horses were involved during the season.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what Ministry of Defence equipment armed forces personnel are permitted to use in off-duty hours to participate in hunting; and if he will provide details of the hire charges.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Personnel from non-mounted units using Army horses off-duty are required to pay £10 per hour for the hire of the horse. They would normally provide their own equipment.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who is responsible for veterinary fees following an injury to a Ministry of Defence horse used for hunting by armed forces personnel in off-duty hours.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Personnel from non-mounted regiments riding Army horses off-duty are required to pay a full cost hire charge and to take out comprehensive insurance to cover the cost of damages to the unit, the horse and any third parties. The hire charge covers the costs of veterinary services.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) which mounted regiments of the armed forces are permitted to take part in *(a)* fox hunting, *(b)* deer hunting and *(c)* hare hunting in duty hours;

(2) whether any military personnel have any involvement in deer hunting during duty hours;

(3) if he has any plans to restrict armed forces personnel's participation in hunting in duty hours.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Hunting in duty hours is permitted in mounted regiments only at the Commanding Officer's discretion, when it is not to the detriment of any military task. Personnel in non-mounted regiments are not normally permitted to hunt in duty hours. No further restrictions are planned.

Army horses and personnel do not participate in deer hunting in duty hours.

Military and Naval Hospitals

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if there have been any recent changes in the entitlement of retired services personnel to receive medical treatment in military and naval hospitals.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Military Exports

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the value of new contracts approved for military exports in 1990; and what was the value of actual deliveries of military equipment which passed through the United Kingdom Customs for approved export in 1990.

Mr. Alan Clark: New contracts approved for military export in 1990 were worth approaching £3,000 million. For the value of deliveries passing through Customs, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1991, Volume 2, table 2·7, which was published last week.

W88 Warhead

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the concerns expressed by the Defence Committee and the Drell report about weaknesses in the United States W88 warhead designed for the Trident D5.

Mr. Alan Clark: We intend to publish a formal response to the Defence Committee's report on the Trident programme in due course.

Weapons Transportation

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now ensure that the missile and warhead are at all times transported separately.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I assume that the hon. Gentleman is referring to the UK Trident II missile and its associated warheads, which will normally be handled and transported separately. We plan to transport operational missiles only within the Royal Naval Armaments Depot at Coulport. No final decisions have been taken, or are yet needed, on whether the missile and warhead should be handled together within the depot.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now state what notification is given to local police and fire authorities prior to the transport of nuclear warheads or missiles through the centre of a city.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The local police force is always informed when a nuclear weapons convoy passes through their area of responsibility.

Holcombe Moor Inquiry

Mr. Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will quantify the cost to his Department of the inquiry into the extension of a dry training area on Holcombe moor, Bury, in 1988.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No. it is not our normal policy to provide such costs.

Butterflies (Porton Down)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps have been taken to protect rare species of butterfly on Porton Down by his Department in areas under the jurisdication of his Department.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: This is a matter for the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment under its framework document. I have therefore asked the chief executive of the CBDE, Dr. G. S. Pearson, to reply direct to the hon. Member.

Royal Navy (Support Infrastructure)

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made on developing plans for the rationalisation of the Royal Navy's support infrastructure.

Mr. Tom King: The Government have been examining all aspects of the armed forces' support, in order to achieve the most efficient support infrastructure and to make savings in line with the front-line force level reductions confirmed in the Statement on the Defence Estimates "Britain's Defence for the 90s". The closure of the RN leadership school, HMS Royal Arthur, the RN diesel repair depot at Blackbrook Farm, and the accommodation and administrative headquarters, HMS St. Vincent, at Furse house, London, have already been announced, *Official Report*, 16 January 1991, column *500*.

Following a thorough review of basing arrangements, I have decided that when the new force structure is in place ships of the Royal Navy will continue to be based at each of the naval bases at Portsmouth, Devonport, Rosyth and Faslane. Although Portland is not a base port but an operating base, I see a continuing need for a naval presence there also. We will now proceed to rationalise the support activities in each of these naval base areas, and changes will also be made to the current arrangements for basing ships at Rosyth.

The Rosyth-based squadron of four type 42 destroyers —HMS York, Glasgow, Liverpool and Edinburgh—will be redeployed to Portsmouth, which will become their base port. This will allow the support activity for type 42s to be concentrated in Portsmouth with consequent economies. This move to Portsmouth will take place progressively from mid-1993 to late-1994. In addition, the four ships of the Northern Ireland squadron will move to Faslane in 1993. Rosyth remains the base port for the 1st, 3rd and 4th minecounter measure squadrons together with the fishery protection squadron. As a result of these changes, about 1,100 service personnel will relocate to Portsmouth and 100 to Faslane. Some 900 civilian posts will also be affected with a number moving to other establishments, but also with some inevitable redundancies. Employment at Rosyth will then number around 8,500 including employees at the dockyard. Current plans to conduct major refits of submarines, including Vanguard class SSBNs, and surface vessels, at Rosyth remain unchanged. The substantial investment currently being made in the dockyard in new refit facilities for Trident submarines will itself provide a further significant number of jobs.

A range of other measures designed to rationalise support facilities elsewhere in the naval shore infrastructure have also been decided. These include the closure of the royal naval air station HMS Daedalus at Lee-on-Solent and the relocation of the air engineering school and other units to other establishments in the Portsmouth area; the closure of the royal naval stores depots at Lathalmond in Scotland and Copenacre in Wiltshire, although some offices will remain in Copenacre, the closure of the royal naval armaments depot at Trecwn in Wales and the partial closure of the armament depot at Ernesettle, Plymouth; closure of the oil fuel depot at Invergordon and withdrawal of Royal Navy facilities at the Finnart oil fuel depot; and the sale of the Gunwharf site at HMS Nelson, Portsmouth. Some 1,900 civilian posts will be affected with some inevitable redundancies, but it is hoped about a third will be relocated to other establishment. These closures will take place progressively over the next five years.

These measures carry forward the policy already announced of making reductions in the support area proportional to those in the front line. They are an essential part of ensuring the best use of defence resources and providing a structure appropriate to the needs of our Navy in the 90s and beyond.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Herbs and Spices

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has made any evaluation of the masterspice process for the reduction of microbial contamination in herbs and spices as an alternative to irradiation.

Mr. Maclean: Evaluation of food processing methods generally is a matter for the industry. My responsibility is to be satisfied as to the safety and wholesomeness of foods treated by novel processes, as is the case with food irradiation.

Sheep Dips

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to announce the results of his review into the safety of sheep dips.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 12 June at column *602* to my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North, (Mr. Speller).

Angling

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, if he will take steps to ensure the retention of regional licences for angling under the new licensing arrangements being sought by the National Rivers Authority.

Mr. Curry: The National Rivers Authority is currently consulting all interests about its proposals for a national angling licence structure for salmon and freshwater fish in England and Wales. This consultation process ends on 31 August, after which the NRA will develop its final proposals, advertise them and submit its proposed licence duties for the consideration of my right hon. Friends the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for Wales. Clearly, it would be quite wrong for Ministers to give any undertaking of the kind sought about regional licences and indeed it would be a breach of the procedures set out in the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975 (as amended).

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those persons representing fishing interests on the National Rivers Authority regional committee; and what is the basis on which selection of nominees is made.

Mr. Curry: Appointment by the National Rivers Authority to the regional fisheries advisory committees are made on the basis of informal nominations. Members are drawn from among angling and commercial fisheries interests, fish farming interests, sea fisheries committees, aquarian owners' associations, conservation interests, and academic/professional bodies. Normally, there will be no more than 15 members in total.

A full list of the current chairmen and members of each of the regional fisheries advisory committees appears in the table.

Regional Fisheries Advisory Committees

Region and member's name	*Suggested by*	*Interest*
Anglian		
Mr. P. Tombleson, OBE	NRA	Chairman
Mr. S. Alden	Eastern Area	Area Fisheries
Mr. S. Amos	Eastern Sea Fisheries Joint Committee	Sea Fisheries Committee
Mr. K. Ball	Central Area	Area Fisheries
Mr. L. Cass	Northern Area	Area Fisheries
Mr. C. Clare	Central Area	Area Fisheries
Mr. M. Foster	—	Commercial Fishing
Mr. C. Groome	NRA	RRAC
Mr. M. Labern	NCC	Conservation
Mr. D. Lloyd	National Anglers Council	Angling
Mr. J. Martin	NRA	RFDC
Mr. P. Peachey-Edwards	Eastern Area	Area Fisheries
Mr. C. Rollinson	Northern Area	Area Fisheries
Mr. A. Wheeler	IFM	Fisheries
Northumbria		
Mr. P. Tennant	NRA	Chairman
Mr. J. Browne-Swinburne	NRA	RRAC
Dr. T. Crisp	—	Academic
Mr. J. Evans-Freke	—	Riparian Owners
Mr. J. Fry, JP	—	Angling
Dr. S. Haile	—	Academic
Mr. D. Hall	—	Angling
Mr. D. Heselton	—	Commercial Fishing
Mr. K. Hewitson	—	Angling
Mr. R. Kirton-Darling	—	Riparian Owners
Dr. M. Owen	—	Conservation
Mr. E. Pratt	—	Riparian Owners
Mr. E. Thomas	—	Commercial Fishing
Mr. C. Warwick	—	Commercial Fishing
Mr. E. Wrangham	NRA	RFDC
Mr. K. Young	—	Commercial Fishing
North West		
Mr. T. Barnes, OBE	NRA	Chairman
Mr. R. Bailey	National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations	Commercial Fishing
Dr. R. Broughton	Ribble Fisheries Association	Other Industry
Mr. A. Brown	—	Other Industry
Mr. F. Bunting	—	Other Industry
Mr. J. Croft	—	Other Industry
Mr. E. Ecroyd	Salmon and Trout Association	Game Angling
Mr. J. Fell	—	Other Industry
Mr. C. Holland	Mersey Basin Campaign	Conservation
Mr. B. Irving	—	Academic
Mr. K. Lambert	North West Federation of Sport and Recreation	Sport/Recreation
Mr. E. Le Cren	IFM	Academic
Mr. J. Lovell	Association of Sea Fisheries Committees	Sea Fisheries Committee
Mr. P. Neal	—	Other Industry
Mr. W. Wannop, OBE	NRA	RFDC
Mr. R. Weston	NRA	RRAC
Severn Trent		
Mr. F. Jennings	NRA	Chairman
Dr. P. Bottomley	National Federation of Anglers	Academic
Mr. W. Casey	Severn Fisheries Conservation Council	Area Fisheries
Mr. G. Chambers	Salmon and Trout Association	Game Angling
Mr. T. Clowes	CLA	Riparian Owners
Mr. B. Crawford	National Association of Specialist Anglers	Angling
Mr. K. Fisher	British Waterways	Area Fisheries
Mr. W. Hardy	Severn Estuary Fishermen's Association	Commercial Fishing
Mr. C. Hawthorne	NRA	RFDC
Mr. H. Howarth	Trent Consultative	Area Fisheries
Mr. A. Jones	[illegible] Consultative	Area Fisheries
Mr. D. Morgan	Severn Consultative	Area Fisheries
Mr. D. Orton	Angling Foundation	Angling
Dr. A. Richards	Trent Consultative	Area Fisheries
Mr. R. Sparrow	National Farmers Union	Fish Farming
Mr. A. Stephens	National Federation of Anglers	Angling
Dr. H. Tebbutt	NRA	RRAC
Mr. R. Williams	Severn Consultative	Area Fisheries

Region and member's name	Suggested by	Interest
Southern		
Mr. A. Humbert	NRA	Chairman
Mr. B. Aldrich	Hampshire Water Keepers Association	Special
Mr. D. Brunwin	Kent Anglers	Area Fisheries
Mr. A. Costen	Southern Counties Federation Angling Clubs	Angling
Dr. J. Cotton	Salmon and Trout Association	Coarse Angling
Mr. M. Drummond	NRA	RRAC
Mr. I. Gay	NFU	Fish Farming
Dr. B. Lindsay	Sussex Anglers	Area Fisheries
Mr. C. Neame	NRA	RFDC
Mr. J. Parkman	—	Other Industry
Mr. J. Potter	Isle of Wight and Hampshire Anglers	Area Fisheries
Mr. F. Reader	National Federation of Anglers	Angling
Mr. B. Stott	IFM	Fisheries
Major J. Thomas	Kent and Essex Sea Fisheries Committee	Sea Fisheries Committee
South West		
Mrs. A. Voss-Bark	NRA	Chairman
Lt. Col. G. Badham	—	Area Fisheries
Mr. A. Baker	Netsmen	Commercial Fishing
Lord Clinton	South West Riparian Owners Association	Riparian Owners
Mr. S. Day	Devon Sea Fisheries Committee	Sea Fisheries Committee
Mr. P. Edwards	NRA	RRAC
Miss J. Edwards	Devon Wildlife Trust	Conservation
Professor C. Kennedy	Exeter University	Academic
Mr. G. Manning	NRA	RFDC
Mr. H. Maund	South West Riparian Owners Association	Fish Farming
Mr. M. Mountjoy	North Devon Commercial Fishermen's Association	Commercial Fishing
Mr. T. Mutton	Salmon and Trout Association	Game Angling
Mr. R. Retallick	—	Coarse Angling
Mr. J. Stevens	Cornwall Sea Fisheries Committee	Sea Fisheries Committee
Mr. M. Weaver	West Country Tourist Board	Sport/Recreation
Mr. B. Wilson	Liskeard and District Anglers	Area Fisheries
Thames		
Mr. H. Parry	NRA	Chairman
Dr. J. Alabaster	—	Academic
Mr. M. Davies, OBE	NRA	RFDC
Professor J. George	—	Conservation
Mr. M. Gregory, OBE, LLB	CLA	Riparian Owners
Mr. A. Hodges	Thames Consultative	Fisheries
Dr. D. Jamieson	Thames Water Utilities Limited	Water Industry
Mr. B. Knights	—	Commercial Fishing
Mr. D. Komrower	NFU	Fish Farming
Mr. G. Lee	Thames Consultative	Angling
Mr. T. Mansbridge	Thames Consultative	Fisheries
Mr. A. Meddle	Kent and Essex Sea Fisheries Committee	Sea Fisheries Committee
Mr. D. Wales	Thames Consultative	Fisheries
Mr. A. Williams	Thames Consultative	Fisheries
Mrs. J. Wykes	NRA	RRAC
Welsh		
Lord Moran	NRA	Chairman
Mr. I. Edwards-Jones	Wye Salmon Fishery Owners' Association	Riparian Owners
Dr. J. Fish	North Western and North Wales Sea Fisheries Committee	Sea Fisheries Committee
Mr. W. Hardy	National Federation Fishermen's Organisations	Commercial Fishing
Mr. M. Johnston	—	Area Fisheries
Mr. M. Matthews	—	Fisheries
Mr. J. Mayers	Welsh Federation of Coarse Anglers	Coarse Angling
Mr. M. McLaggan	NRA	RFDC
Mr. I. Milichamp	IFM	Fisheries
Mr. M. Morgan	Welsh Salmon and Trout Angling Association	Game Angling
Colonel P. Ormrod	—	Riparian Owners
Sir I. Raikes	United Usk Fishermen's Association	Riparian Owners
Mr. A. Rees	—	Area Fisheries
Mr. J. Rhydderch	South Wales Sea Fisheries Committee	Sea Fisheries Committee
Mr. G. Roberts	—	Area Fisheries
Dr. W. Roscoe Howells	NRA	RRAC
Mrs. J. Spence	NFU	Fish Farming
Mr. W. Williams	—	Fisheries

Region and member's name	Suggested by	Interest
Wessex		
Mr. C. Rothwell	NRA	Chairman
Mr. R. Baker	NRA	RFDC
Mr. R. Corbett	—	Game Angling
Mr. D. Gifford	—	Game Angling
Mr. K. Hall	—	Coarse Angling
Major A. Hill	—	Fish Farming
[illegible]r. P. Lacey	NRA	RRAC
[illegible]. K. Lacey	—	Coarse Angling
Dr. M. Ladle	Institute of Freshwater Ecology	Conservation
Mr. J. Mathrick	—	Coarse Angling
Mr. J. Parker	—	Coarse Angling
Major D. Rasch	—	Game Angling
Mr. M. Stoodley	—	Coarse Angling
Colonel C. Tarver, MBE	Trout Fishermen	Game Angling
Mr. G. Topp	—	Coarse Angling
Yorkshire		
Mr. J. Fawcett	NRA	Chairman
Mr. J. Austerfield	IFM	Academic
Mr. T. Collier	NRA	RFDC
Mr. A. Dalby	Ouse Consultative	Angling
Mr. A. Evans	Don Consultative	Angling
Mr. P. Hayton	Aire/Calder Consultative	Angling
Mr. W. Jackson	Esk/Derwent Consultative	Angling
Mr. H. Mackrill	CLA	Riparian Owners
Mr. J. Mitchell	East Riding FCA	Angling
Mr. A. Noble	National Federation of Anglers	Angling
Mr. M. O'Donnell	NFU	Fish Farming
Dr. R. Ormond	—	Conservation
Mr. M. Stewart	Salmon and Trout Association	Angling
Mr. G. Traves	National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations	Commercial Fishing
Mr. J. Whitworth	NRA	RRAC

Notes:
NRA—National Rivers Authority.
NCC—Nature Conservancy Council.
IFM—Institute of Fisheries Management.
RRAC—Regional Rivers Advisory Committee.
RFDC—Regional Flood Defence Committee.
CLA—Country Land Owners Association.
NFU—National Farmers Union.

Land Settlement Association

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list, by county, the number of small holdings and orchards and the amount of land operated by the Land Settlement Association, which *(a)* has been sold since 1982 and *(b)* has yet to be sold; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The details requested are as follows:

	Sold		*Unsold*	
	Smallholdings	*Land including Orchards (Hectares)*	*Smallholdings*	*Land (Hectares)*
Bedfordshire	94	278	8	18
Cambridgeshire	80	392	2	4
Essex	60	159	—	—
Gloucestershire	51	137	—	—
Lincolnshire	26	51	—	—
Suffolk	47	152	1	5
West Sussex	120	234	—	—
Humberside	38	118	—	—
Total	516	1,521	11	27

I am pleased that more than 90 per cent. of tenants have been able to purchase their holdings.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for what reasons *(a)* his Ministry was unable to sell the land of the Land Settlement Association, and *(b)* land had to be given to the association's tenants and ex-tenants.

Mr. Gummer: Eleven holdings are still in Ministry ownership because the tenants declined the opportunity to purchase them. No holdings or land have been given to association tenants or ex-tenants.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list, by county, the number of smallholdings and orchards and the area involved in

hectares, that were operated by the Land Settlement Association prior to the termination of the arrangements with his Ministry in 1982; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The details requested are as follows:

	Small holdings	*Land including orchards (Hectares)*
Bedfordshire	102	296
Cambridgeshire	82	396
Essex	60	159
Gloucestershire	51	137
Lincolnshire	26	51
Suffolk	48	157
West Sussex	120	234
Humberside	38	118
Total	527	1,548

Most of the holdings and land have now been sold to the tenants.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much his Ministry has received for each year since 1982 for the sale of land operated by the Land Settlement Association; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The details requested are as follows:

	£
1982-83	Nil
1983-84	2,007,890
1984-85	11,250,088
1985-86	5,084,205
1986-87	1,704,469
1987-88	325,966
1988-89	209,226
1989-90	209,545
1990-91	590,000
TOTAL	21,381,389

I consider that fair prices were obtained for all the holdings and land sold. Tenants who purchased their holdings and land paid the tenanted value for the property.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Local Management

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools have applied for local management for schools status in England and Wales and in the South West Hertfordshire education division; and what are their relevant percentages of the total schools.

Mr. Fallon: Seventy-eight per cent. of secondary and 30 per cent. of primary schools in England already have delegated budgets; none of these is in Hertfordshire. All secondary and those primary schools with a pupil population of 200 or more must have delegated budgets on or before 1 April 1993; primary schools with fewer than 200 pupils must have delegated budgets by 1 April 1994.

Schools which are dissatisfied with the timing of delegation proposed by their local education authorities may apply to the Secretary of State for accelerated delegation, to take effect from as early as 1 April 1992. We have had a number of informal inquiries from schools but no formal applications to date.

Educational Psychology

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if hospital psychologists will be allowed to offer their services to schools in the educational psychology discipline under local management for schools.

Mr. Fallon: It will be open to anyone to offer their services to schools under LMS. Where budgets for support services such as educational psychology have been delegated, it will be for schools to ensure that the services they purchase fully meet their requirements and offer value for money.

Private Golf Clubs

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the categories of Government funding for which private golf clubs are eligible.

Mr. Atkins: Government funding for golf is channeled through the Sports Council. Golf clubs with open memberships are eligible for Sports Council regional grants, usually capital grants, towards facilities or a grant towards promotional development of the sport, but their activities must be deemed a priority in terms of the Sports Council's regional targets. Private golf clubs with closed memberships are not eligible for Sports Council funding.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make it his policy to ascertain whether private golf clubs in receipt of Government grants deny membership to women.

Mr. Atkins: Sports Council grant conditions stipulate open membership: no one will be denied access to use a facility on grounds of race, creed, colour, sex, occupation, religious or political persuasion. Any golf club applying for funding would have its constitution scrutinised before any grant was made in order to ensure it met these conditions.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list each Government grant to private golf clubs for the past five years.

Mr. Atkins: The information requested is not held centrally.

Royal Lifesaving Society

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the 100th anniversary of the Royal Lifesaving Society to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Atkins: I have considered, and approved in principle, an application for an exhibition relating to the 100th anniversary of the Royal Lifesaving Society to be mounted in the Upper Waiting Hall under the sponsorship of my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton). This approval in principle was given in a letter from my office on 24 June.

Conservation Biology

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to ensure that research in the field of conservation biology is included within the terms of reference of an appropriate research council.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Research into nature conservation is included in the charter of the Natural Environment Research Council. Nature conservation embraces conservation biology.

South-West London College

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has received from the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council concerning the next academic year's arrangements for the staff and students of South-West London college; and what other contacts he has made with the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council concerning the future of the college's staff and students.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. and learned Friend has received the results of the consultations with students at the college about their future study carried out by an independent assessor, and which the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council published on 11 July. The Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council are currently discussing with college staff the location of their future employment. It will be for the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council to take account of the views of staff and students in preparing further advice on the transfer of the college's property, rights and liabilities to other institutions.

"Education and Training"

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a breakdown of the responses received to the White Paper "Education and Training", Cm. 1536, giving *(a)* the total number of responses and *(b)* the number received from (i) governing bodies of colleges, (ii) local education authorities, (iii) bodies representative of business and commerce, (iv) bodies representative of teaching staff and (v) others, with the proportion of responses in favour, and against, the proposals for a central funding council.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My Department has so far received more than 1,500 letters commenting on the recent White Paper on education and training. Responses are still coming in. I invited comments on the proposals to enable me to arrive at better informed decisions in due course. I do not believe that the responses will lend themselves to analysis in the way that the hon. Member requests.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will deposit in the Library copies of all responses received to the White Paper "Education and Training", Cm. 1536.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My Department has received over 1,500 responses to the White Paper, "Education and Training for the 21st Century". Responses are still coming in. I did not invite those responses on the basis that they would be public documents. I do not believe that the process of consultation will be helped if they were now turned into public documents.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assessment has been made of the implications for non-vocational adult education, of the proposals in the White Paper "Education and Training for the 21st Century".

Mr. Eggar: The proposals in the White Paper will increase educational opportunities for adults. The further education funding councils will have a duty to secure adequate provision of education leading not only to vocational qualifications, but to GCSEs, AS and A levels, access to other further education or higher education, acquisition of basic skills, English for speakers of other languages and education for adults with special educational needs. Local education authorities will retain the duty to secure adequate provision of other kinds of further education. Our proposals will make it easier for secondary schools to admit adults to their classes or to put on courses for adults on their own initiatives.

Assisted Places Scheme

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will list the number of children participating in the assisted places scheme in each school;

(2) if he will list the schools now participating in the assisted places scheme;

(3) what are the fees at each school that is part of the assisted places scheme;

(4) if he will list the number of pupils who receive a grant through the assisted places scheme in each participating school;

(5) if he will list the number of pupils in each school participating in the assisted places scheme.

Mr. Fallon: I have today placed copies of the table in the Library.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 17 July 1991

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Belfast Duty Solicitor Scheme

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Attorney-General what arrangements he intends to make to ensure the survival of the Belfast duty solicitor scheme.

The Attorney-General: The Belfast duty solicitor scheme is a voluntary scheme established and administered by the Council of the Law Society for Northern Ireland. The continued running of the scheme is, therefore, a matter for that body.

ENERGY

Energy-efficient Lighting

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he is taking to encourage businesses to follow the lead of the Houses of Parliament in introducing energy-efficient lighting to cut costs and save energy.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My Energy Efficiency Office uses its 'Best Practice' programme and the network of Regional Energy Efficiency Officers to promote the saving of energy costs through the use of energy efficiency lighting in industry and commerce.

Central Heating Boilers

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will make a statement on the assessment he has made of the effect of the EC's draft directive for new hot water boilers fired with liquid or gaseous fuels—document No. 9791/90—on *(a)* the average cost to British householders of replacing a central heating boiler, *(b)* the average cost of installing a central heating system, *(c)* the average cost of a central heating boiler, *(d)* the profitability of the British boiler-making industry, *(e)* the average cost of a new house or flat, *(f)* employment within the British boiler-making industry, *(g)* the number of house owners who in future will not be able to replace central heating boilers and *(h)* the average annual saving per boiler in fuel costs;

(2) if it is Her Majesty's Government's intention to oppose implementation of the draft directive on new hot water boilers fired with liquid or gaseous fuels.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Government wish to encourage cost-effective improvements in the energy efficiency of central heating systems in the United Kingdom. The draft directive as proposed by the Commission would not secure this aim. We have offered detailed suggestions for amendments, as have other member states and the European Parliament, and we await a response from the Commission.

Precise assessment of the effects of implementing the current draft is not possible, because of uncertainty about its meaning; in general, the average costs of boilers and systems (a, b, c) are likely to rise, and the average saving (h) is unlikely to be sufficient to make the extra investment cost-effective. Some 60 per cent. of households would have to make alterations costing from £200 to £1,000 before being able to replace their current boiler, a total cost to the nation of some £2,000 million to £3,000 million, resulting in annual fuel savings of only some £10 million to £20 million. The consequential impacts on the average cost of new dwellings (e) and on profitability and employment in the boiler-making industry (d and f) are not clear, but there would have to be major redeployments of resources.

Ministerial Advisers

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about the role of the working group involving outside advisers to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Lewisham East, (Mr. Moynihan) on renewable sources of energy.

Mr. Wakeham: The Government announced their intention to conduct a review of their renewable energy programmes in the White Paper "This Common Inheritance" published in September 1990. A further statement will be made shortly on the procedures to be followed for that review.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisoners

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether prisoners are considered for transfer to an open prison if they have not previously been on home leave.

Mrs. Rumbold: The successful completion of a period of home leave is not a general requirement for allocation to open conditions, but most open establishments include such a requirement in their allocation criteria because of its usefulness as an indication of inmates' suitability.

Prisoners

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people in the current prison population spent time in local authority care as children; and what proportion this is of the total prison population.

Mrs. Rumbold: This information was collected in the national prison survey and will be made available once the results have been analysed.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions have been brought under section 100H(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and 50H(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, respectively, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, since 1 April 1986.

Mr. John Patten: Records available centrally show no prosecutions in England and Wales from 1986 to 1989 under the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985. No information is centrally available for Scotland.

Criminal Injuries Compensation

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in tabular form details of the numbers of claims for between *(a)* £750 and £850, *(b)* £850 and £950 and *(c)* £950 and £1,050 and the number in excess of these amounts by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board during the most recent 12-month period for which figures are available; and how many of the claims were made by police officers.

Mr. John Patten: Information is not available in the form requested, but the percentage of awards within different bands for the year ended 31 March 1990, is shown in paragraph 8.1 of the board's last annual report—Cm 1365—a copy of which is in the Library. The relevant figures are:

	Number	*Percentage*
Under £400	462	1·6
£400— £499	473	1·7
£500— £599	3,179	11·4
£600— £799	5,085	18·2
£800— £999	3,458	12·4
£1,000—£1,991	7,868	28·2
£2,000—£4,999	5,205	18·6
£5,000—£9,999	1,394	5·0
£10,000 and over	802	2·9
	27,926	100·0

The board does not keep totals of the number of applications from police officers.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of cases settled under the criminal injuries compensation scheme in 1990; and what information he has about the time taken to determine cases from first registration in the years ending 31 March 1990 and 31 March 1991.

Mr. John Patten: In the calendar year 1990, a total of 50,006 cases were resolved. The percentage resolved within certain periods of registration for the year ended 31 March 1990, is shown in paragraph 6.1 of the board's 26th annual report—Cm 1365—a copy of which is in the Library. The relevant figures are:

	Percentage
Up to 3 months	0·5
3 to 6 months	1·5
6 to 9 months	3·8
9 to 12 months	13·9
Over 12 months	80·3

Equivalent figures for the year ended 31 March 1991 are not yet available, but a recent survey by the board indicated that about 60 per cent. of applications are being resolved within 12 months.

Parliamentary Boundary Commissioners

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the process of consultation for appointing the assistant parliamentary boundary commissioners; and what progress has been made to date.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has been asked by the Boundary Commission for England to appoint a panel of about 60 assistant commissioners in connection with the fourth general review of constituencies in England, which began in February. The commission put forward a list of 110 distinguished lawyers compiled by writing to heads of chambers and the Lord Chancellor's Department inviting suggestions.

The Home Office is now in the process of consulting the Lord Chancellor's Department over biographical information about the nominees. Final decisions about which of the nominees should be invited to serve will be made in due course.

Prisons

Mr. John Browne: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider using the redundant Army barracks and air and sea stations as prisons for low category prisoners as a short-term measure to relieve overcrowding in prisons such as Winchester.

Mrs. Rumbold *[holding answer 15 July 1991]:* The use of military accommodation to hold prisoners would be justifiable only if the prison population was so high that it could not be contained within the operational capacity of the prison service. Winchester prison, as with many local prisons serving the courts, has a population which exceeds its certified normal accommodation but is less than its operational capacity. Over the next two years, 10 new local prisons and remand centres will be opening, and these will make a major impact on overcrowding in local prisons.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Namibia

Mr. Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make representations to the European Commission with the aim of ensuring that the Community's policy towards negotiations with Namibia is not affected by national bias arising from the current dispute concerning illegal fishing in Namibian waters by nationals of a Community member.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The United Kingdom has expressed concern over the handling of the suspension of fisheries negotiations between the Community and Namibia. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development raised the issue with Commission officials during the 6 and 7 May Council of Ministers in Brussels. The Commission has now given an assurance of its readiness to resume negotiations, which is shared by the Namibian Government.

Dependent Territories

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether his review of the financial arrangements and the adequacy of financial regulations in dependent territories has now been completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My officials have conducted a review; further work is still needed. My officials are discussing further action with the Comptroller and Auditor General.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Set-aside Scheme

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all the options available to farmers which are non-agricultural under the set-aside scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Farmers can make use of any non-agricultural option under the set-aside scheme within the limitations described on page 6 of the booklet SA1—Rev 2—a copy of which is attached. The booklet is also available in the Library of the House. In the first two years of the scheme the main non-agricultural uses related to horse-based activities, golf courses, game cover for commercial shoots, sports grounds and other recreational activities.

Blue-ear Pig Disease

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is yet in a position to relax movement restrictions imposed because of blue-ear pig disease; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The Government's prompt action in response to suspicion of this disease in Great Britain appears to have been successful in containing its spread. In the light of accumulating knowledge about the development of the disease it is now possible to reduce the size of the restricted area, which was imposed on 13 June, around those farms in Humberside where the disease is suspected or has been confirmed. This action, which will take effect immediately, will release movements of pigs from over 100 large livestock units from all restrictions.

Restrictions on farms where the disease has been confirmed or is suspected will remain, but some changes in the movement controls which are applied to affected farms and within restricted zones can now safely be made. These changes are being finalised in the light of comments made by the industry; the details will be announced shortly. These changes will be welcomed by the farmers concerned.

Investigations of the original source of infection in Great Britain are continuing, and developments on farms where disease has been found or is suspected are being closely watched. The fact that these changes can now be made reflects the success of the Government's prompt actions when early reports of the disease were reported and is a tribute to the effectiveness of the state veterinary service in responding to new challenges.

Agriculture Council

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Agriculture Council held in Brussels on 15 and 16 July.

Mr. Gummer: I represented the United Kingdom at this meeting together with the Parliamentary Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry).

Discussion concentrated on the Commission's proposals for major adaptations to the common agricultural policy. I welcomed the prospect of reform and reminded the Council that the United Kingdom was wholly committed in its support for radical change in the CAP. However, I also emphasised that the main thrust of these proposals was disappointing in that they do not constitute a long-term policy for encouraging efficient farming in the Community, are certain to be very costly and involve substantial discrimination between different producers and member states. Furthermore, the environmental element of the CAP would still be an add-on extra rather than a central theme. The Council is expected to resume these discussions at its next meeting in September.

In a discussion on the GATT round I emphasised the need for the Community to take the initiative immediately with a view to achieving an overall solution well before the end of this year.

I also stressed the continued need to protect United Kingdom producers of soft fruit from low-priced processed imports from eastern Europe. The Commissioner agreed to extend the present safeguards until 25 September.

TRANSPORT

Transport Planning

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what conclusions the Government have reached in reviewing methods to achieve a balance between economic and environmental costs and benefits in transport planning.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment—SACTRA—is currently reviewing the Department's methods of environmental assessment for trunk roads, and in particular the scope and methods for putting monetary values on environmental effects. I expect to receive its report in the late summer. The Department gathers information on the full range of economic, environmental and other costs and benefits, to inform decision making, whether or not the information can be quantified or expressed in monetary values.

Airport Charges

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations he has had with the Civil Aviation Authority and BAA concerning the proposals for cuts in the charges levied on airlines.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. and learned Friend has had no such consultations.

Lighthouses

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the net cost to the general lighthouse fund in 1988-89 and 1989-90 in respect of the fund's obligations for *(a)* the Sumbrero lighthouse in Anguilla and *(b)* Pembroke light in the Falkland Islands.

Mr. McLoughlin: The figures for 1988-89 and 1989-90 for Sombrero are £31,008 and £48,507 respectively. No expenditure was incurred at Cape Pembroke, where the lighthouse is not operational.

Rail Freight

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations he has had with rail freight distributors on the regulations concerning undermodal vehicles maximum cargo as against road haulage competition.

Mr. Freeman: Following the launch of his railfreight initiative on 28 May, my right hon. and learned Friend has written to rail freight distributors and others asking for their views on the opportunities for, and obstacles to, a more effective use of the rail network.

Marine Directorate

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to relocate the marine directorate of his Department away from central London.

Mr. Chope: It is this Government's policy to keep under review the cost and location of work carried out by Departments.

Following a review of my Department's marine directorate headquarters, we have decided that most of the directorate's posts which are currently located in offices in central London should relocate to Southampton.

The work to be relocated includes the central staff of the Surveyor-General's Organisation, the HQ administration of Her Majesty's Coastguard, and the marine pollution control unit. Approximately 260 jobs are affected. Some 20 posts dealing with ports matters will remain in central London.

The marine directorate plans to move into new offices in Southampton in May 1993. They will be equipped with all the necessary up-to-date technology to ensure that communications with the rest of the Department, both in London and round the coast, are easy and quick at all times. The move is expected to yield savings of about £19 million over 20 years.

PRIME MINISTER

Energy-efficient Lighting

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Prime Minister what steps he is taking to encourage all Government Departments to introduce energy-efficient lighting to cut costs and save energy; and whether he will assist them with such schemes.

The Prime Minister: As part of the Government's drive to improve energy efficiency on their estate the ministerial group on energy efficiency chaired by the Secretary of State for Energy encourages Departments to take all cost-effective energy efficiency measures available. Since the start of the present campaign many Departments have introduced energy-efficient lighting schemes.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Minister when he was first informed of the doubts of the Bank of England concerning BCCI.

The Prime Minister: I was informed of the fraud as soon as the Bank was satisfied that it had evidence on which it could act.

Sheikh of Abu Dhabi

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister when he last met the Sheikh of Abu Dhabi.

The Prime Minister: I paid a courtesy call on Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan in my capacity as Foreign Secretary on 21 July 1989.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Forestry

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action the Government have taken since September 1990 to reform the tropical forestry action plan.

Mrs. Chalker: The United Kingdom participated in the ad hoc expert group in Geneva in March to develop revised goals and objectives for the TFAP and revisions to its organisation and management following the independent review of TFAP published in May 1990. The group emphasised the need for the TFAP to be country-led, nationally owned process overseen by a consultative group which would monitor quality and impact.

The FAO Council in June 1991 agreed that a small "contact group" of developing and developed countries, NGOs and international agencies should further develop the ad hoc group proposals and report to FAO's Council in November. The ODA will play an active part, if invited.

In countries where the ODA has been involved in TFAP activity since September 1990, officials have followed the recommendations of the independent review in formulating projects and strengthening planning capacity in-country.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what bilateral aid has been given to developing countries to address the social and economic reasons for forest loss since September 1990; and what steps he has taken to assess its effectiveness in promoting agroforestry and reforestation;

(2) if he will list, with figures, the research projects wholly or partly funded by the Government, aimed at improving the productivity of forests in developing countries since September 1990.

Mrs. Chalker: The following ODA forestry research projects have been approved since September 1990. These fall into two categories: strategic research and bilateral country programme activities. All have increased forest productivity as a major objective.

Project	*ODA contribution £*
Strategic Research	
Tree crop interactions in agroforestry prototypes in the Sahel	169,200
Management of miombo woodland as community woodlots	81,000
Comparative study of traditional and introduced tree crops	164,000
Rainforest regeneration in threatened forests of Northern Amazonia	46,000
Investigating soil characteristics and relationship to vegetation status on Mt. Cameroon	43,000
Collection of Calliandra calothyrus seeds and distribution	22,000
Reproductive biology of Contra alliodora	74,000
Evaluation of tree species' potential for fodder (in Central America and Africa)	292,000

Project	ODA contribution £
Study of Inga genetic resources in Central and South America	268,000
Mangrove distribution, vulnerability and management in Central America	34,000
Recovery of tropical forest ecosystems from major disturbances (Indonesia)	60,000
Impact of invasive tree species and control (Jamaica)	73,000
Agroforestry and Mycorrhiza research for semi-arid land of East Africa	60,000
Modelling approach to new logging practices (Malaysia)	45,000
Diseases of forest tress in South East Asia	26,000
Long-term production prospects of logged and unlogged forest in Uganda	98,000
Contribution of fruit-eating primates to natural forest regeneration in Uganda	142,000
Africa Acacia rhizobial technology and ecology (Zimbabwe)	204,000
Dipterocarps, Awarcariacae studies and their application	291,000
Study of seed growth of ecophysiology and Dipterocarp varieties	63,000
Molecular study of the genetic resources in the genus Lencaena	66,000
Comparative physiology, field performance and propagation of prosopsis plants	243,000
Improving yield and sustainability of food production by control of soil acidity	142,000
Reliability of genetic parameters estimated from forest tree progeny tests	161,000
Bilateral Research Programmes	
Production of national database of land resources in Belize	143,000
Developmental potential of rosewood and other species in Para State, Brazil	634,000
Establishment of new biological research station in Caxiuana National Forest, Para State, Brazil	1,351,000
Biological study of ecology, natural regeneration and flora of flooded forest, Para State, Brazil	246,000
Pilot management project to demonstrate artificial regeneration techniques and management procedures in Cameroon	1,900,000
Forest ecology research and staff training in Ghana	333,000
Entomological research in Guyana's forest	190,000
Development of a small and medium scale wood industry in Honduras	1,956,000
Managing lowland dipterocarp forest as a sustainable and productive resource (Indonesia)	2,644,000
Biological control of aphids attacking conifer plantations in Malawi	612,000
Development of a sustainable forestry research capacity in Nepal	4,921,000

The following projects have investigation of social/economic reasons for forest loss as part of their overall objectives [Strategic Research (SR); Bilateral (B)].

	£
Belize forest planning and management (B)	3,356,000
Impact of rainforest logging on local people in Sumatra (SR)	32,000
Resistance of forests to Hurricane Gilbert (Jamaica) (SR)	200,000
Indigenous forest conservation project (Kenya) (B)	4,860,000
Integration of social forestry issues into objectives of Cross River State, (Nigeria) (B)	1,690,000
Adoption of hedgerow intercropping by Third World farmers (SR)	48,000

Under ODA's joint funding scheme, finance is also provided for many non-governmental organisation projects. Details of these could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

ODA has long-established procedures for monitoring and evaluation of projects including feedback of evaluation lessons to all seven programme managers. ODA is currently evaluating five completed forestry projects, in Kenya, India, Lesotho, Nepal and Cote d'Ivoire. The results of this are expected in mid-1992.

Conservation

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what specific bilateral aid the Government have given to conservation projects in developing countries, particularly to anti-poaching projects and the management of wildlife reserves since September 1990.

Mrs. Chalker: We are currently financing 67 NGO environment and wildlife conservation projects through the ODA's joint funding scheme, at an aid programme cost of £1·2 million in 1991-92; and 21 bilateral wildlife conservation projects in Africa at an estimated total aid programme cost of £5 million.

WALES

A470

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what his estimate is of the cost of completing the A470 Pentrebach to Cefn Coed, Merthyr Tydfil.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The estimated total cost of the A470 Pentrebach to Cefn Coed scheme given in the 1991 supplement to "Roads in Wales: Progress and Plans for the 1990s" is £28 million at November 1989 prices.

Mr. Rowlands To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his Department's estimate of the expenditure on the A470 Pentrebach to Cefn Coed, Merthyr Tydfil in 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Actual expenditure will depend on the speed with which engineering design and statutory procedures can be completed and the timing of the start of main works. A main works start is planned before April 1994, and it is not possible to give a more precise date at this stage. A realistic breakdown of expenditure between the financial years requested cannot be given.

Housing for Wales

Mr. Rowlands To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the salaries and emoluments of the board members of Tai Cymru (Housing for Wales).

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) on Thursday 11 July, at column *449*.

A487

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date the first study on the need for a replacement for the Pont Seiont on the A487 to the south of Caernarfon was initiated; on what date that study was completed; what were the initiation and completion dates of any subsequent surveys; on what date construction work on a new bridge was originally scheduled to start; on what dates the start date was revised, for what reason and to what new start date; what is the latest start date for this scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: As part of a general exercise to assess the load-carrying capacity of certain bridge structures on trunk roads in Wales a study of Pont Seiont was commissioned in 1973. This study culminated in the announcement by the then Secretary of State in November 1979 of his "Preferred Route" for the replacement of Pont Seiont. The scheme was included in the 1978 "Roads in Wales" programme for a start in the time band 1981-83. Also as a consequence of the study the existing bridge was strengthened in 1982 to enable it to carry trunk road traffic in the short to medium term. A recent assessment has shown the bridge to be in good condition satisfying current and anticipated loading requirements.

The time band for the start of the replacement scheme has changed in subsequent publications of "Roads in Wales" to reflect this scheme's priority in relation to others in the roads programme. The 1991 supplement to "Roads in Wales: Progress and Plans for the 1990s" shows the scheme in the time band April 1994 to March 1997.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will state for the last available year *(a)* the amount of toxic waste imported through Welsh ports in total, and by port and *(b)* the country of origin and destination of toxic waste imports by port, together with the nature of toxic waste in each case.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The Government believe that developed countries should be self-sufficient in waste disposal and are working towards that end in international discussions.

The information for the year ending 31 March 1991 is as follows:

Port	*Country of origin*	*Destination*	*Type of waste*	*Tonnes*
Holyhead	Ireland	Greater Manchester	Glycolmethacrylate Scrap	16·0
			Metal Hydroxide/Oxides	340·1
			PolychloroBiphenyl (PCB)	13·7
		Hampshire CC	Miscellaneous Waste	22·6
			Miscellaneous Chemical Waste	15·1
			Organic Waste (mix)	84·8
			Pharmaceutical Waste	79·0
		Torfaen BC	Adhesive Waste	12·4
			Liners (cont: toxic waste)	35·2
			Miscellaneous Waste	14·6
			Miscellaneous Chemical Waste	131·5
			Organic Waste (mix)	19·7
			PolychloroBiphenyl (PCB)	12·0
			Pharmaceutical Waste	19·2
			Total	815·9
Newport	Austria	Greater Manchester	Metal Hydroxide/Oxides	84·1
			Miscellaneous Waste	1,090·6
	Germany	Hampshire CC	Laboratory Waste	66·5
			Pesticides	70·0
		Torfaen BC	Miscellaneous Chemical Waste	6·9
			Pesticides	23·9
	Finland	Torfaen BC	PCB Fluid/Transformer	10·7
	Ireland	Greater Manchester	Metal Hydroxides/Oxides	1,515·7
		Hampshire CC	Organic Waste (mix)	31·3

Port	Country of origin	Destination	Type of waste	Tonnes
	Switzerland	Greater Manchester	Aluminium Hydroxide/Oxide	7·4
			Battery Waste	7·0
			Distillation Residue	25·0
			Inorganic Waste	3·8
			Organic Waste (mix)	3·8
			Paint Waste	96·7
			Sodium Chloride	84·4
			Sodium Benzosulphonate	34·1
		Hampshire CC	Organic Waste (mix)	326·2
		Torfaen BC	Organic Waste (mix)	129·1
			Paint Waste	64·0
			PolychloroBiphenyl (PCB)	66·9
			PVC Waste	17·0
			Total	4,505·1
Swansea	Ireland	Torfaen BC	Miscellaneous Waste	10·1
			Total	10·1
			GRAND TOTAL	5,331·1

Dentistry

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those health authorities in Wales that have appointed directors of dental public health; how many of these directors are designated or accredited consultants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The information is as follows:
The district health authorities that have directors of dental public health in post are:

Clwyd[1]
East Dyfed[1]
Gwent
Gwynedd[1]
Pembrokeshire
Powys
South Glamorgan[1]
West Glamorgan

[1] Of consultant designation.

The post in Mid Glamorgan is currently vacant. It is shortly to be advertised as a shared appointment with Powys with the intention of securing the services of an accredited consultant in dental public health.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the number of full-time posts and full-time equivalent posts allocated by each family health authority in Wales for dental matters.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: This information is not available centrally.

TVEI

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when the Training Agency and his Department intend to publish their next joint statement on the technical and vocational education initiative and the national curriculum.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department, the Training Agency and the Curriculum Council for Wales issued a joint statement on TVEI and the national curriculum in July 1989. At present I have no plans to publish a further statement.

Adult Education

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of his budget is allocated to non-vocational adult education.

Sir Wyn Roberts: A great deal of non-vocational adult education is undertaken by local education authorities for which allowance is made in the annual local authority revenue settlement. The sums involved are not hypothecated. The Welsh Office budget for adult education is not split between vocational and non-vocational education.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will establish an inquiry into the state and development of non-vocational adult education in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I do not believe that an inquiry is necessary. The White Paper "Education and Training for the 21st Century" sets out the Government's priorities for the provision of further education for adults. The consultation exercise that ensued has brought forward a wide range of views on the future of adult education and these are being considered in detail before we move forward towards legislation.

Family Health Services

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the family health services authorities in Wales he has met since his appointment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: My right hon. Friend met the chairmen of all the authorities in July 1990. Subsequently, I met the chairmen in June this year when we discussed the progress being made in the development of family health services in Wales.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Schools Budgets

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list local education authorities in rank order by the proportion of the potential schools budget held back in 1991-92, showing in each case the proportion held back in 1990-91.

Mr. Fallon: We are not yet in a position to provide all the information requested. I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Education Expenditure, Coventry

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of Coventry local education authority's expenditure is held back from schools after deductions have been made for capital expenditure; and what is the relative figure for other local education authorities.

Mr. Fallon: The figures for 1991-92 will be published soon: I will write to my hon. Friend.

National Curriculum Council

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the relevant qualifications of Mr. David Pascall in respect of his part-time chairmanship of the National Curriculum Council prior to his appointment in 1990; what proportion of the working week he is expected to devote to these duties; and to what salary and emoluments he is entitled in the year 1991-92.

Mr. Eggar: Mr. Pascall was appointed to the NCC in August 1990 and knows its work well. He will assume the chairmanship of the council on a part-time basis in August 1991. He currently expects to spend 25 to 30 days a year on council business and will be paid an appropriate per diem fee, the amount of which has not yet been settled.

ILEA Sites (Disposal)

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how many former Inner London education authority sites have been disposed of by the London residuary body through negotiation; and how many have been sold at auction;

(2) what is the total income so far raised by the London residuary body from the sale of former Inner London education authority sites; and what is the estimated value of those still to be disposed of;

(3) how many former Inner London education authority sites have been sold by the London residuary body to *(a)* London borough councils, *(b)* other public bodies and *(c)* private purchasers; and how many have still to be disposed of;

(4) how many former Inner London education authority sites transferred to the London residuary body for disposal were previously used as playing fields.

Mr. Eggar: These are matters for the London residuary body.

Education and Training

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the consequences for adult education of the recent Government White Paper on education and training.

Mr. Eggar: The Department has so far received around 1,000 representations about the implications for the further education of adults of the recent Government White Paper "Education and Training for the 21st Century".

Open University

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he will next meet the vice-chancellor of the Open university to discuss the expansion of the university's range of activities.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I meet the vice-chancellor from time to time to discuss a range of issues relating to the university. I met the vice-chancellor in May, and again when I visited the university last week. No date has yet been fixed for a further meeting.

Adult Education

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of his budget is allocated to non-vocational adult education.

Mr. Eggar: Allowance is made within annual local authority finance settlements for the further education of adults. It is for individual local education authorities and the institutions they maintain to determine the pattern of spending in each area within the resources available to them.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of the population of the United Kingdom participated in non-vocational adult education.

Mr. Eggar The information requested is not available centrally, because the available enrolment data do not distinguish between vocational and non-vocational study. Enrolments at adult education centres in the United Kingdom numbered 1·6 million in 1988-89. In addition there were nearly 600 thousand enrolments on courses run by university extra-mural departments, the Workers Educational Association and other bodies. There were also over 600,000 enrolments on non-examinable courses without a specified qualification in further education colleges in England alone. All of these enrolment statistics will cover both vocational and non-vocational study.

CIVIL SERVICE

Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will state the first degree obtained by the chief executive of the Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency and from which university or polytechnic it was awarded.

Mr. Renton: This is a personal matter for the chief executive. However, he has authorised me to say that his first degree was a bachelor of arts in English and History from the university of British Columbia.

Civil Service College

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will state the first degree obtained by the chief executive of the Civil Service college; and from which university or polytechnic it was awarded.

Mr. Renton: This is a personal matter for the chief executive. However, she has authorised me to say that her first degree was in philosophy, politics and economics from Oxford university.

Occupational Health Scheme

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when the last annual report for the Occupational Health Service was published; and when the next one is due.

Mr. Renton: The last annual report of the Civil Service Occupational Health Service was published in July 1990 for the year ending 31 March 1990. The annual report for 1990-91 is due to be published on 26 July 1991. Copies of this will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses when available.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will list the quality of service performance indicators adopted by the Occupational Health Service since its establishment as an executive agency; and separately identify those quality of service performance indicators already operative prior to agency status.

Mr. Renton: The quality of service performance indicators being developed in the Occupational Health Service include:

1. Peer review and review by Division Heads of performance against objectives.
2. Standard protocols for the delivery of services.
3. Post-service questionnaires for advisory visits, comprehensive medical examinations and lifestyle screenings, and Occupational Health Service health and safety training. The overall rating will be on a six points scale with targets set for the proportion of responses in the top two points.
4. Targets for turn around time in case referrals and for the error rate in invoices to customers.
5. Cost per productive professional day.

There were no specific quality of performance indicato

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will state the first degree obtained by the chief executive of the Occupational Health Service; and from which university or polytechnic it was awarded.

Mr. Renton: This is a personal matter for the chief executive. However, he has authorised me to say that his first degree was a bachelor of medicine/bachelor of surgery from the university of Aberdeen.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Enterprise Initiative (Consultants)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many of his Department's contractors are also listed as consultants under the enterprise initiative assisted consultancy scheme; and what proportion of the number of projects their work comprises.

Mr. Leigh: The Department has five main contractors who are responsible for the administration of the enterprise initiative assisted consultancy scheme. In turn, the Chartered Institute of Marketing, as one of the main contractors, sub-contracts most of its operation to four regional contractors. Of the nine bodies concerned, five are listed as consultants under the scheme. Since the enterprise initiative was introduced in January 1988, they have been responsible collectively for 1·9 per cent. of the total projects completed to date across all six consultancy schemes.

Trade Agreements

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action he has taken since September 1990 to ensure that international trade agreements involving the United Kingdom have had respect for the international environment.

Mr. Lilley: The European Community has signed no new multilateral trade agreements since September 1990. Meanwhile, the United Kingdom is playing a leading role in an important and developing international debate about the relationship of environmental questions to the rules of international trade.

Since September 1990 the Government have participated in a study on trade and environment issues in the OECD—this led to endorsement by the OECD ministerial council in June of a programme of further work, in which we are participating, and which may lead to guidelines on ways to protect the environment while preserving the open multilateral trading system; begun planning a consultancy study which will look urgently at the trade effects of measures which may be taken to control the emission of greenhouse gases; participated with our European partners in the GATT Uruguay round negotiations on agriculture which are addressing the need for assistance for environmental and conservation purposes—agreement in GATT on investment and intellectual property would also assist the technology flows needed to deal with environmental problems; participated fully in a GATT working party on the export of domestically prohibited goods, including those banned on environmental grounds; supported re-establishment of a GATT working party on the environment.

Publicity Campaigns

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his answer of 1 July, *Official Report*, column *20*, if he will list the commencement date and duration of each publicity campaign.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 10 July 1991]:* Most of the activities listed are of a continuing nature in support of departmental programmes. The two major campaigns, the enterprise initiative support package for business and the

single European market information campaign, began in 1988. The enterprise initiative's assisted consultancy scheme will continue until March 1994. The single market campaign was launched as a five-year programme to alert British business to the challenges and opportunities that the single market is bringing.

British Standards Institution

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how the Government responded to the call in last year's European Commission Green Paper on standardisation for national Governments to put more resources into promoting and supporting standardisation at national level.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 15 July 1991]:* The Government continue to provide substantial funding to the British Standards Institution and, in the single market campaign, emphasise the importance of industry contributing to European standards work through BSI.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the amount of funding given by his Department to the British Standards Institution in each of the years from 1979 to 1990, and what is the amount planned to be given in 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 15 July 1991]:* Expenditure on the grant in aid to the BSI together with the consultancy drafting scheme, the priority standards fund, additional targeted funding and the assisted international travel scheme has been:

	£ ,000
1982-83	3,408
1983-84	3,618
1984-85	4,051
1985-86	4,530
1986-87	5,316
1987-88	5,509
1988-89	5,889
1989-90	5,898
1990-91	6,223
1991-92	[1]6,807

[1] Estimates provision

No decisions on funding for 1992-93 have yet been taken. I regret that comparable earlier figures are not readily available.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Banks

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many representations he has now received about the treatment of small businesses by the banks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have now completed my discussions with the chairmen of the major clearing banks and considered the information which they have provided on their interest rates and charges to small businesses.

Over recent months the Government have received complaints from small businesses about the way in which banks were handling their business, in particular suggestions that the banks were not passing on to their customers the full cut in base rates seen since October 1990. A strong banking system is of considerable importance to the economy, but the way in which small businesses are financed, and the terms on which they deal with the banks, are equally important. Small firms have provided much of the dynamism and renewed entrepreneurial spirit which have done so much to improve the United Kingdom economy over the past decade. The success of small firms is essential to the success of the economy. Suggestions that they are getting a bad deal from the banks therefore required serious and urgent investigation.

I, therefore, saw the president of the British Bankers Association on 5 June and the chairmen of National Westminster, Lloyds, Barclays and the Midland over the following week. I expressed the Government's concern about the complaints we had received and asked the chairmen to co-operate in the joint exercise by the Bank of England and Treasury officials to establish the facts.

The banks have now supplied the information requested and this has been analysed and considered by the Bank of England and the Treasury. A summary is being placed in the House Library. The deputy governor and I subsequently met the major clearing banks again to discuss the position.

I have also received a large number of letters from small businesses, as has the Prime Minister, the Bank of England, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Employment. Well over 1,000 letters of complaint have been received and analysed. The Department of Trade and Industry regional directors have held discussions with banks and businesses and the Department of Employment has had continuing discussions with banks and small businesses over recent months.

The information we received suggests that the bulk of small firms' overdrafts and loans were base rate related. The great majority—some 95 per cent.—of small business borrowers saw at least 3 per cent. of the 3½ per cent. cut in base rates made between October of last year and the date on which the information was supplied. In about 70 per cent. of cases, the full 3½ per cent. was passed through to borrowers. From the point of view of monetary policy, there is no reason to doubt that the reductions in interest rates are feeding through and will have their effect.

About 25 per cent. of borrowers, however, experienced an increase in their margins of about ½ per cent. and a small minority—some 5 per cent.—saw their margins widen by more than that. In general, this is either because they had to negotiate new facilities; because they were moved on to a new basis of setting rates as part of a central initiative; because they had gone over their authorised borrowing limits and faced the high "penal" rates—30 per cent. APR or more—common to all banks on the excess amounts; or because the banks judged that an increase was necessary on credit risk grounds. To the extent that this reflects the current stage in the business cycle, that should be reversed as the recovery takes hold.

Any increase in costs to a business man is unwelcome. From the correspondence we have received, it is also clear that in a number of cases increases in margins have been notified to customers at short notice and sometimes retrospectively. Moreover, it is also clear that banks have been imposing higher charges and more frequently for services than before. Some banks have increased their revenue significantly from the provision of other services, particularly management, arrangements and renewal fees.

The increases reported by individual banks range from 16 per cent. to 55 per cent. over the last six to 12 months, albeit from a low base. In some cases, new or significantly increased charges have been made without prior notice. Such practices are clearly inconsistent with the head office policies which the chairman described to me.

I have sent the chairmen an analysis of the complaints we have received about their bank so they can follow them up. I have asked each of the chairmen to give me a report on how these complaints have been dealt with. I have also spoken to the chairmen generally about the main sources of complaint. I have put it to them that they should each consider drawing up a code of conduct for their small business customers and that at the least customers have a right to expect that the terms and conditions of their accounts should be fair and reasonable, taking account of the customer's individual circumstances; they should have been notified to the customer in advance in writing in clear and simple terms; they should be given a full written statement of the standard tariffs of charges applicable to their account; they will be specifically warned in advance if charges which are not covered by the standard tariff are likely to be made, such as fees for management time; they should be given a clear explanation of the basis on which interest is to be charged, whether it is base rate related and what the margin over base rate will be; the terms and conditions of the account other than the interest rate, should not be altered without adequate prior notice in writing perhaps of one month, offering an opportunity to discuss with branch staff; finally, customers should be given a clear explanation of how complaints may be made about decisions taken at local branch.

The chairmen have assured me that these points are generally reflected in their existing policy, but they will instruct their branch managers to ensure that they are followed in all cases. They will each consider what further code of best practice each of them should promulgate within their banks, and they have undertaken to report to me what action they have taken. I will take stock with them in six months' time of their progress in implementing these codes of good practice.

Some of the complaints we have received are serious and reflect an unprecedented degree of public concern about the conduct and attitude of the banks. The bank chairmen are well seized of the Government's concern about this issue and have undertaken to make sure that their managers are fully aware of the need to handle small business customers with due care and sensitivity. The Government will continue to monitor the situation and I have made it clear to the chairmen that we would view with serious concern any evidence of high-handed or unprofessional behaviour.

It is also, however, important that small businesses communicate fully with their banks, and both the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Employment will continue to assist in fostering such a dialogue.

Finally, although the information we received showed no evidence of collusion, I am passing it to the Director General of Fair Trading in case there is anything in it which he considers merits investigation.

Civil Servants (Pay Levels)

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consideration his Department has given to the findings of the Office of Manpower Economics in respect of the relative pay levels of civil servants in comparison with private sector equivalents; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The long-term pay agreements covering different civil service groups provide for pay negotiations to be informed at least once every four years by a survey of outside remuneration levels undertaken by the Office of Manpower Economics. The information in each levels survey is one of the factors which is taken into account during the subsequent negotiations.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to accept requests for arbitration from the National Union of Civil and Public Servants in respect of its 1991 pay claim; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The 1991 pay offer has been accepted by the NUCPS after a ballot of their membership produced a substantial vote in favour. In these circumstances, arbitration would clearly be inappropriate.

Pensions

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which sections of the public service have had trusts or pension or charitable funds established as a result of the underpayment of pensions in 1987-88; what are the amounts of capital vested in these trusts, pensions or charitable funds; and what are the estimated costs of establishing such trusts and administering them.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by the then Paymaster General to my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) on 3 May 1988, at column *400*, in which he gave details of the existing public service charities to which donations were being made as a result of the underestimation in the retail prices index. The Paymaster General also said that, as there was no national charity on a scale desirable for the national health service, the Government would consult staff and management interests on the possibility of establishing one.

The NHS Pensioners' Trust came into operation on 1 April 1991, and it was given £1,311,000. It was the only trust, pension or charitable fund set up for the public services as a result of the retail prices index error. The estimated cost of establishing the trust is of the order of £35,000. The cost of administering the trust is a matter for the trustees.

Public Expenditure, Scotland

Mr. Gill: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current level of public expenditure in Scotland expressed as an amount per capita.

Mr. Mellor: Data on identifiable general Government expenditure per capita in Scotland in 1989-90, the latest year for which data are available, is given in table E5b of appendix E of the "Statistical Supplement to the 1990 Autumn Statement", Cm. 1520.

Coinage

Mr. Adley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to phase out the 1p piece.

Mr. Maples: No. However, as already announced, from September 1992 1p and 2p coins will be issued in copper-plated steel instead of traditional bronze. The new coins will have the same weight and diameter as the existing versions. The new and old coins will circulate together.

Flexibility Schemes

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the entitlements for 1991-92 resulting from the carry forward of capital and running costs underspends allowed under the end-year flexibility schemes.

Mr. Mellor: A list of entitlements totalling £162 million for capital expenditure and £26 million for running costs is shown in the table. Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates, individual cash limits and running costs limits will be increased when entitlement is taken up. The total increase in cash limits resulting from the take-up of end-year flexibility will be charged to the reserve and will therefore not add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Entitlements for 1991-92 cash limits resulting from the carryover of capital underspends

Class	*Vote*	*Department*	*Description*	*Amount (£000s)*
II	1	Foreign and Commonwealth Office	Overseas representation.	5,674
II	3	Foreign and Commonwealth Office	External broadcasting and monitoring.	1,181
III	2	Intervention Board-Executive Agency	Administration.	306
III	4	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	Other agricultural and food services and support for the fishing industry.	2,000
III	5	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	Departmental research, advisory services and administration.	793
IV	2	Department of Trade and Industry	Support for industry, international trade, statutory and regulatory work, consumer protection and administration.	4,346
IV	9	Office of Telecommunications	Office of Telecommunications.	341
VI	1	Department of Employment	Training and enterprise programmes.	2,000
VII	2	Department of Transport	Administration and transport services.	735
VII	4	Department of Transport	Driver and vehicle licensing.	74
VIII	5	Department of the Environment	Central environmental services, etc.	903
VIII	6	Department of the Environment	Royal palaces, royal parks, historic buildings, ancient monuments and the national heritage.	1,048
VIII	7	Property Holdings[1]	Civil accommodation services and administration, etc.	1
VIII	12	Ordnance Survey	Ordnance Survey.	1,348
IX	2	Home Office	Prisons, England and Wales.	3,949
IX	3	Home Office	Administration, immigration and police support services, England and Wales.	2,000
X	11	HM Land Registry[2]	HM Land Registry.	1
X	12	Public Record Office	Public Record Office.	880
X	13	Crown Office	Administration.	447
XI	1	Department of Education and Science	Schools, research and miscellaneous services.	6,085
XI	2	Department of Education and Science	Higher and further education.	2,688
XI	4	Department of Education and Science	Administration.	2,000
XII	3	Office of Arts and Libraries	Libraries.	221
XIII	1	Department of Health	Hospital and community health services, family practitioner services (part) and other services, England.	31,480
XIV	4	Department of Social Security	Administration and miscellaneous services.	3,718

Class	Vote	Department	Description	Amount (£000s)
XV	2	Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department	Agricultural services and fisheries for Scotland.	1,890
XV	3	Scottish Office Industry Department	Regional and general industrial support, Scotland.	1,215
XV	5	Scottish Office Environment Department	Roads, transport and environmental services, Scotland.	1,017
XV	10	Scottish Courts Administration	Administration of justice, Scotland.	1,026
XV	13	Scottish Office Home and Health Department	Law, order and miscellaneous health services, etc. Scotland.	1,075
XV	14	Scottish Office Education Department	Education, arts and libraries Scotland.	2,000
XV	18	General Register Office	General Register Office, Scotland.	802
XV	20	The Scottish Office	Administration.	311
XV	26	Scottish Office Home and Health Department	Family practitioner services (part) and other health services, Scotland.	10,068
XVI	2	Welsh Office	Agricultural services, support for the fishing industry, regional and industrial development, Wales.	1,880
XVI	5	Welsh Office	Tourism, roads and transport, housing, other environmental services, education and science, arts and libraries and centrally funded health and personal social services, Wales.	1,075
XVI	8	Welsh Office	Hospital and community health services, family practitioner services (part) and other health services, Wales.	5,086
XVI	9	Welsh Office	Administration	118
XVII	1	Northern Ireland Office	Law, order, protective and miscellaneous services, Northern Ireland.	650
XVIII	1	Her Majesty's Treasury	Administration.	2,000
XVIII	5	Customs and Excise	Administration.	2,385
XVIII	6	Inland Revenue	Administration	159
XVIII	9	Department for National Savings	Department for National Savings.	329
XVIII	13	Central Statistical Office	Central Statistical Office.	563
XIX	1	Office of the Minister for the Civil Service	Office of the Minister of the Civil Service.	397
XIX	2	Cabinet Office	Other services.	1,228
Total voted				109,493

[1] This is a token vote. Carryforward will be taken in the form of increased appropriations in aid of £8,544,000.
[2] This is a token vote. Carryforward will be taken in the form of increased appropriations in aid of £817,000.

Non-voted cash limits

Cash Block	Department	Description	Amount (£000s)
DOE/HC	Department of the Environment	Grants and capital expenditure financed by the Housing Corporation in England.	950
DOE/UA	Department of the Environment	External financing requirements of urban development corporations in England and grants to local authorities and other bodies under the urban programme, the derelict land reclamation and city grant programmes (including associated LA credit approvals) and other expenditure for inner cities initiatives.	8,781
DOE/LACAP	Department of the Environment	Basic credit approvals for housing, transport (except passenger transport authorities), education, health, other environmental services in England and Shire fire. Supplementary credit approvals and grants to local authorities for housing in England.	18,844
DOE/OES	Department of the Environment	Supplementary credit approvals for other environmental services in England.	3,041

Cash Block	Department	Description	Amount (£000s)
DTP/LACAP	Department of Transport	Supplementary credit approvals for transport in England. Basic credit approvals for passenger transport authorities.	91
MAFF/LACAP	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	Supplementary credit approvals for flood defence and coast protection in England.	776
SO/LA1	Scottish Office	Capital expenditure in Scotland by authorities on roads and transport, sewerage, general services, urban programmes, police and social work, schools further education, teacher training and arts and libraries.	8,900
SO/LA2	Scottish Office	Capital expenditure in Scotland by local authorities for housing and capital expenditure by new towns in Scotland for housing and other environmental services.	561
WO/UA	Welsh Office	Supplementary credit approvals and grants (both capital and current) to local authorities in Wales in respect of the urban programme and urban development grant. Urban investment grant and expenditure by the Cardiff Bay Development Corporation.	3,183
NID1	Northern Ireland Departments	Services broadly analagous to services covered by cash limits including family practitioner services.	7,053
Total non voted			52,180
Total capital end year flexibility (voted and non-voted)			161,673

Entitlements for 1991-92 running costs limits resulting from the carryforward of running costs underspends

Department	Amount (£000s)
Intervention Board-Executive Agency	117
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	1,460
Trade and Industry	1,504
Department of Energy	180
Department of Employment Group	4,705
Property Holdings	179
Home Office	2,589
Lord Chancellor's Department	1,419
Department of Education and Science	404
Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys	263
Scottish Office	984
Scottish Courts Administration	160
Scottish Record Office	50
General Register Office, Scotland	50
Welsh Office	186
Northern Ireland Office; Northern Ireland Departments	1,356
HM Treasury	426
Customs and Excise	2,886
Inland Revenue	6,638
Department for National Savings	582
Central Statistical Office	134
Government Actuary's Department	50
Total	26,322

Intestacy

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much money was collected as ultimus haeres from Scotland and as bona vacantia from England and Wales for each year since 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maples *[holding answer 16 July 1991]:* The amounts collected as ultimus haeres from Scotland were £400,000 in 1988 and £300,000 in 1989. The amounts collected as bona vacantia from England, Wales and Northern Ireland, excluding the Duchies of Cornwall and Lancaster, were £5,100,000 in 1988 and £5,100,000 in 1989. These figures are net of ex-gratia payments to kin, debts paid on estates, and administration and other costs. The accounts for 1990 will be laid before the House in the autumn.

BCCI

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that all EC authorities regulating banks with branches in the United Kingdom provide a satisfactory degree of supervision; and what conclusions he has reached.

Mr. Maples: The harmonisation of supervisory standards within the EC is an area of considerable activity at Community level, in preparation for implementation of the second banking directive in 1993. The essential common standards have already been adopted in the solvency ratio directive and the own funds directive, and directives to harmonise further other aspects of the supervisory system are under negotiation at present. We shall be considering whether the BCCI case has any further lessons for the framework of regulation both at home and abroad.

EMPLOYMENT

Enterprise Allowance

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the period of enterprise allowance in *(a)* January 1991 and *(b)* at present; how much has been spent each month this year for publicising the enterprise allowance scheme for starting up new businesses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: In January 1991, the enterprise allowance scheme provided up to 52 weeks on an allowance for all

those accepted on to the scheme. Since April 1991, entrants may stay on the scheme for between 26 weeks and 66 weeks, the actual period being determined by the local training and enterprise council according to local priorities. Where no training and enterprise council is yet in operation, the period of provision remains up to 52 weeks.

National expenditure on publicity is shown in the table. This relates to the provision of the leaflets and support materials and does not include any local publicity which may have been undertaken by training and enterprise councils. Demand for the scheme remains strong with around 1,000 new entrants a week at present.

Enterprise allowance scheme: expenditure on publicity in 1991

	£
January	17,947
February	1,230
March	27,007
April	nil
May	2,053
June	1,524
July	2,290

HEALTH

HIV

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many persons in the United Kingdom are currently estimated to have AIDS or are HIV positive; and how many of these people have been notified and are known by name.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The AIDS case reports for the United Kingdom to the end of May 1991 total 4,666—4,412 males and 254 females—of which 2,695—2,568 males and 127 females—are known to have died. Adjusting for an estimated under-reporting rate of 20 per cent. would give a current estimate of 2,500 AIDS patients in the United Kingdom at the end of May 1991. These were all individuals tested in named testing programmes who would have been informed of their results.

The HIV antibody positive reports received at the PHLS communicable disease surveillance centre numbered 15,337 for the United Kingdom at the end of March 1991. However, this represents an underestimate of the total number of infected persons because it is based only on those who have presented for testing. These people also would have been informed of their results.

Names are not collected centrally.

In addition we have available the results of the first phase of the anonymised HIV surveys.

These indicate that among women attending certain ante-natal clinics in inner London the rate of HIV prevalence is one in 500. These figures show a fivefold range from about one in 200 to more than one in 1,000. In the small number of clinics surveyed in outer London there was a wider range from about one in 300 to one in 2,500, but half these clinics had no positive results. In other parts of the country only one of 16,000 tests performed was positive.

Among heterosexual women attending certain sexually transmitted diseases—STD—clinics in inner London prevalence is one in 500. It is, however, one in 100 for heterosexual men. Among homosexual and bisexual men attending the same clinics the current prevalence rate is one in five.

These preliminary results provide valuable information, but because they are based on studies of specific groups of people in selected areas they do not enable us to estimate the number of people in the general population that are HIV positive.

More information about prevalence will become available as further results are published.

Tranquillisers

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research he has commissioned into the question of manufacturers' negligence in relation to tranquillisers.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: None.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the number of people who have been permanently disabled as a result of taking tranquillisers.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally.

Population Statistics

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion the population of Wales represents as a percentage of the population of England on the most recent available information.

Mr. Dorrell: Resident populations for England and Wales relating to mid-1990 have now been estimated, and will be published shortly in "OPCS Monitor PP1 91/1". The figures are:—

	Million
England	47·837
Wales	2·881

The estimated resident population of Wales is therefore 6 per cent. of that of England.

Hospital Chaplains

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will consult the Joint Committee for Hospital Chaplaincy on a revision of the guidelines for the appointment of chaplains within the national health service, to ensure that appropriate representation for all relevant faith communities is taken into consideration by regional and district health authorities.

Mr. Dorrell: The decision whether to appoint a chaplain is a matter for local decision. There is no bar on access to patients by representatives of non-Christian faiths.

Infant and Maternal Deaths

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the change in the number of infant and maternal deaths in England and Wales since 1979.

Mr. Dorrell: The information is shown in the table.

Number of Infant and Maternal deaths in England and Wales 1979 to 1990

	Infant deaths	*Maternal deaths*
1979	8,178	74
1980	7,899	70
1981	7,021	57
1982	6,775	42
1983	6,381	54
1984	6,037	52
1985	6,141	46
1986	6,313	45
1987	6,272	46
1988	6,270	41
1989	5,808	56
[1]1990	5,564	57

[1] 1990 figures are provisional.

Carers National Association

Dr. Gilbert: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the Carers National Association to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Under the procedures agreed by the Services Committee, I understand that arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 2 to 6 December 1991.

Energy Efficient Lighting

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to encourage local health authorities to introduce energy-efficient lighting to cut costs and save energy; and whether he will assist them with such schemes.

Mr. Dorrell: The national health service is committed to the objective of achieving a 15 per cent. saving in energy consumption over the five years from 1 April 1991. This programme, to which energy-efficient lighting will make a contribution, will release over £30 million for improved patient care within the NHS.

Private Health Care

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list those hospitals which comprise the European Private Patients Group.

Mr. Dorrell: About 30 national health service hospitals are involved in the European Private Patient Group which is carrying out a feasibility study on the sale of NHS private patient facilities to other European countries. The results of the study, and those hospitals involved, will be announced by the group in the autumn.

Garlands Hospital, Carlisle

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients or ex-patients of the Garlands hospital, Carlisle, have fallen or jumped from the footbridge that crosses the M6 motorway from the hospital to Scotby village in the last 10 years; and how many were fatally injured.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Ian Carr, the chairman of East Cumbria health authority, for details.

Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the anticipated cost of running the new Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority; what are the anticipated revenues from sale of licences for each category of activity; and if he would make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In the first full year, 1992-93, the running costs of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority are estimated at £1·7 million. Fees have been set at a level which is intended overall to recoup from treatment and research centres about 50 per cent. of the costs of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority. The other 50 per cent. is contributed from public funds. The decision to increase the contribution from public funds from one third, as envisaged during the passage of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill, to one half was made following an analysis of the costs once the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority was set up. The proportions reflect the approximate costs attributable to the licensing process, to be recouped from treatment and research centres, and to the wider safeguards and requirements of the Act as laid down by Parliament, to be paid for from public funds.

The initial fee which must accompany an application for a licence to carry out treatment or research has been set as follows:

	£
Treatment Licence (including storage)	250
Research Licence (including storage)	100

Treatment centres will be charged an additional fee calculated on the basis of the number of treatment cycles performed by the centre in the year preceding the issue of a licence. The rate is £7 per donor insemination treatment cycle and £30 per in vitro fertilisation treatment cycle.

Community Health Councils

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his policy towards the retention of the existing community health councils when new health authorities are being established.

Mr. Dorrell: When two or more existing district health authorities are being merged, there will in future be no automatic expectation that the matching community health councils—CHCs—should also merge. It will be for regional health authorities to ensure after consultation, that CHCs are organised in a way that allows them to carry out their duties economically and effectively.

Abortion

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total number of women who have had more than one abortion in the United Kingdom; and if he will list the figures (i) for each of the last five years, (ii) under each ground and (iii) by number of abortions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 25 June 1991]:* The tables provide the data requested for Great Britain. There are no available data for Northern Ireland.

The total number of women who have had more than one legal termination in Great Britain, for: (1) each of the last five years; (2) each ground.

Year	Total number of women who have had more than one termination in Great Britain	Statutory grounds under which the current termination was performed, by number of women					
		1 (with any other)	2 (alone)	3 (with or without 2)	4 (alone)	4 (with any other except 1, excluding 4 alone)	5 or 6
1986	32,539	87	28,448	3,671	194	139	—
1987	34,591	76	29,976	4,212	194	132	1
1988	37,939	99	33,187	4,360	196	97	—
1989	40,650	70	35,469	4,804	210	97	—
1990	43,048	94	38,085	4,563	234	70	2

1. Risk to life of woman.
2. Risk of injury to physical or mental health of woman.
3. Risk of injury to physical or mental health of existing child(ren).
4. Substantial risk of child being born seriously handicapped.
5. In emergency, to save life of woman.
6. In emergency, to prevent grave permanent injury to physical or mental health of woman.

The full definition of statutory grounds appears in the introduction to the OPCS annual publication 'Abortion statistics'.

The total number of women who have had more than one legal termination in Great Britain, for: (1) each of the last five years; and (2) by the number of previous terminations.

Year	Total number of women who have had more than one termination in Great Britain	Number of women who have had a termination in the current year, by the number of previous terminations									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Not known
1986	32,539	27,927	3,732	655	161	27	22	8	4	3	—
1987	34,591	29,542	4,092	740	159	37	14	3	2	2	—
1988	37,939	32,424	4,463	794	184	48	14	8	2	2	—
1989	40,650	34,444	4,935	975	206	53	24	9	1	3	—
1990	43,048	36,243	5,446	1,001	228	75	34	9	3	8	1

SOCIAL SECURITY

Resettlement Unit, Notting Hill Gate

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the estimated cost of repairs to drains and sewers at the Notting Hill Gate resettlement unit before its closure; and what was the charge made by Dyno-Rod for solving the problem.

Miss Widdecombe: The management of resettlement units is a matter for Mr. Tony Ward, the chief executive of the Resettlement Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Student Benefits

Mr. Ron Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations have been made to him by the National Union of Students about the recent changes in his Department's rules concerning benefits for students; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: We received a letter and submission in October 1989 and a further letter, together with a copy of the National Union of Students' response to the Social Security Advisory Committee's consultation on the new regulations, in June 1990.

Income Support

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to provide an increase above the rate of inflation in income support for people in residential care throughout the United Kingdom when income support is next uprated; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: In setting the income support limits we have to make decisions within the context of the Government's public expenditure objectives, which embrace not only spending on people in independent homes but on the rest of the social security system, the NHS, and other public services. It is our policy to direct available resources to where the need is greatest and where such targeting will prove most effective.

Rates of income support in Northern Ireland are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. The same considerations do, of course, apply there as well as in the rest of the United Kingdom.

Income-related Benefits

Mr. Lee: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information is available on the take-up of income-related benefits in the year before the 1988 reforms.

Mr. Jack: Take-up estimates for 1987 confirm previous results and indicate that, overall, almost £9 out of every £10 of income-related benefit was claimed, and some 80 per cent. of those eligible to receive some income-related benefit made a claim. These figures are derived from "Technical Notes" covering take-up estimates for the income-related benefits for 1987, copies of which have been placed in the Library.

Tax-Benefit Model Tables

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he intends to publish tax-benefit model tables for 1991-92.

Mr. Jack: Copies are being printed and should become available within the next few days. I will ensure that they are placed in the Library as soon as they are ready.

Young People (Benefit Claims)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he plans to make any changes in the arrangements for dealing with benefit claims from 16 and 17-year-olds.

Mr. Jack: I announced measures yesterday, in reply to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson), which will further improve delivery of income support under the severe hardship provision to 16 and 17-year-olds. These will improve further the service provided to young people by Benefits Agency offices. I also stated the Government's intention to improve the handling of young people leaving care. We will legislate for 16 and 17-year-olds leaving care who live independently and continue in full-time education to receive income support without having to prove that they are estranged from their parents. We further intend to give those leaving care to live independently, who are registered for work and youth training, entitlement to income support for up to eight weeks. This initiative in conjunction with the earlier referral under the liaison arrangements, which we also announced yesterday, will give valuable assistance to this vulnerable group in establishing themselves in their new environment.

Social Fund

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he intends to publish his annual report on the social fund; and when he will publish the social fund commissioner's annual report.

Mr. Newton: My report (Cm. 1580) has been published today and I have laid it before Parliament. The social fund commissioner's annual report has also been published today and copies placed in the Library.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Accommodation

Sir Gerard Vaughan: To ask the Lord President of the Council for how many hon. Members and how many personal staff of hon. Members it is now planned to provide accommodation in the first stage of the new parliamentary building; what change these numbers represent from those previously envisaged; how this accommodation will be allocated; and when hon. Members and their staff will be able to move in.

Mr. MacGregor: 1 Parliament street will contain single rooms for 65 Members, together with desk spaces for 75 Members' staff. Further accommodation will become available in the Palace of Westminster, in consequence of staff moving into the new building and of the renovation of rooms in Speaker's Court. 1 Parliament street will be available for occupation in September 1991; the Speaker's Court renovations should be completed in January or February 1992. By early 1992, it is estimated that there will have been net gains across the parliamentary estate of 95 Members' offices and 99 desk spaces for Members' staff. The Services Committee report setting out the original design brief for 1 Parliament street suggested that space was likely to be available within that building for about 60 Members and 100 Members' secretaries. The report continued:

"These numbers are indicative only. We believe the balance proposed represents the pattern of Members' work as it exists at present, but changes are sure to come about and we do not regard the relative figures mentioned here as in any way sacrosanct."

—Select Committee on House of Commons (Services), Third Report of Session 1983-84, *The New Building: The Design Brief* (HC 571), paragraph 22.

On the question of the allocation of offices, I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel) on 9 July 1991 at column *341*.

SCOTLAND

Agency Status and Privatisation

17. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those public bodies and utilities that he is considering for either agency status or privatisation.

Mr. Lang: I announced that the agricultural scientific services were candidates for agency status on 16 April. Further candidates for agency status or privatisation will be brought forward when the case for any such change has been fully considered.

Roads

20. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he will take to improve roads in crofting areas.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Most roads in crofting areas are local roads and are the responsibility of the regional and islands councils, which are the local roads authorities. The improvement of such roads, therefore, is a matter for the councils concerned. Recent major improvements to the trunk road network have greatly benefited the crofting areas by providing improved access.

37. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much has been spent in Scotland since 1979 on road building and improvements.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Since 1979 to the end of the financial year 1990-91 a total of £2,430 million has been spent on new road construction and improvements in Scotland; £1,060 million on motorways and trunk roads and £1,370 million on local roads.

Earnings

21. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the improvement in average earnings in Scotland over the past decade.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Average real earnings in Scotland increased by over a fifth in the 10 years to April 1990.

Companies Acts

22. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* prosecutions have been instituted and *(b)* convictions obtained in respect of breaches of the Companies Acts in Scotland in each year since 1987 and in the present year to date.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not separately identifiable within the Scottish Office classification of crimes and offences.

Poll Tax (Civil Penalties)

23. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received on poll tax civil penalties.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend has recently received a small number of representations about the imposition of civil penalties by community charges registration officers for the failure to return community charge registration forms.

Electoral Registration

24. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on electoral registration trends in Scotland in the light of the OPCS analysis on pages 1 to 3 of "Population Trends 64".

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The table of total electoral registrations in Scotland, produced on page 2 of "Population Trends 64", shows that there were 151,000 more registrations in 1991 than on the 1976 electoral register, although there has been a slight fall since 1987. As the analysis indicates, there are a number of reasons for these changes and it is not possible to evaluate their impact separately.

Local Government Finance

18. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has of the amount of poll tax that has been collected in the year 1991-92; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: According to information provided by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, a total of £43 million had been collected by the end of May. This low figure is not surprising given that some authorities, including Strathclyde, did not issue revised 1991-92 charge bills until last month.

29. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will now remove people on income support and students from liability to pay the poll tax.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend is keeping all aspects of the community charge under review, but has no plans for changing the arrangements affecting the liability of people on income support to pay the charge.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table, otherwise comparable to that provided for England in the answer of 17 April, *Official Report*, columns *184-85*, to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) showing *(a)* reductions in 1991-92 in community charge in Scotland by successive increments of £10 from £0 to £140 for (i) charge payers and (ii) pensioners and *(b)* average community charge less community charge reduction scheme less community charge benefit, both before and after the £140 budget reduction in gross community charge, consistent with his written answer of 3 June, *Official Report*, columns *19-20*.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 15 July 1991]:* It is estimated that in 1991-92 the average community charge in Scotland, after the community charge reduction scheme and community charge benefit, would have been £320 before the Community Charges (General Reduction) Act and will in the event be £198. These figures make no allowance for reductions due to selective action. Beyond this I am unable to add to the reply I gave on 4 June.

35. **Mr. McMaster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet representatives of Scottish local authorities to discuss local government finance.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I refer to my right hon. Friend's reply earlier today to the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing).

19. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on what basis Scottish local authorities are being funded to compensate them for the reductions in poll tax charges announced by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Community charge grant is being paid to local authorities to compensate them for the £140 reduction in headline community charges for this year.

25. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the shortfall in local authority receipts of poll tax income for the first two years of the operation of the tax in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Based on the latest collection figures issued by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, and using local authorities' own payment assumptions, the shortfall in budgeted charge income is £80 million—8·8 per cent.—in 1989-90 and £220 million—21·9 per cent.—in 1990-91. An improvement in these figures, particularly for 1990-91, can be expected as collection procedures continue.

Scottish Enterprise

26. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends to discuss with Scottish Enterprise its strategy for tackling the current recession in the Scottish economy.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend and I have frequent opportunities to discuss with the chairman, and members of the board, of Scottish Enterprise a range of topics concerned with further improving Scotland's economic performance.

Lothian Regional Council

27. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will review the revenue support grant of Lothian regional council.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Lothian regional council's revenue support grant for 1992-93 will be determined entirely according to the principles of grant allocation jointly agreed with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities through the distribution committee of the working party on local government finance. These principles are reviewed each year, incorporating, where appropriate, changes in service delivery nationally and improved information sources, to achieve the fairest possible distribution of the available Government support. Claims that the Government treat Lothian unfairly in terms of grant distribution are accordingly absolute nonsense.

36. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the outcome of his intervention to reduce the budget of Lothian regional council.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend withdrew his proposal to reduce Lothian's 1991-92 personal community charge by £50 after the council agreed to a voluntary reduction of £37.

Strathclyde (Finance)

28. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will next meet representatives of Strathclyde regional council to discuss its present financial situation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I refer to my reply earlier today to the hon. Members for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) and Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy).

Mar Lodge

30. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what further representations he has had for the purchase of Mar Lodge for the nation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: On 27 June I met representatives of the World Wide Fund for Nature, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Chris Brasher Trust who outlined their proposals for the purchase of the Mar Lodge estate.

New Towns Development Corporations

31. **Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the proposed dissolution of the Scottish new towns development corporations.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Dissolution of the Scottish new town development corporations will take place in the order in which they were established—East Kilbride and Glenrothes first, then Cumbernauld, Livingston and Irvine.

I anticipate that the necessary consultation process will start in the autumn of this year with a view to the first two wind-up orders being made in December.

My intention is to base these consultations on a proposed period for wind-up of four years for East Kilbride and Glenrothes rather than the period of three years orginally suggested in the White Paper "The Scottish New Towns: The Way Ahead".

Fishing Industry

32. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received from Scottish fishermen about the activities of the Northumberland drift net fishery.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Since 1 January 1991 my right hon. Friend has received representations from the migratory fish committee of the Scottish Anglers National Association, the Atlantic Salmon Trust, the Association of Scottish District Salmon Fishery Boards and from one individual angler. These and other representations are being considered by Fisheries Ministers along with the scientific information collated for the purposes of the review which my right hon. Friends are required to carry out by section 39 of the Salmon Act 1986, on salmon net fishing from the Humber to the Ugie. A report will be presented to Parliament as soon as possible.

Housing

33. **Sir David Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent discussions he has had with Scottish Homes.

Mr. Lang: I met the board of Scottish Homes on 1 July to discuss a range of strategic issues.

38. **Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the most recent report he has received on the state of dampness in Scottish public sector housing and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The most recent information available is based on local authority returns to the Scottish Office Environment Department which indicate that 145,260 local authority houses were subject to dampness or both condensation and dampness as at 31 March 1990. The Government have made available housing revenue account—HRA—housing capital allocations in 1991-92 totalling £454·5 million. It is for local authorities to decide how to use these resources for investment in their own housing stock according to local priorities.

Drinking Water

34. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects Scottish drinking water supplies to conform with EC directives; and how much expenditure his Department is committing in the current financial year towards achieving that objective.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The quality requirements of the EC drinking water directive have been incorporated into The Water Supply (Water Quality) (Scotland) Regulations 1990. Water authorities have undertaken to ensure that, within the next five years, in excess of 90 per cent. of supply zones will be receiving water which satisfies the regulations. Beyond this, improvements will continue, particularly in respect of iron through an extensive programme of replacement of old mains.

Improvements to drinking water supplies form part of the authorities' water and sewerage capital expenditure programmes and for the current financial year Scottish programme provision has been set at more than £169 million. Authorities may fund additional capital expenditure from revenue.

Heart Surgery

39. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many heart operations have been carried out privately in NHS hospitals in Scotland in the last 10 years; what is the total cost involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Statistics on heart operations carried out privately in NHS hospitals are not held centrally. Since central funding for major cardiac surgery began in 1983, the number of operations performed in Scotland has increased from 1,970 to 2,705 by December 1990.

"Meeting Scotland's Needs"

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a list of all the alterations made to Scottish Enterprise and Highland and Islands Enterprises' respective budgets since the publication of "Meeting Scotland's Needs", and any directions given about the spending of those additional moneys.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him on 8 July, at columns *271-72*.

Special Protection Areas

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those sites so far designated or identified for designation in Scotland as special protection areas under EC directive 79/409 on the conservation of wild birds or wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar convention on wetlands of international importance especially as waterfowl habitat.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the table.

Designated Sites

Site	*County*	*SPA Ramsar*	*Date designated*
Loch An Duin	Western Isles	Ramsar	25 April 1990
Loch Druidibeg/a'Machair and Loch Stilligary	Western Isles	Ramsar	5 January 1976
Loch Druidibeg/a'Machair	Western Isles	SPA	31 August 1982
Handa	Highland	SPA	25 April 1990
Priest Island	Highland	SPA	1 October 1986
Rhum	Highland	SPA	31 August 1982
Claish Moss	Highland	Ramsar	24 July 1981
Loch Eye	Highland	SPA/Ramsar	1 October 1986
Cairngorm Lochs	Grampian Highland	Ramsar	24 July 1981
Loch of Skene	Grampian	SPA/Ramsar	1 October 1986
Abernethy Forest	Highland	SPA	25 April 1990
Loch Lomond	Strathclyde	Ramsar	5 January 1976
Gruinart Flats, Islay	Strathclyde	SPA/Ramsar	14 July 1988
Bridgend Flats, Islay	Strathclyde	SPA/Ramsar	14 July 1988
Laggan Peninsula, Islay	Strathclyde	SPA	14 July 1988
Eilean na Muice Duibhe, Islay	Strathclyde	SPA/Ramsar	14 July 1988
Glac na Criche, Islay	Strathclyde	SPA/Ramsar	25 April 1990
Feur Lochain, Islay	Strathclyde	SPA/Ramsar	25 April 1990
Ailsa Craig	Strathclyde	SPA	25 April 1990
Silver Flowe	Dumfries and Galloway	Ramsar	24 July 1981
Rannoch Moor	Tayside Highland	Ramsar	5 January 1976
Loch of Lintrathen	Tayside	Ramsar	24 July 1981
Loch Leven	Tayside	Ramsar	5 January 1976
Forth Islands	Lothian Fife	SPA	25 April 1990
Gladhouse Reservoir	Lothian	SPA/Ramsar	14 July 1988
Fala Flow	Lothian	SPA/Ramsar	25 April 1990
Hoselaw Loch	Borders	SPA/Ramsar	14 July 1988

Potential Sites

Site	*County*	*SPA/Ramsar*
North Rona and Sula Sgeir	Western Isles	SPA
Flannan Isles	Western Isles	SPA
St. Kilda	Western Isles	SPA
Shiant Isles	Western Isles	SPA
West Sound of Harris	Western Isles	SPA/Ramsar
Monach Islands	Western Isles	SPA
South Uist Machair and Lochs	Western Isles	SPA/Ramsar
West Sound of Barra	Western Isles	SPA/Ramsar
Mingulay and Berneray	Western Isles	SPA
Pentland Firth Island	Highland Orkney	SPA
The Peatlands	Highland	SPA/Ramsar
Caithness Lochs	Highland	SPA/Ramsar
Caithness Cliffs	Highland	SPA
Durness Lochs and Streams	Highland	Ramsar
Cape Wrath	Highland	SPA
Loch Morar	Highland	Ramsar
Kentra Moss	Highland	Ramsar
Balranald	Western Isles	SPA/Ramsar

Site	County	SPA/Ramsar
Baleshare and Kirkibost	Western Isles	SPA/Ramsar
Loch Scadavay	Western Isles	SPA
Inverpolly, Loch Urigill and Nearby Lochs	Highland	SPA/Ramsar
Loch Maree	Highland	SPA/Ramsar
Loch Ruthven and Nearby Lochs	Highland	SPA
Central Highland Hills and Glens	Highland	SPA
Lewis Peatlands	Western Isles	SPA/Ramsar
North Harris Mountains	Western Isles	SPA
Assynt Lochs	Highland	SPA/Ramsar
Loch Stack, Loch Nam Brac and Nearby Lochs	Highland	SPA
Loch Shin and Nearby Lochs	Highland	SPA
Moray Basin Firths and Bays	Grampian	SPA/Ramsar
	Highland	
Beinn Dearg	Highland	SPA
Ben Wyvis	Highland	SPA
Glengarry Lochs	Highland	SPA
Loch Tarf and Nearby Lochs	Highland	SPA
North Inverness Lochs	Highland	SPA
Hermaness and Saxa Vord, Unst	Shetland	SPA/Ramsar
Ramna Stacks and Gruney	Shetland	SPA
Fetlar	Shetland	SPA
North Roe and Tingon, Mainland Shetland	Shetland	SPA/Ramsar
Papa Stour	Shetland	SPA
Foula	Shetland	SPA/Ramsar
Noss	Shetland	SPA
Fair Isle	Shetland	SPA
West Westray	Orkney	SPA
Papa Westray (North Hill and Holm)	Orkney	SPA
Marwick Head	Orkney	SPA
Lochs of Harray and Stenness	Orkney	SPA/Ramsar
Hoy	Orkney	SPA
Copinsay	Orkney	SPA
Sule Skerry and Stack	Orkney	SPA
Loch Spynie	Grampian	SPA/Ramsar
Loch of Strathbeg	Grampian	SPA/Ramsar
Ythan Estuary, Sands of Forvie and Meikle Lochs	Grampian	SPA/Ramsar
River Spey—Insh Marshes	Highland	SPA/Ramsar
Cairngorms	Highland	SPA
	Grampian	
Fowlsheugh	Grampian	SPA
Lochnagar	Grampian	SPA
Drumochter Hills	Highland	SPA
	Tayside	
West Mainland Moors	Orkney	SPA
North Mainland Coast	Orkney	SPA/Ramsar
South Westray Coast	Orkney	SPA/Ramsar
East Sanday	Orkney	SPA/Ramsar
Croussa Field and the Heogs	Shetland	SPA
Mousa	Shetland	SPA
Rousay (part)	Orkney	SPA
North Ronaldsay Coast	Orkney	SPA/Ramsar
Southeastern Stronsay	Orkney	SPA/Ramsar
Eday	Orkney	SPA
Troup, Pennan and Lion Heads	Grampian	SPA
St. Cyrus	Grampian	SPA
Buchan Ness to Collieston Coast	Grampian	SPA
Sumburgh Head	Shetland	SPA
Monadhliath	Highland	SPA
Alvie	Highland	SPA
Ben Alder	Highland	SPA
Kinveachy	Highland	SPA
Creag Meagaidh	Highland	SPA
Lochs of Spiggie and Brow	Shetland	SPA/Ramsar
Mill Dam, Shapinsay	Orkney	SPA/Ramsar
Rosehearty to Fraserburgh Coast	Grampian	SPA/Ramsar
Orphir and Stenness Hills	Orkney	SPA
Keelylang	Orkney	SPA
Loch of Isbister	Orkney	SPA
Blackpark and Gutcher, Yell	Shetland	SPA
Loch Oire	Grampian	SPA
Loch Vaa	Highland	SPA
Glen Tanar	Grampian	SPA
Muir of Dinnet	Grampian	SPA/Ramsar
Moorland Areas, Central Shetland	Shetland	SPA
West Burrafirth, Shetland	Shetland	SPA
Hill of Colvadale and Sobul	Shetland	SPA
An Socach—Carn a Gheoidh	Grampian	SPA
	Central	

Site	County	SPA/Ramsar
Loch Lomond	Strathclyde	SPA/Ramsar
	Central	
Tiree and Coll	Strathclyde	SPA/Ramsar
Treshnish Isles	Strathclyde	SPA
Rhinns of Islay	Strathclyde	SPA/Ramsar
Islay; the Oa	Strathclyde	SPA
Inner Clyde Estuary	Strathclyde	SPA/Ramsar
Rhunahaorine Point	Strathclyde	SPA
Machrihanish and Tangy Loch	Strathclyde	SPA/Ramsar
Loch Ken and Dee Marshes	Dumfries and Galloway	SPA/Ramsar
Lochinch and Torrs Warren	Dumfries and Galloway	SPA/Ramsar
Wigtown Bay	Dumfries and Galloway	SPA/Ramsar
North Colonsay and Western Cliffs	Strathclyde	SPA
Sanda	Strathclyde	SPA
Castle Loch Dumfries	Dumfries and Galloway	SPA/Ramsar
Caenlochan	Tayside	SPA
	Grampian	
Montrose Basin	Tayside	SPA/Ramsar
Loch of Kinnordy	Tayside	SPA/Ramsar
Loch of Lintrathen	Tayside	SPA
Tay-isla Valley	Tayside	SPA/Ramsar
Loch Leven	Tayside	SPA
Firth of Tay	Tayside	SPA/Ramsar
	Fife	
Cameron Reservoir	Fife	SPA/Ramsar
Eden Estuary, Tentsmuir Point and Abertay Sands	Fife	SPA/Ramsar
	Tayside	
Flanders Moss and Lake of Monteith	Central	SPA/Ramsar
Westwater	Borders	SPA/Ramsar
Moorfoot Hills	Borders	Ramsar
St. Abb's Head to Fast Castle	Borders	SPA
Greenlaw Moor and Hule Moss	Borders	SPA/Ramsar
South Tayside Goose Roosts	Tayside	SPA/Ramsar
Firth of Forth	Lothian	SPA/Ramsar
	Fife	
	Central	
Upper Solway Flats and Marshes	Cumbria	SPA/Ramsar
	Dumfries and Galloway	

Earnings

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has as to how the expected product of poll tax in Scotland and each of the regions in Scotland might be raised through a local income tax with resource equalisation in 1991-92 in the cases of *(a)* a single person on (i) 100 per cent. and (ii) 66 per cent. average earnings and *(b)* a married man with average male full-time earnings whose wife earns (1) average female full-time earnings and (2) average female part-time earnings.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information is set out in the table. The figures are based on average earnings in Scotland in April 1990, and tax allowances for the 1990-91 tax year. The estimated local income tax rates are as given in my answer of 7 May, *Official Report*, columns *415-16*.

	Single person 100 per cent. average earnings	*Single person 66 per cent. average earnings*	*Married man (average earnings) wife (average full-time earnings)*	*Married man (average earnings) wife (average part-time earnings)*
	£	£	£	£
Borders	349	193	590	387
Central	601	333	1,016	667
Dumfries and Galloway	419	233	709	466
Fife	605	335	1,023	672
Grampian	488	271	826	542
Highland	402	223	680	446
Lothian	911	505	1,540	1,011
Strathclyde	574	318	970	637
Tayside	601	333	1,017	668
Orkney	10	5	16	11
Shetland	0	0	0	0
Western Isles	68	38	115	75
Scotland	581	322	983	645

Note: Figures based on average earnings in April 1990 and 1990-91 tax allowances.

Flood Warnings

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of the capital expenditure allocations was used to provide flood-warning systems by each river purification board for each year since 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 16 July 1991]:* River purification boards—RPBs—do not each receive a block allocation for capital expenditure. Instead, the consent of my right hon. Friend is required to incur any liability to meet capital expense for individual projects. Capital expenditure in itself is not a complete measure of the resources used in establishing flood warning systems. However, details of the proportion of RPB's annual capital expenditure used for flood warning systems since 1985 are set out in the table.

Proportion of capital expenditure (per cent.)

RPB	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Clyde	0	0	0	0	0	21
Forth	0	0	0	0	0	8
Highland	26	0	11	15	45	66
North East	0	0	0	0	0	0
Solway	0	0	0	0	0	58
Tay	0	0	0	0	0	70
Tweed	4	32	41	0	34	0

NORTHERN IRELAND

Maydown Incinerator

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) which method for disposing of the combustion gases would be used at the incinerator proposed for the Maydown, Londonderry site;

(2) what gas cleaning system is intended for the proposed incinerator at Maydown, Londonderry;

(3) at what level above the stoichiometric requirements for complete combustion it is intended that air should be supplied at the proposed incinerator at Maydown, Londonderry;

(4) what system of quenching combustion gases is intended for the proposed incinerator at Maydown, Londonderry;

(5) what type of kiln is intended for the proposed incinerator at Maydown, Londonderry;

(6) what system of introducing combustion air into the furnace is intended for the proposed incinerator at Maydown, Londonderry;

(7) what kind of combustion chamber is intended for the proposed incinerator at Maydown, Londonderry;

(8) what waste feed arrangements for reactive and other difficult wastes are intended for the proposed incinerator at Maydown, Londonderry.

Mr. Needham: Such details are not yet available and can be provided only if and when Du Pont (UK) Ltd. submits a planning application and accompanying environmental statement for a toxic waste incinerator at its Maydown site.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish the outline information provided by Du Pont UK Ltd. in relation to the possible siting of a toxic waste incinerator at Maydown, Londonderry.

Mr. Needham: Such details are not available. No planning application has been lodged by Du Pont (UK) Ltd. in relation to the possible siting of a toxic waste incinerator at Maydown, Londonderry.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make it his policy to ensure that the heating process at the proposed incinerator at Maydown, Londonderry, is effective in disposing of toxic wastes.

Mr. Needham: The proposed incinerator will not be permitted to come into operation unless the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland is fully satisfied that the equipment and procedures involved are so designed that the incinerator can fulfil safely and effectively its purpose of disposing of those wastes for which it is specified and that emission standards are fully met.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make it his policy to publish a detailed environmental risk assessment of the proposed incinerator at Maydown, Londonderry.

Mr. Needham: If Du Pont (UK) Ltd. proceeds with its proposal to site a toxic waste incinerator at Maydown, the environmental statement which must accompany the planning application under schedule 1(B) of the Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations (NI) 1989 will address the issue of risk to the environment. The statement will be made available to the public and for consideration during the public local inquiry into the project.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what level of exposure of gases to catalytic metals in the structure of the plant will take place at the proposed incinerator at Maydown, Londonderry.

Mr. Needham: Such structural design details are not available but may become so if and when Du Pont (UK) Ltd. submits a planning application for a toxic waste incinerator at its Maydown site.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the expected lifetime of the incinerator proposed for the Maydown site in Londonderry.

Mr. Needham: An incinerator of the type which may be proposed at this site could be expected to last approximately 20 years.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what method of disposing of halogenated acids it is intended should be used at the proposed incinerator at Maydown, Londonderry.

Mr. Needham: Such details are not yet available and can be provided only if and when Du Pont (UK) Ltd. submit a planning application and accompanying environmental statement for a toxic waste incinerator at its Maydown site. However, for the design to be approved, it will be necessary for the company to satisfy the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland that the incinerator will be capable of destroying those wastes for which it is intended, without contravening the emission controls set.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what constraints the incinerator proposed for the Maydown, Londonderry site will meet for gaseous emissions of *(a)* particulate matter, *(b)* lead, *(c)* cadmium and mercury, *(d)* hydrochloric acid, *(e)* hydrofluoric acid, *(f)* hydrobronic acid, *(g)* total acid as SO_3, *(h)* NO_2, *(i)* SO_2, *(j)* phosphorous, *(k)* destructive and removal efficacy of polychlorinated biphenyls and *(l)* total dioxin/furan equivalents.

Mr. Needham: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave on 26 June 1991, *Official Report*, column *488*.

Such details are not available and can be provided only if and when Du Pont (UK) Ltd. submits a planning application with accompanying environmental statement for a toxic waste incinerator at its Maydown site.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the intended degree of burn-out of solids as measured on ignition of kiln slag at the incinerator proposed for the Maydown, Londonderry site.

Mr. Needham: Such details are not yet available and can be provided only if and when Du Pont (UK) Ltd. submit a planning application and accompanying environmental statement for a toxic waste incincerator at their Maydown site. However, the requirements set by the Government will ensure that the degree of burnout achieved at any such incinerator will be sufficient fully to destroy all material for which the plant is designed.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for what proportion of time the incinerator proposed for the Maydown, Londonderry site will be able to operate without visible emissions or visible steam plumes from the stack.

Mr. Needham: Such details are not yet available and may become so only if and when Du Pont (UK) Ltd. submits a planning application and accompanying environmental statement for a toxic waste incinerator at its Maydown site. Emissions to the atmosphere from the proposed incinerator would be subject to control by the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland. The presence of visible emissions or steam plumes is likely to be dependent on the chosen methods of emission control.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he has received from the disposal of slag produced by the proposed incinerator at Maydown, Londonderry.

Mr. Needham: None. Such details are not yet available and can be provided only if and when Du Pont (UK) Ltd. submits a planning application and accompanying environmental statement for a toxic waste incinerator at its Maydown site.

Hazardous Waste

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what research is being carried out on behalf of his Department as to how the quantity of hazardous and toxic wastes might be reduced by recycling;

(2) what plans he has to require firms which have hazardous and toxic wastes arising from their processes to reduce the quantities produced by recycling.

Mr. Needham: None specifically. However, the nature of hazardous and toxic waste is such that recycling is not an option and its destruction by high temperature incineration currently presents the most viable alternative. In addition, it is considered that the very considerable cost of high temperature incineration for such waste already provides the firms concerned with a keen incentive to keep the quantities involved to an absolute minimum. Wastes of this nature are essentially not recyclable and only those for which high temperature incineration presents the "best practicable environmental option" will be disposed of in this manner.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has on the environmental audits carried out by companies in Northern Ireland which produce *(a)* toxic and *(b)* hazardous and special wastes.

Mr. Needham: No information on environmental audits is available to the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland. Such audits as exist are generally conducted by private consultants for individual companies to ensure a proper understanding of performance.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has on environmental impact assessments of the major producers of *(a)* toxic, *(b)* hazardous and *(c)* special wastes in (i) the United States of America, (ii) Canada and (iii) the other European Community countries.

Mr. Needham: There is no national or international compendium of this information in existence. Government officials are, however, aware of published information on such issues.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table showing the amounts of hazardous waste imported into Northern Ireland from the Irish Republic in each year since October 1988.

Mr. Needham: The information is:

Year	*Amount*
1988-89	275 tons
1989-90	4,997 tons

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table showing the amounts of hazardous waste transported from the Republic of Ireland through Northern Ireland to Great Britain in each year since October 1988.

Mr. Needham: The information is:

Year	*Amount*
1988-89	384 tons
1989-90	672 tons

Publications

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total cost of printing and distributing the Social Security Agency's framework document and business plan for 1991-92; and who was awarded the printing contract.

Mr. Hanley: This is a matter for the chief executive of the Social Security Agency. He will write to the hon. Gentleman and place copies of his letter in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Special Protection Areas

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list those sites so far designated or identified for designation in Northern Ireland as special protection areas under EC directive 79/409 on the conservation of wild birds or wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar convention on wetlands of international importance especially waterfowl habitat.

Mr. Needham: No SPA sites have been designated in Northern Ireland. Lough Neagh, with Lough Beg, has been designated as a Ramsar site. A review of potential SPA and Ramsar sites in Northern Ireland will be carried out later this year and a list of proposed sites will be produced.

New Hospital, Coleraine

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has given further consideration to the case for a new hospital on a greenfield site at Coleraine, Co. Londonderry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The Northern health and social services board's proposal for a new-build hospital on a greenfield site at Coleraine was submitted to the Department of Health and Social Services on 11 April. This is a major and complex proposal involving substantial capital expenditure and is therefore still being considered in detail within government. I hope that a decision can be taken in the near future.

Scheduled Offences

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details for 1988, 1989 and 1990 of the number of members of the Ulster Defence Regiment, the Royal Ulster Constabulary, their respective reserves, and the British Army, who have been charged with offences and who have been convicted of offences, giving details of custodial sentences imposed, and separately for charges and convictions concerning murder, attempted murder, membership of illegal organisations, conspiracy to cause explosions, withholding information concerning terrorist activities, possession of firearms, possession of firearms with intent to cause bodily harm and other offences classified as scheduled offences.

Dr. Mawhinney: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Set-aside Scheme

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the uptake of the set-aside scheme in *(a)* the number of farms and *(b)* the area of land set aside in hectares for 1990 and 1991.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 11 July 1991]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 11 July 1991, *Official Report*, column *444*.

Traffic Accidents

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many traffic accidents for the last 12 months for which figures are available were tyre related; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 16 July 1991]:* Road traffic accident statistics in Northern Ireland are collected and collated by the Royal Ulster Constabulary. The most recent figures available are for the calendar year 1989 when 11 accidents were attributable to tyre defects out of a total of 7,199. Figures for 1990 are expected to be available in mid-August.

Hearing Therapists

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the professional qualifications for hearing therapists which are recognised by the Department of Health and Social Services; and the institution offering appropriate training.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 15 July 1991]:* There are no formally recognised professional qualifications for hearing therapists. Persons appointed as hearing therapists are required to undertake an intensive one-year course of professional training. It is available at the City Lit Centre for the Deaf, Keeley house, Keeley street, London WC2B 4BA.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what plans he has to improve the therapy available to the hearing impaired in Northern Ireland;

(2) what plans he has to increase the number of hearing therapists employed within the Northern Ireland health service.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 15 July 1991]:* The management and delivery of services at local level are the responsibility of each health and social services board. Boards are expected to determine the level of service to be provided and the requisite number of staff to be employed and trained. In the draft regional strategic framework 1992-1997 issued recently for consultation, one of the objectives included asks that each board should identify the number and needs of sensorily impaired people living in its area and should ensure access to specialist teams of staff to provide support for hearing and for visually impaired people.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many hearing therapists are employed within the Northern Ireland health service.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 15 July 1991]:* There are two, one based in the Royal group of hospitals and one at the Craigavon area hospital.

Hearing Loss

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people in Northern Ireland are suffering from hearing loss in each of the classifications (1) mild loss (20-39dB), (2) moderate loss (40-59dB), (3) severe loss (60-79dB), (4) profound loss (80-99dB) and (5) unaidable (100dB).

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 15 July 1991]:* I regret that the information requested is not held centrally.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Finance

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing for each year from 1979-80 to 1990-91 *(a)* service expenditure control totals for each appropriate area for the purposes of the annual financial settlement and *(b)* the actual expenditure outturn in each of those areas.

Mr. Portillo: The service expenditure control totals used in the rate support grant settlements from 1982-83 to 1989-90 are shown in the table. Information on expenditure control totals is not available for years prior to 1982-83.

It is not possible to construct comparable figures for outturn expenditure on the basis of the available returns from local authorities.

The service expenditure control totals used in the 1990-91 revenue support grant settlement together with expenditure on a similar basis are as follows:

	Control totals £ million	*Expenditure £ million*
Education	14,753	15,683
Personal Social Services	3,592	4,035
Police	2,125	2,187
Fire and Civil Defence	877	949
Highway Maintenance	1,578	1,736
All Other Services	4,502	5,617
Capital Financing	2,380	3,045
Total Revenue Expenditure	29,805	33,250

1982-83 to 1989-90 total grant related expenditure for the main groups of services

£ million

	1982-83	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
1. Education, Arts and Libraries	10,217	10,349	10,624	11,093	11,618	12,576	13,939	14,354
2. Personal Social	1,943	2,085	2,205	2,366	2,553	2,756	2,913	3,269
3. Law and Order	1,649	1,785	1,890	2,008	2,152	2,363	2,555	2,846
4. Transport	1,373	1,398	1,487	1,733	1,929	2,045	2,024	2,140
5. Employment and Consumer Protection	107	110	115	118	127	148	159	174
6. Housing	591	536	514	628	826	825	816	872
7. Environmental Services	2,405	2,507	2,520	2,652	2,926	3,000	3,137	3,620
8. Financing Items	230	461	527	622	660	29	464	386
All Services	18,515	19,231	19,882	21,221	22,790	23,742	26,006	27,662

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the balance in the general revenue account at the end of the financial year for London authorities for each year since 1985, by London borough.

Mr. Portillo: The available information as returned by authorities is given in the table.

Closing balance (ie at 31 March) on rate fund revenue account

£ million

	1984-85	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
ILEA	46·489	55·175	50·545	41·241	94·604	69·081
Greater London CL	0·000	214·448	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
City of London	5·369	11·322	19·152	18·782	28·850	37·526
Camden	3·649	17·489	9·151	1·726	12·289	19·068
Greenwich	13·102	11·099	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Hackney	−2·216	11·485	15·234	n/a	n/a	0·490
Hammersmith and Fulham	0·030	0·140	0·140	0·175	12·971	33·805
Islington	0·000	3·843	0·112	3·198	4·054	10·962
Kensington and Chelsea	17·252	15·857	17·962	16·563	10·463	10·126
Lambeth	33·516	36·367	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Lewisham	7·461	12·967	20·609	11·129	0·315	n/a
Southwark	0·000	2·909	31·155	18·790	23·755	12·606
Tower Hamlets	11·638	9·282	0·119	0·000	11·380	0·000
Wandsworth	2·886	4·463	18·205	6·909	20·111	35·914
Westminster	10·732	14·877	14·110	13·022	12·488	n/a
Barking and Dagenham	7·328	4·790	7·529	7·714	7·197	6·567
Barnet	3·337	3·982	5·415	4·830	14·396	16·274
Bexley	6·999	5·974	6·237	3·184	3·742	2·074
Brent	13·715	32·252	−14·847	−8·543	−23·188	3·185
Bromley	2·976	1·144	11·373	18·089	26·670	24·709
Croydon	4·283	4·687	19·228	21·352	16·566	7·380
Ealing	−1·786	−3·543	n/a	n/a	n/a	−4·928
Enfield	3·481	5·543	6·730	6·758	9·899	8·190
Haringey	2·000	24·115	0·248	n/a	n/a	n/a
Harrow	10·304	12·696	13·118	11·035	12·116	11·884
Havering	4·860	2·112	4·489	4·499	3·702	2·900
Hillingdon	−6·235	0·000	2·524	0·000	2·305	6·187
Hounslow	5·689	26·623	n/a	1·081	9·571	n/a

	1984-85	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
Kingston-upon-Thames	1·027	0·687	1·604	7·041	9·936	5·296
Merton	4·775	6·761	37·416	35·314	33·254	n/a
Newham	7·230	25·707	n/a	0·000	0·000	4·018
Redbridge	0·341	0·218	2·411	4·596	4·686	5·371
Richmond-upon-Thames	6·325	7·354	5·667	13·441	14·797	n/a
Sutton	2·416	2·143	7·677	5·345	12·190	8·959
Waltham Forest	9·199	3·387	0·260	1·538	3·244	2·077
London Fire/CD authority	[1]—	[1]—	13·464	0·004	−26·702	0·000
Middlesex Probation	[1]—	[1]—	0·000	0·000	0·000	0·000
South East London Probation	[1]—	[1]—	0·000	0·000	0·000	0·000
South West London Probation	[1]—	[1]—	0·003	0·020	0·037	0·055
North East London Probation	[1]—	[1]—	0·059	0·000	0·000	0·000
London Waste Reg.	[1]—	[1]—	0·325	0·540	−0·319	0·499
West London Waste	[1]—	[1]—	1·860	2·093	1·947	1·953
North London Waste	[1]—	[1]—	2·960	1·901	1·893	2·502
East London Waste	[1]—	[1]—	1·020	0·984	0·622	0·065
West Riverside Waste	[1]—	[1]—	1·126	1·170	0·949	2·119

n/a Not available.
[1]— Not applicable.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing, for the years 1966-67 to 1991-92, separately for England, English regions, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Great Britain and the United Kingdom *(a)* average household domestic rate/community charge bills in pounds sterling, *(b)* average domestic rate/community charge bills adjusted by the retail prices index, *(c)* average domestic rate/community charge bills as a proportion of average household income and *(d)* average domestic rate/community charge bills as a proportion of male average earnings.

Mr. Portillo: The available information for average gross domestic rate bills per household, by region in England, is as follows:

Region	*1983-84* £	*1984-85* £	*1985-86* £	*1986-87* £	*1987-88* £	*1988-89* £	*1989-90* £
South East	370	393	420	451	486	527	573
South West	255	272	291	351	377	418	459
East Anglia	244	265	281	349	370	404	449
West Midlands	290	299	345	398	429	467	520
East Midlands	243	271	292	362	395	444	461
North West	291	314	347	401	432	466	515
Yorkshire and Humberside	234	251	273	335	353	393	437
Northern	262	284	322	375	382	413	457
England	303	323	351	400	429	468	512

Average gross community charges by region for England are as follows:

	1990-91 £	*1991-92* £
South East	351	257
South West	339	242
East Anglia	368	235
West Midlands	373	267
East Midlands	352	256
North West	377	286
Yorks and Humberside	315	228
Northern	376	267
England	357	252

Information on the RPI is published in *Economic Trends*; average household income by region is published in the annual Family Expenditure Survey reports and Regional Trends; average male earnings by region are published in the annual New Earnings Survey (Volume E) and reported also in Regional Trends. These publications are available in the House of the Commons Library.

Information for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is a matter for my right hon. Friends the respective Secretaries of State.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing, with columns for English regions and England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, an analysis of local authority expenditure consistent with table 2 of Cm 1514.

Miss Widdecombe: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 10 July 1991 at columns *396-98*.

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in rank order the proportion of community charge for 1990-91 now collected for each local authority, and the average for England.

Mr. Portillo: We estimate that the average percentage of budgeted community charge yield collected in England by 31 March 1991, allowing for non-responding authorities, was 90 per cent. I am placing in the Library a table containing information for individual local authorities ranked in descending order.

War Widows (Housing Benefit)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what factors in the standard spending assessments relate to the liability of local authorities to offer a housing benefit disregard for war widows; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: That part of housing benefit payments which falls to be met by local authorities' general funds rather than being supported directly by central Government subsidy is covered by the all other services element of standard spending assessments—SSAs. This element covers a wide range of services and is distributed on the basis of a number of indicators, including an indicator of social conditions. There is no direct link between any single service covered by this SSA element and any one of the indicators.

Special Protection Areas

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he proposes to take to ensure that local planning authorities are aware of the location of sites which have been identified by the statutory nature conservation agencies as meeting criteria for designation as SPAs under EC directive 79/409 on the conservation of wild birds or under the Ramsar convention.

Mr. Baldry: Designated and potential special protection areas and Ramsar sites are afforded protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 through the sites of special scientific interest system. Local planning authorities are already informed of the location of these sites as part of the SSSI designation process. A list of both potential and designated SPAs and Ramsar sites has been published in the *Official Report* and is updated.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those sites so far designated or identified for designation in England as special protection areas under EC directive 79/409 on the conservation of wild birds or wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar convention on wetlands of international importance especially as waterfowl habitat.

Mr. Baldry: The tables list all those sites in England which have been designated as either special protection areas, or Ramsar sites, or both and those which have been identified by the Nature Conservancy Council as potential special protection areas or Ramsar sites.

Designated Sites

Site	*County*	*SPA/Ramsar*	*Date designated*
Rockliffe Marshes	Cumbria	SPA/Ramsar	1 October 1986
Irthinghead Mires	Cumbria Northumberland	Ramsar	17 July 1985
Leighton Moss	Lancashire	SPA/Ramsar	28 November 1985
Alt Estuary (part)	Merseyside	SPA/Ramsar	28 November 1985
Ribble Estuary (part)	Lancashire	SPA	31 August 1982
Martin Mere	Lancashire	SPA/Ramsar	28 November 1985
Lindisfarne (part)	Northumberland	Ramsar	5 January 1976
Farne Islands	Northumberland	SPA	17 July 1985
Coquet Island	Northumberland	SPA	17 July 1985
Holburn Lake and Moss	Northumberland	SPA/Ramsar	17 July 1985
Derwent Ings	North Yorkshire Humberside	SPA/Ramsar	17 July 1985
Moor House	Cumbria	SPA	31 August 1982
Rostherne Mere	Cheshire	Ramsar	24 July 1981
The Wash	Lincolnshire Norfolk	SPA/Ramsar	30 March 1988
Ouse Washes	Cambridgeshire Norfolk	Ramsar	5 January 1976
North Norfolk Coast	Norfolk	SPA/Ramsar	20 January 1989
Redgrave and Lopham Fens	Norfolk Suffolk	Ramsar	15 February 1991
Minsmere-Walberswick (part)	Suffolk	Ramsar	5 January 1976
Orfordness-Havergate (part)	Suffolk	SPA	31 August 1982
Abberton Reservoir	Essex	Ramsar	24 July 1981
Bure Marshes	Norfolk	Ramsar	5 January 1976
Hickling Broad and Horsey Mere	Norfolk	Ramsar	5 January 1976
Chew Valley Lake	Avon	SPA	17 July 1985
Chesil Beach and The Fleet	Dorset	SPA/Ramsar	17 July 1985
Chichester and Langstone Harbours	Hampshire West Sussex	SPA/Ramsar	28 October 1987
The Swale (part)	Kent	SPA/Ramsar	17 July 1985
Pagham Harbour	West Sussex	SPA/Ramsar	30 March 1988
Dee Estuary	Clwyd Cheshire Merseyside	SPA/Ramsar	17 July 1985
Upper Severn Estuary	Gloucestershire	SPA/Ramsar	5 February 1988
Bridgwater Bay	Somerset	Ramsar	5 January 1976

Potential Sites

Sites	*County*	*SPA/Ramsar*
Upper Solway Flats and Marshes	Cumbria Dumfries and Galloway	SPA/Ramsar
Duddon Estuary	Cumbria	SPA/Ramsar
Esthwaite Water	Cumbria	Ramsar

Sites	County	SPA/Ramsar
	Northumberland	
Morecambe Bay	Cumbria	SPA/Ramsar
	Lancashire	
Ribble and Alt Estuaries	Lancashire	SPA/Ramsar
	Merseyside	
Mersey Estuary	Merseyside	SPA/Ramsar
	Cheshire	
Ravenglass	Cumbria	Ramsar
Bowland Fells	Lancashire	SPA
Thorne and Hatfield Moors	South Yorkshire	SPA/Ramsar
	Humberside	
Shap Fells	Cumbria	SPA
Solway Mosses	Cumbria	Ramsar
Duddon Mosses	Cumbria	Ramsar
North of England Montane Sites	Cumbria	SPA
Lindisfarne	Northumberland	SPA/Ramsar
Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast	Cleveland	SPA/Ramsar
Malham Tarn	North Yorkshire	Ramsar
Flamborough Head and Bempton Cliffs	Humberside	SPA
Humber Flats, Marshes and Coast	Humberside	SPA/Ramsar
	Lincolnshire	
Northumberland Coast	Northumberland	SPA/Ramsar
North Yorkshire Moors	North Yorkshire	SPA
Hornsea Mere	Humberside	SPA
Yorkshire Dale Moorlands	North Yorkshire	SPA
	Cumbria	
North Pennine Moors	Cumbria	SPA/Ramsar
	Northumberland	
	Durham	
	North Yorkshire	
Peak District Moors	Derbyshire	SPA
	South Yorkshire	
	Staffordshire	
Midland Meres and Mosses	Cheshire	Ramsar
	Shropshire	
	Staffordshire	
Walmore Common	Gloucestershire	SPA/Ramsar
	Norfolk	
The Wash—Gibraltar Point	Lincolnshire	SPA/Ramsar
Nene Washes	Cambridgeshire	SPA/Ramsar
Ouse Washes	Cambridgeshire	SPA
	Norfolk	
Rutland Water	Leicestershire	SPA/Ramsar
Roydon Common	Norfolk	Ramsar
Minsmere—Walberswick	Suffolk	SPA/Ramsar
Orfordness—Havergate	Suffolk	SPA/Ramsar
Stour and Orwell Estuary	Suffolk	SPA/Ramsar
	Essex	
Hamford Water	Essex	SPA/Ramsar
Abberton Reservoir	Essex	SPA
Benfleet and Southend Marshes	Essex	SPA/Ramsar
Breckland heaths	Norfolk	SPA
	Suffolk	
Dersingham Bog	Norfolk	Ramsar
Chippenham Fen	Cambridgeshire	Ramsar
Mid-Essex Coast	Essex	SPA/Ramsar
Norfolk Broads	Norfolk	SPA/Ramsar
Deben Estuary	Suffolk	SPA/Ramsar
Great Yarmouth North Denes	Norfolk	SPA
Somerset Levels and Moors	Somerset	SPA/Ramsar
Taw and Torridge Estuary	Devon	SPA
Isles of Scilly Coastal Habitats	Cornwall	SPA/Ramsar
Exe Estuary	Devon	SPA/Ramsar
Dorset Heathlands	Dorset	SPA
Poole Harbour	Dorset	SPA/Ramsar
East Devon Heaths	Devon	SPA
Tamar Complex	Devon	SPA
	Cornwall	
Bodmin Moor	Cornwall	SPA
New Forest	Hampshire	SPA/Ramsar
Portsmouth Harbour	Hampshire	SPA
Southampton Water and Solent Marshes	Hampshire	SPA/Ramsar
Avon Valley	Hampshire	SPA/Ramsar
	Dorset	
Porton Down	Wiltshire	SPA
	Hampshire	

Sites	County	SPA/Ramsar
Windsor Forest and Great Park	Berkshire	SPA
	Surrey	
Woolmer Forest	Hampshire	SPA
The Swale	Kent	SPA/Ramsar
Thames Estuary and Marshes	Kent	SPA/Ramsar
Medway Estuary and Marshes	Kent	SPA/Ramsar
Thanet Coast	Kent	SPA/Ramsar
Pevensey Levels	East Sussex	SPA/Ramsar
Dungeness to Pett Levels	Kent	SPA/Ramsar
	East Sussex	
Lee Valley	Greater London	SPA
Stodmarsh	Kent	SPA/Ramsar
Thursley, Hankley and Frensham Commons	Surrey	SPA/Ramsar
Chobham to Yateley Commons	Surrey	SPA
	Hampshire	
	Berkshire	
Amberley	West Sussex	SPA/Ramsar
South West London Reservoirs and Gravel Pits	Greater London	SPA/Ramsar
	Berkshire	
	Surrey	
Severn Estuary	Gloucestershire	SPA/Ramsar
	Avon	
	Somerset	
	South Glamorgan	
	Gwent	

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to ensure that port and harbour authorities are aware of the locations and significance of sites which have been identified by the statutory nature conservation agencies as meeting criteria for designation as SPAs under directive 79/409 on the conservation of wild birds or under the Ramsar convention.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 11 July 1991]:* Designated and potential special protection areas and Ramsar sites are afforded protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 through the sites of special scientific interest system. Harbour and port authorities, as owners/occupiers, are already informed of the location and ornithological significance of these sites as part of this process. SSSIs are entered as a local land charge.

Water Industry

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what record he has of or what representations he received from the water industry, before privatisation, about its inability to recruit the most suitable applicants for posts in top and middle management, or skilled scientific and professional grades owing to inadequate or non-competitive salaries.

Mr. Baldry: In making the appointments of executive directors of the new water and sewerage companies before privatisation we had in mind the need to attract applicants of the necessary calibre and took into account representations from the industry about the salaries that were required for that purpose. In some cases, it was necessary for these to be above the existing scales of the industry. The relevant salaries were listed in the prospectus.

Mortgage Payments

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with building societies' representatives about schemes to prevent the increase in repossessions and help for people falling behind with mortgage payments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: As part of our continuing discussions with banks and building societies, my right hon. Friend met the Council of Mortgage Lenders earlier this month. In addition to the help already available to some borrowers through income support and through shared ownership schemes, discussion included steps to see that reductions in base rates were passed promptly to borrowers and that links between lenders, local authorities and local DSS offices are improved to ensure that no property is needlessly repossessed.

Flags (10 July)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which flags were being flown on 10 July on the Treasury building, Whitehall; and if he will make a statement about the reasons why each of these flags has been selected.

Mr. Yeo: On 10 July four union flags were flying on the Treasury building as part of the preparations for the London economic summit. Since then other flags of the United Kingdom, the armed forces and the G7 flag have been added in accordance with Her Majesty's command.

Business Rates

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects appeals against assessment of uniform business rate for 1990-91 to be completed.

Mr. Portillo: The hearing of appeals is a matter for the valuation and community charge tribunals, which are statutory independent. However, I expect the tribunals to determine by 1 April 1994 the bulk of appeals lodged in the financial year 1990-91 against the 1990 rating list.

Local Government (Statutory Obligations)

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all statutory obligations currently imposed on local government in England.

Mr. Portillo: It is not practicable to list all local authority statutory obligations which arise under a very

wide range of both public general and local Acts. Moreover, in addition to those responsibilities which are cast in the form of legal duties, practical considerations may make other functions, which are formally only powers, effectively obligations.

House Prices

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the change in house prices during the second quarter of 1991 for *(a)* the northern region, *(b)* Yorkshire and Humberside, *(c)* the north-west, *(d)* the east midlands, *(e)* the west midlands, *(f)* East Anglia, *(g)* the south-west, *(h)* the south-east and *(i)* Greater London as measured by the house price index.

Mr. Yeo: The regional mix-adjusted house price index based on the survey of building society mortgage completions is published annually by the Department. The latest figures, for 1990, are in table 5.11 of "Regional Trends 26", a copy of which is in the Library. The quarterly mix-adjusted index, at the national level—United Kingdom—is published in part 2 of the quarterly edition of "Housing and Construction Statistics: Great Britain". The index for the second quarter of 1991 is not yet available.

Marine Monitoring

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for the future of marine monitoring in United Kingdom coastal waters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I have today placed copies in the Library of both the report of the marine pollution monitoring management group—MPMMG—on, "The Principles and Practice of Monitoring in UK Coastal Waters" and the Government's response to it. This response sets out the Government's views for the future of marine monitoring around our shores in the light of the recommendations made by MPMMG.

Drinking Water Inspectorate

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has now received the report of the drinking water inspectorate for 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: The chief inspector, Michael Healey, has submitted to me and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales his first annual report on drinking water in 1990. This has been published today, and I have placed copies in the Library.

Of 3·3 million tests carried out on drinking water during 1990, 99 per cent. came within the legal limits. The chief inspector has concluded that the water supplied to consumers is of high quality, and often of exceptionally high quality. Overall, the inspectorate has confirmed the safety of public water supplies.

The report is the first comprehensive description of drinking water quality in England and Wales, tested rigorously against the very demanding criteria of the Water Quality Regulations, which incorporate the limits in the EC drinking water directive. I am pleased that in this country we are leading the way in Europe by requiring such close scrutiny of our water supplies and the publication of a report of this kind.

Some supplies were found not to comply at some time with some of the standards in the Water Quality Regulations. These cases do not endanger health. Some companies have given my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Wales and me undertakings, in response to action by us under section 20 of the Water Act 1989, to remedy the position as quickly as practicable, and in most cases by 1995. Other companies will do so shortly. This remedial programme requires major capital investment by the industry, amounting to over £2 billion by 1995. The inspectorate has concluded that the programme is on schedule. My hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier), the Minister for the Environment and Countryside, is however writing today to the chairmen of water companies to emphasise the importance we attach to this programme.

Furthermore, my right hon. Friend and I have asked the inspectorate to review the remedial programme. If the review shows that there is scope for remedying current breaches of the standards at an earlier date than hitherto planned, we shall consider to what extent water companies should be required to do that. This could mean that some companies would be allowed a higher limit on their charges, to reflect additional costs.

Finally, the report also refers to a small number of incidents notified by water companies to the inspectorate in which either companies have had to take special precautions or the inspectorate is considering enforcement action or prosecution.

In parallel with this major investment programme by the water industry, the Government are taking action on other fronts which will reduce the contamination of water sources by nitrate and pesticides.

Planning Applications

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to issue a consultation paper about publicity for planning applications.

Mr. Yeo: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has today issued a consultation paper "Planning Applications: Publicity and Notification" seeking views on a range of proposals for a new regime of publicity for planning applications.

In particular views are invited on:

(a) the merits of introducing compulsory neighbour notification for all planning applications;

(b) the relative merits of different types of publicity eg. site notices, newspaper advertisements or any other media and on whether publicity should be undertaken by applicant or local planning authority;

(c) the scope for introducing variable levels of publicity depending on the importance of the application and the location of the application site;

(d) the merits of extending publicity requirements to applications for reserved matters following a grant of outline planning permission;

(e) a proposal for all planning decisions to be advertised.

Separate but parallel consultation is being carried out by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Montreal Protocol

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, with figures, the total contributions that the Government have made since September 1990 towards the costs that developing

countries will incur in complying with the revised Montreal protocol; and what further contributions the Government will undertake before the end of 1993.

Mrs. Chalker: I have been asked to reply.

The Government announced a contribution of up to $15 million to the Montreal protocol funding mechanism in June 1990, to be disbursed over the following three years. There are no present plans for further contributions.

Kingsbridge Book Shop

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what date the appeal against uniform business rate assessment for 1990-91 of Kingsbridge Book Shop was received; and when he expects it to be heard.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 15 July 1991]:* The proposal to alter the entry in the rating list for Kingsbridge Book Shop was lodged on 25 September 1990 and was transmitted to the local valuation and community charge tribunal—VCCT—within the statutory six months of receipt. Unless agreement between the ratepayer and the valuation officer is reached beforehand, it is estimated that the appeal will be listed for hearing by the VCCT by the end of September.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 18 July 1991

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Legal Aid

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Attorney-General how many people have been granted legal aid to assist them in taking legal action against drug companies in relation to the effects of tranquilisers.

The Attorney-General: As at 5 July 1991 5,337 people had been granted full civil legal aid certificates by the Legal Aid Board to enable them to take legal action in relation to the effects of tranquilisers.

Asylum Cases

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General what will be the annual spending reduction as a result of the abolition of green form assistance for political asylum cases; and what consultations will take place about this change in the legal aid scheme.

The Attorney-General: The annual reduction in the legal aid costs will depend on the final details of the new arrangements with the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service for the economic and effective provision of advice and assistance in immigration and political asylum cases. Consultation will take place on the detailed implementation of the proposals.

Syndicates (Investigations)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Attorney-General what are the recommendations from the Serious Fraud Office that have been put to the chairman or chief executive of Lloyd's, following the completion of the preliminary investigations into syndicates 317-661.

The Attorney-General: I regret that I do not think it appropriate to give information about any communications between the Serious Fraud Office and any regulatory bodies.

Judicial Appointments (Women)

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General how many women there are in each class of judicial appointments; and what change there has been in the numbers over the last year.

The Attorney-General: The numbers of women currently in post as judges or stipendiry magistrates, and those in post a year ago, together with the net change, are as follows:

	July 1990	*July 1991*	*Net change*
Lords Justices of Appeal	1	1	—
High Court Judges	1	2	+1
Circuit Judges	19	20	+1
District Judges	7	9	+2
Metropolitan Stipendary Magistrates	8	8	—
Provincial Stipendary Magistrates	—	1	+1

TRANSPORT

Motorcycle Traffic

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport further to his written answer to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-West of 21 June, *Official Report*, columns *335-36*, if he will provide the basis for the statement that total motorcycle traffic rose by an estimated 53 per cent. between 1970 and 1989.

Mr. Chope: In the answer to my hon. Friend of 21 June, I stated that

"Total motorcycle traffic rose by an estimated 53 per cent. between 1970 and 1989".

The information on the use of motorcycles comes from the national traffic census and is published in "Transport Statistics Great Britain 1979-1989", tables 2.1 and 7.4. Revisions to the traffic estimates were made in 1989 and included a revision of all figures from 1966.

The answer of 21 June used the previous estimate for 1970 which estimated growth at 53 per cent. The 1989 revision estimated motorcycle traffic at 4 billion vehicle kilometres in 1970 compared with 6·3 billion vehicle kilometres in 1989—a growth of 58 per cent.

A2

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the awarding of the design consultancy contract in relation to the dualling of the A2 between Lydden and Dover.

Mr. Chope: The design commission for the proposed dualling of the A2 between Lydden and Dover was awarded on 15 July to Bullen and Partners, consulting engineers.

Lichfield-Walsall Rail Line

Mrs. Heal: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to ensure that the Lichfield to Walsall rail formation will not be obstructed by the construction of the northern relief road and to ensure the railway's continued use for freight and the future use of its double-track formation for passenger traffic.

Mr. McLoughlin: It was a condition of the competition to design, build, finance and operate the Birmingham northern relief road that tenderers should obtain the agreement of British Rail for any railway possessions or operating restrictions required in connection with their proposals. It is hoped to announce the result of the competition as soon as possible.

Mrs. Heal: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what environmental benefits he will consider when judging the case for re-opening the Lichfield to Walsall line to passenger and freight traffic.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. and learned Friend has received no such case. It would be for British Rail to put

forward one. If the case did not meet the required rate of return on financial grounds alone it would be open to BR, the Passenger Transport Authority and local authorities to take account of external benefits. Grants are available under section 56 of the Transport Act 1968. Criteria for these grants are set out in departmental circular 3/89, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Rugeley-Walsall Rail Line

Mrs. Heal: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what environmental benefits he will consider when judging the case for opening the Rugeley to Walsall line to passenger traffic.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. and learned Friend has received no such case. It would be for British Rail to put forward one. If the case did not meet the required rate of return on financial grounds alone it would be open to BR and local authorities, to take account of external benefits. Grants are available under section 56 of the Transport Act 1968. Criteria for these grants are set out in departmental circular 3/89, a copy of which is available in the Library.

M4/A4 Corridor

Sir Barney Hayhoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive the final report of the M4/A4 corridor study from his consultants; what are the reasons for its delay; and when it will be published.

Mr. Chope: The final report has been received from the consultants and will be published shortly. Its completion has been delayed by the need to update the traffic data.

Taxi Drivers

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether, in the light of the recent amendment in the Road Traffic Bill that facilitates the vetting of those applying for a taxi driver's licence, he will issue advice to local authorities covering *(a)* how to determine what offences makes a person not a fit and proper person to hold a taxi licence, *(b)* the case for establishing an independent appeals procedure should a licence be refused and *(c)* the need to ensure that the criminal record is accurate, is relevant to the issuing of the licence and relates to the licence applicant; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government will be consulting the police and licensing authorities prior to issuing a circular detailing the checking arrangements for taxi and private hire vehicle drivers' licences. The circular will include advice on how to interpret the criminal record and on procedures for dealing with disputed information.

Black Country Spine Road

Mr. Bevan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will announce the conclusions of the review of the black country spine road.

Mr. Chope: I have today invited the Black Country development corporation, in co-operation with the metropolitan borough of Sandwell, to take forward a modified scheme for a spine road in the black country.

A halt was called to the previous proposals when the costs escalated last year and a review was carried out. That review showed that any scheme in this part of the black country would be very expensive and the original scheme had to be scaled down in order to get a scheme that was affordable and a worthwhile investment.

The scheme now proposed will be a dual carriageway road from Carters green to Sandwell 2000 with junctions at ground level at an estimated cost of £93 million. It will open up access to the key development sites in the area of the Black Country development corporation. In particular it will provide access from the south to Sandwell 2000 and creates the potential for bringing £540 million of new investment and 17,000 jobs to the black country.

London Transport

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now place the management of London Transport out for competitive tender; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: No.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what access to competitors' tenders was allowed to existing operators in the London Transport bus route tendering process; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: None. London Transport's tendered bus division treats all tenders for London Transport bus routes in the strictest confidence.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage salary increase has been requested by the chairman and board members of London Transport with effect from April 1991; and when he expects to announce the level of board salaries for 1991-92.

Mr. Freeman: Recommendations for salary increases for members of the board of London Transport come to us in confidence and should not be known even to the board members concerned. My right hon. and learned Friend expects to determine board salaries for 1991-92 fairly shortly.

M11 Link Road

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list what *(a)* measures and *(b)* standards to mitigate the environmental impact of the M11 link road through Leyton and Leytonstone were applied.

Mr. Chope: A fundamental objective during the development of the design of the A12 Hackney-M11 link road has been to mitigate the environmental impact of the road. The selection of a route which runs alongside the railway line and below ground level and in places in tunnel show how this has been achieved. Retaining walls have been used to minimise land take. Provision will be made for noise insulation to houses nearby, shrubs and trees will be planted, and land is to be made available for public use in exchange for areas of open space to be acquired in connection with the scheme.

Railway Platforms

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the requirement by the Department of Transport that platforms at railway stations should be extended to the length of trains using the platforms, and on the amount of grant aid given to British Rail for this work.

Mr. Freeman: The requirement that platforms should be as long as the trains regularly booked to call at them has been in existence since the turn of the century. Her Majesty's inspectorate issued fresh guidance on this matter last year, in connection with the greater use of trains with crew-controlled doors. British Rail is surveying its stations to identify any which do not meet the requirements. It will then discuss with the inspectorate and the Department what action should be taken. Safety expenditure by the subsidised railway sectors will continue to be supported by means of the PSO grant in the normal way.

Fatalities

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the number of fatalities on British Rail and London Transport for each year from 1975, giving their nature and cause.

Mr. Freeman: The number of fatalities (excluding suicides and trespassers) on all railways in the period 1975-89 is as follows. An analysis of the nature and causes of accidents is given in the report on the safety record of the railways in Great Britain which is issued annually by Her Majesty's chief inspector of railways. Copies are available from the Library of the House.

Year	*Passengers*	*Staff*	*Others*	*Total*
1975	69	46	12	127
1976	30	46	21	97
1977	30	34	20	84
1978	47	45	22	114
1979	52	43	12	107
1980	26	32	11	69
1981	39	27	10	76
1982	20	27	10	57
1983	29	28	12	69
1984	39	25	12	76
1985	33	25	16	74
1986	32	16	24	97
1987	68	16	20	104
1988	69	16	12	97
1989	33	18	18	69

Environment Exhibition, Olympia

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information on the environmental benefits of walking and cycling was made available at his Department's exhibition stand at the environment, wildlife and conservation exhibition at Olympia on 6 to 11 July.

Mr. McLoughlin: Information on the environmental benefits of walking and cycling was included in displays and in leaflets and booklets available at the stand.

Youth Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list *(a)* the number of youth training places in his Department and *(b)* the number of places occupied in May for each of the years 1989, 1990 and the current year.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department of Transport currenty has the equivalent of 31 contracted places for youth trainees at Bristol and Swansea (Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre). The numbers of trainees at the dates referred to are:

	Bristol	*Swansea*
May 1989	4	8
May 1990	3	20
May 1991	5	28

Advertising Campaigns

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 2 July *Official Report*, column *86*, if he will list the commencement date and duration of each publicity campaign to which he refers.

Mr. McLoughlin: The commencement dates and duration of publicity campaigns referred to in my answer of 2 July are as follows:

For television advertising campaigns
- child road safety: 23 April to 16 May a further campaign is being planned for October
- drinking and driving: a campaign is being planned for December

For other publicity campaigns
- Summer drink/drive: 3 July for one month
- transport and the environment: 5 July and continuing
- Road Traffic Act: under consideration
- coastguard advice for users of coastal waters: continuing
- Safety on the Move exhibitions: continuing

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the advertising, promotional or public relations companies employed by or on behalf of his Department who are involved in the campaigns given in his answer of 2 July, *Official Report*, column *86*.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department's advertising on the child road safety and drink drive campaigns is handled by D'Arcy Masius Benton and Bowles.

No promotional or public relations companies are currently employed by my Department in respect of these and the other campaigns referred to.

A303

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all roadworks currently being undertaken on the A303 trunk road.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 17 July 1991]:* Two improvement schemes are in progress on the A303; between Stockton wood and Chicklade bottom in Wiltshire and between Mere in Wiltshire and Wincanton in Somerset. Other minor repair works take place as necessary and vary from day to day.

Seat Belts

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many prosecutions have been undertaken on drivers and passengers in coaches and large minibuses for failure to wear seat belts since October 1988; and with what results.

Mr. John Patten: I have been asked to reply.

The statistics collected centrally on prosecutions for not wearing a seat belt do not record the type of vehicle involved.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Bryan Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what aid has been supplied to developing countries for (i) family planning

activities, (ii) projects aimed at alleviating poverty and promoting economic and social development and (iii) projects to improve the health and education of women and to reduce infant mortality, since September 1990.

Mrs. Chalker: Promoting sustainable economic and social development and alleviating poverty are the basic objectives of the whole aid programme. British aid, bilateral and through multilateral channels, providing direct support to family planning services was just over £17 million in 1989 (final 1990 figures are not yet available but there was a significant increase to about £24 million). Improving the health and education of women and reducing infant mortality are part of a number of the activities that we finance. Bilateral activities which include these objectives as identifiably substantial aspects of the work, involved expenditure of about £29 million in 1989. In addition a good part of our contributions to WHO, UNICEF and UNHCR activities totalling £43·5 million in 1989 would have been devoted to such activities.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Youth Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list *(a)* the number of youth training places in his Department and *(b)* the number of places occupied in May for each of the years 1989, 1990 and the current year.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Neither the diplomatic wing nor the aid wing participates in the youth training scheme. But both Departments run regular work experience schemes. Twice a year, the FCO takes on about 10 schoolchildren for two weeks in London. The ODA takes about 40 schoolchildren and students altogether, annually, in London, East Kilbride and at its Scientific Executive Agency in Chatham.

Central Europe

Mr. Whitney: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans there are for starting direct teaching of English in central Europe; and what the approximate start-up costs are estimated to be.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Numerous private and independent English language teaching organisations are developing programmes in central Europe.

The British Council plans open a teaching centre in Hungary in 1992 and is evaluating the scope in Czechoslovakia. Start-up costs will depend on the need to adapt premises.

SCOTLAND

Blairgowrie Cottage Hospital

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the capital cost for the proposed new eight-bedded ward at Blairgowrie cottage hospital.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Tayside health board is consulting on its proposals which have not yet come forward to be considered by Ministers.

Playgroups

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will use his powers under the Children Act 1989 to ensure that registration and inspection fees under part X of the Act are waived for non-profit making playgroups with charitable status when the provisions of the Act come into force later this year.

Mr. Lang: Registration and inspection fees for playgroups and other childcare services will be prescribed in regulations which the Government will bring forward for coming into force on 14 October. No decisions have yet been taken on the level of the fees to be prescribed but in fixing them I will take account of the non-profit making and charitable status of playgroups which, I believe, provide a valuable experience for very many young children and for their families.

Will Aid 1992

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to support Will Aid 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No. This is a project initiated by lawyers and it will be for individual solicitors to decide whether or not to support it.

Prison Service

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has for changes to the organisation and management of the Scottish prison service.

Mr. Lang: In February 1991, I authorised the director of the Scottish prison service to enter into consultations with staff and trade unions on proposals for changes to the organisation of the Scottish prison service, contained in the report "Organising for Excellence", prepared by a prison service review team. Comments were invited by the end of April.

I have now had an opportunity to consider the responses to the consultation period. In the light of the comments received, I have now authorised the director of the Scottish prison service to implement the broad structure recommended by the review team. In particular, the reorganisation will involve:

- The creation of a new prisons board for Scotland, including two non-executive members, to advise on the development of strategies and plans for the service;
- The reorganisation of the headquarters of the Scottish prison service under four new directorates—prisons, strategy and planning, human resources, and finance and information systems—to provide a more effective framework for the strategic management of the service;
- The creation of area directors, who would be responsible for the line management of a group of establishments on a regional basis; and over time, the delegation of considerably greater responsibility, authority and accountability to the Governors of establishments.

As a consequence of these changes, I have decided that in future the Scottish prison service shall operate on next steps principles. Such a move is consistent with the measures which we have already taken to deliver greater public accountability and improve managerial control within the Scottish prison service. In addition, I have asked my officials to review the practicability and desirability of a move to full agency status, with a view to this work having been completed by the end of December 1991.

The staff of the Scottish prison service are critical to its future success. A key objective of the proposed changes will be to deliver a more integrated service, offering staff at all levels greater job satisfaction and improved opportunities for career development. While the broad principles of the new structure have now been decided, much work remains to be done on the detail of how they will be implemented and we will be consulting fully with the trade unions and individual members of staff on the implementation of these changes.

Legal Aid

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he intends to undertake separate Scottish consultations on the current review of financial conditions for legal aid.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Office is today publishing a consultation paper entitled "Eligibility for Civil Legal Aid in Scotland" which will be circulated to a wide range of interested parties. The paper, which covers non-matrimonial civil legal aid, reflects the Government's commitment to maintaining an effective legal aid system in Scotland. It presents a number of options for the future funding of civil cases, paying particular attention to the importance of targeting resources where need is greatest. It also proposes that legal aid would continue to be available free to those who could not reasonably be expected to make any contribution towards the costs of their case.

The paper is the first stage of a review covering all aspects of financial conditions for legal aid. Further stages will deal with legal aid in criminal and family cases.

Copies of the paper have been laid in the Libraries in both Houses of Parliament. Comments are invited before the end of October and no decisions will be taken before then.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps will be taken to enable planners and developers to know whether a site is sensitive to development or change in use if the sites of special scientific interest label is removed.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 9 July 1991]:* Under current procedures for the denotification of a site of special scientific interest (SSSI), the Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland advises local planning authorities that a former SSSI may well retain features of wildlife, geological or physiographical importance which deserve protection. Local planning authorities are, therefore, able to identify such sites as being sensitive, within their published local and structure plans. It is expected that these arrangements will continue under Scottish Natural Heritage.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the cost of the Nature Conservancy Council review of existing sites of special scientific interest; how many sites of special scientific interest were denotified, and how many objections to sites of special scientific interest he is currently considering.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 9 July 1991]:* The precise cost of reviewing existing sites of special scientific interest is not known. Since 1981, 109 sites in Scotland have been denotified, including sites first notified under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 but not re-notified under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. My right hon. Friend has no role in the consideration of objections to the notification of sites of special scientific interest; this is a matter for the Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the estimated average cost of reviewing the case against a single site of special scientific interest.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 9 July 1991]:* It is not possible to produce an estimate as no information is available to distinguish between the costs of various stages of the site notification process including responding to objections.

Government Contracts

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland to whom in Scotland, outside Government, details of companies carrying out work on Government contracts have been passed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 9 July 1991]:* The information required could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Commercially confidential information is not made available outside Government. Details of other information in the form requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

HIV/AIDS

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many of the pregnant women who have been tested for AIDS over the past five years had positive test results; and how many were informed of the result of their individual test by the appropriate medical authority.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 11 July 1991]:* The information requested is not reported on a routine basis to the communicable diseases (Scotland) unit and is, therefore, unavailable.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many tests for HIV and AIDS have been carried out in each of the health board areas during *(a)* 1986, *(b)* 1987, *(c)* 1988, *(d)* 1989 and *(e)* 1990.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 11 July 1991]:* Information about the number of HIV tests carried out in 1986, 1987 and 1988 is unavailable. The table shows the number of HIV tests reported to the communicable diseases (Scotland) unit by source health board area for 1989 and 1990.

Health Board	*1989*	*1990*
Argyll and Clyde	342	244
Ayrshire and Arran	197	257
Borders	57	60
Dumfries and Galloway	132	160
Fife	104	102
Forth Valley	331	395
Grampian	1,201	1,433
Greater Glasgow	4,015	3,869
Highland	220	395
Lanarkshire	339	263

Health Board	1989	1990
Lothian	3,898	3,579
Orkney	8	15
Shetland	17	19
Tayside	986	1,301
Western Isles	2	Nil
	11,849	12,092

Note: A "source health board area" is the health board area in which the blood specimen for HIV testing was taken by the clinician.

NHS Reforms

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the amount of extra funding which has seen provided to each health board in Scotland to meet the cost of publicity for national health service reforms; and what criteria is applied to the expenditure of these funds.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 17 July 1991]:* Each health board has been provided with additional assistance to meet the cost of implementation of the NHS reforms. There is no separate allocation for publicity. The deployment of these resources is a matter for individual boards but I regard the use of funds to provide information about the reforms as entirely appropriate and necessary.

ENVIRONMENT

Pollution Inspectorate

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what factors he considered when he decided to transfer Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution local authority unit to Department of Environment control; what functions the unit will undertake in the future; how long he intends to maintain the unit at its current staffing levels; and whether there are any plans to wind up the unit.

Mr. Trippier: The local authority unit was transferred from Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to the air quality division of my Department on 1 April this year, the date on which part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 came into force. This was because the air quality division oversees implementation by local authorities of their new air pollution controls under part I of the Act, whereas HMIP is the central enforcing authority for integrated pollution control. There is close liaison between air quality division and HMIP.

The unit will continue to work on the preparation of guidance notes for processes prescribed for local authority air pollution control and will be responsible for regular review of the guidance. The unit will also continue to act as a pool of technical expertise and general advice in relation to the air pollution controls of part I of the Act. Staffing levels will be reviewed at the end of this year when the 78 process guidance notes have been completed. There are no plans to wind up the unit.

River Thames (Navigation)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the names of any persons or organisations appointed by him, or the National Rivers Authority, to provide information and advice to its Thames division on matters relating to navigation.

Mr. Baldry: Some members of the Thames Regional Rivers Advisory Committee have a particular interest or expertise in matters relating to navigation. Neither my right hon. Friend nor the National Rivers Authority have appointed any other persons or organisations to provide information or advice on this subject.

Local Plans

Sir Peter Morrison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what relative weight he attaches in coming to decisions about local plans to local district and county councils as against outside bodies.

Mr. Yeo: In fulfilling his responsibilities in relation to development plans, the Secretary of State considers each issue on its merits, irrespective of the nature of the body that brings it to his attention.

Green Belt

Sir Peter Morrison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what examples there are over the last 10 years of decisions to change green belt status; and if he will list them.

Mr. Yeo: We remain fully committed to the purposes of the green belt in checking unrestricted urban sprawl, safeguarding the surrounding countryside, preventing neighbouring towns from merging, preserving the special character of historic towns, and assisting urban regeneration. Since 1979 the extent of green belts in England has more than doubled, to approximately 12 per cent. of the country. The Environment White Paper "This Common Inheritance" (Cm 1200) compares approved green belts in 1979 and 1989. My Department does not maintain a central record of individual additions or deletions from the green belt.

Wind Farms

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance has been made available to planning authorities concerning the siting of wind farms.

Mr. Yeo: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my hon. Friend, the Minister for Housing and Planning, to my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) on 28 March, *Official Report*, columns *543-44*.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what planning permission is required for the establishment of wind farms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The establishment of a wind farm requires planning permission under section 57 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Chester Local Plan

Sir Peter Morrison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in what percentage of cases he has overruled the recommendations of his panel when decisions on local plans have been considered.

Mr. Yeo: Panels are appointed by the Secretary of State to conduct examinations in public in connection with

structure plans proposals. No comprehensive statistics are available covering the Secretary of State's decisions on panel recommendations.

Sir Peter Morrison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what account he took of the fact that Chester enjoys development area status when coming to his decision on the Chester local plan.

Mr. Yeo: The decision by the Secretary of State, in March 1990, to direct the City of Chester not to adopt the Greater Chester local plan was taken to allow full consideration of all the issues it raised, including Chester's development area status, in relation to the Cheshire county replacement structure plan now before him for approval.

Sir Peter Morrison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether Cheshire county council had in their possession his proposals for the Chester local plan in May of this year; to what extent his recent announcement corresponds to those proposals; and what were the considerations which led to the changes.

Mr. Yeo: The City of Chester has prepared proposals for the Greater Chester local plan which are currently subject to a "holding" direction pending approval of the Cheshire county replacement structure plan.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment's proposed modifications to the structure plan were announced on 10 July 1991, and he has asked Cheshire county council to carry out a consultation on them.

Sir Peter Morrison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimates he has made of the inevitably necessary development which will occur in the rural areas and villages surrounding Chester as a result of his latest proposals relating to the Chester local plan.

Mr. Yeo: The Cheshire county replacement structure plan will set the pattern of development for the county as a whole to 2001. It will be for the local authorities, including the City of Chester, to formulate detailed proposals in local plans for their areas, within the framework of the structure plan, once it is approved.

Mortgage Arrears

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what additional resources he is making available to local authorities to enable them to respond to the growth in mortgage arrears and repossessions as revealed in recent Bank of England-sponsored research.

Mr. Yeo: The Government have already helped all borrowers by cutting base rates by 4 per cent. in the last nine months, reducing the cost of the average mortgage by over £60 a month. In addition, income support amounting to over £350 million was given to some borrowers in 1989-90 to enable them to maintain interest payments. This assistance remains available at a higher level this year. Local authorities can help by debt counselling and in some cases by offering shared ownership schemes in co-operation with housing associations.

Advertisement Control

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to issue the planning policy guidance note on outdoor advertisement control as promised in the Environment White Paper, "This Common Heritage."

Sir George Young: Yes. We have considered the comments made by the local authority associations and my right hon. Friend has decided to go ahead. The requirement is being issued to all local authorities today.

Local Authority Registers

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will require local authorities, under section 230 of the Local Government Act 1972, to supply his Department with aggregate information about their registers as proposed on 7 May 1991, *Official Report*, column 401.

Mr. Yeo: My Department and the Welsh Office have today jointly issued a consultative draft planning policy guidance note about control over the display of outdoor advertisement in England and Wales. I am arranging for copies to be placed in the Library of the House.

London Zoo

Sir Hugh Rossi: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to reply to the Fifth Report of the Environment Committee, Session 1990-91, on London zoo.

Mr. Trippier: I would like to thank the Committee for its report on London zoo. I am today placing copies of our response in the Library.

Royal Parks

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the royal parks.

Mr. Heseltine: I am pleased to able to announce today two major initiatives aimed at improving the quality of the royal parks for those who use them.

The first is a review, to be carried out by a group under the chairmanship of Dame Jennifer Jenkins, which will concentrate in the first place on Hyde park and Kensington gardens. The second is the contracting out, from February next year, of the ground maintenance and related work in eight of the royal parks.

Hyde park and Kensington gardens are enjoyed by millions of people—Londoners and tourists alike. But we need to be sure they are really providing what people want today. London's royal parks should fully reflect the city's status as a major world capital. Quality and excellence should be on display for all to see.

I believe we need to take an open minded and imaginative look at what the parks are for and what they should provide. I have therefore asked Dame Jennifer Jenkins to chair a review group whose task will be to consider the role and use of Hyde park and Kensington gardens in the present, in the past and in the future.

The members of the review group bring a wealth of experience and expertise. They will produce a report for a conference under ministerial chairmanship early in 1992, following which new policy guidance will be drawn up.

The royal parks have a well deserved reputation for high quality horticulture. We want to develop this, and where possible improve standards. However, opportunities for this are limited in the public sector. In the private sector there is the enterprise and initiative to develop this horticultural excellence and bring it to a wider public. We therefore wish to help raise standards in the contracting industry as a whole by giving the private sector the chance to do high-quality work in the important locations that the royal parks provide. Once firms gain more experience of working to higher standards, they can use that experience so that the rest of the country can benefit. The Government have therefore decided to put out to tender the ground maintenance and related work currently undertaken in-house in the royal parks. The gardens at Buckingham palace and Clarence house will be excluded from these arrangements and responsibility for these gardens will be transferred to the royal household.

The contracts will be let in about six months time. They will be drawn up in a way which ensures high horticultural standards. I hope that those commercial bodies with reputations for good horticultural quality in related areas such as nurseries will wish to join in tendering for this prestige work as well as firms already working in this area.

Staff currently employed by the Department in the royal parks will be entitled to civil service rates of redundancy compensation, and we will want the chosen contractors to offer all the staff a job interview. Staff who occupy lodges in the parks will be able to remain in occupation.

Overall management of the parks will remain the Secretary of State's responsibility. In so far as that relates to horticultural quality, I am very pleased to say that the president of the Royal Horticultural Society has accepted an invitation to advise the Secretary of State on matters of horticultural quality in the parks both before and after the contracts are let.

This decision represents both a challenge and an opportunity. It is an important point in the history of the royal parks.

Pollution Control

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action has been taken to develop tougher controls over vehicle emissions within the European Community, including smoke and oxides of nitrogen from heavy diesel vehicles and carbon dioxide from internal combustion engines.

Mr. Chope: I have been asked to reply.

On 26 June the EC Council of Ministers adopted an amending directive setting tighter limits on emissions of carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons and oxides of nitrogen (NOx) by new cars and light vans. Among other things, the directive will require almost all new petrol-engined cars from the end of 1992 to use three-way catalytic converters and to run on unleaded petrol. Apart from meeting the same limits for gaseous emissions, diesel cars and light vans will need to comply with a strict limit on paticulates (smoke). The directive will be introduced into United Kingdom law by regulations to be laid later this year.

On 18 March the EC Council of Ministers reached a common position on an amending directive prescribing stricter limits on the same gaseous emissions from diesel-engined trucks and buses over 3·5 tonnes. Limits on emissions of particulates are also set for the first time. There will be two stages, the first to take effect in 1992-93 and the second in 1995-96, with the potential for a third, starting in 1999. The 1992-93 stage substantially reduces the limit for emissions of NOx and establishes limits for particulate emissions. The 1995-96 goes further with NOx reduction, so that the limit value will be less than half its present value and reduces the particulate.

Both directives set ambitious targets with a challenging but industrially realistic timetable, putting the United Kingdom and its EC partners on a course for substantial longer-term progress in improving the quality of air in our towns and cities.

The European Commission has yet to present to the Council of Ministers its proposals for reducing carbon dioxide emissions.

Business Rates

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many appeals against assessment of uniform business rates for 1990-91 in each county in England have been *(a)* lodged and *(b)* heard; and how many are still awaiting decision.

Mr. Key: The information requested cannot be provided on a county basis at a reasonable cost.

Nationally, some 705,000 appeals against valuation matters had been received by 31 May 1991. About 45,000 of these have been settled and 660,000 await decision. The arrangements and timing of appeal hearings is the responsibility of valuation and community charge tribunals which are independent bodies.

The table shows the numbers of 1990 rating appeals which at the end of May 1991 were outstanding at valuation and community charge tribunals in England.

1990 Rating appeals outstanding at the end of May 1991 at Valuation and Community Charge tribunals in England

	Number
Avon	8,892
Bedfordshire	4,442
Berkshire	7,904
Birmingham	13,328
Buckinghamshire	[1]6,075
Cambridgeshire	6,876
Cheshire	9,719
Cleveland	[1]7,651
Cornwall	5,177
Coventry/Solihull	4,573
Cumbria	6,506
Derbyshire	8,971
Devon	10,139
Dorset	8,484
Durham	[1]7,406
East Sussex	6,484
Essex North	5,761
Essex South	7,242
Gloucestershire	5,359
Hampshire North	5,074
Hampshire South	8,472
Hereford/Worcester	8,136
Hertfordshire	10,887
Humberside	8,002
Isles of Scilly	59
Isle of Wight	1,214
Kent	13,850
Lancashire	15,588
Leicestershire	7,879

	Number
Lincolnshire	6,374
London Central	29,935
London North East	17,964
London North West	25,706
London South East	17,711
London South West	19,911
Manchester North	12,052
Manchester South	16,364
Merseyside	14,175
Norfolk	7,945
North Yorkshire	9,471
Northamptonshire	5,956
Northumberland	3,779
Nottinghamshire	8,356
Oxfordshire	6,924
Shropshire	4,289
Somerset	4,784
South Yorkshire	13,122
Staffordshire	9,877
Suffolk	[1]5,924
Surrey	11,526
Tyne and Wear	15,790
Warwickshire	5,395
West Midlands West	14,135
West Sussex	7,160
West Yorkshire	24,455
Wiltshire	4,365

[1] At end April.

Chlorofluorocarbons (India)

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide figures for the assistance that the Government have so far provided to India to help in its plans to phase out CFCs since September 1990.

Mrs. Chalker: I have been asked to reply.

We financed a consultancy to advise the Government of India on a strategy for phasing out the use of CFCs. The consultancy's second phase, completed in December 1990, cost £176,000. We have since confirmed our willingness to help implement the consultancy's findings, once the Government of India have signed the Montreal protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer.

CIVIL SERVICE

Civil Service College

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will state the maximum salary payable to the chief executive of the Civil Service college, including any performance-related element, and the length of time of the chief executive's contract.

Mr. Renton: The chief executive of the Civil Service college is on the standard civil service grade 3 pay range and is eligible for the performance-related element appropriate to that grade. Her contract is for three years.

Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when the last annual report for the Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency was published; and when the next one is due.

Mr. Renton: The Recruitment and Assessment Services (RAS) Agency was established on 1 April 1991. Its first annual report, covering the financial year 1991-92, will be published in July 1992.

On its inception, RAS took over the executive functions of the former Civil Service Commission. The commissioners' report, covering the period January 1990 to March 1991, is due to be published shortly.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service (1) if he will list the new forms of alternative working patterns introduced into the Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency since its establishment as an executive agency; and if he will give a break-down by grade of the numbers of staff taking up each new working pattern;

(2) if he will list those new facilities for staff including nurseries and health care schemes which have been introduced in the Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency since its establishment as an executive agency;

(3) what appointments from the private sector have been made to the Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency at grade 7 or above since its establishment as an agency; and if he will list the post, grade and maximum salary payable, including any performance-related element;

(4) what group bonus schemes are in operation in the Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency; and if he will state the cash amount per person awarded in the last year for which figures are available, and the conditions attached to its award;

(5) how many staff were in post on the date that the Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency was established as an executive agency; and how many staff are in post now;

(6) how much was spent on events and publicity surrounding the launch of the Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency as an executive agency; and whether the cost was borne by the parent department or the new agency.

Mr. Renton: This is a matter for the chief executive of the Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency and I have asked him to write to the hon. Member direct.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will state the maximum salary payable to the chief executive of the Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency including any performance-related element; and the length of time of the chief executive's contract.

Mr. Renton: The chief executive of the Recruitment and Assessment Service? Agency is on the standard civil service grade 3 pay range and is eligible for the performance-related elements appropriate to that grade. His contract is for five years.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will list the quality of service performance indicators adopted by the Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency since its establishment as an executive agency identifying separately those quality of service performance indicators already operative prior to agency status.

Mr. Renton: I have either set, or made specific plans to introduce, demanding quality of service performance targets for the Recruitment and Assessment Services (RAS) Agency in the following areas:

Customer departments' and agencies' satisfaction with overall service

administration (including timeliness)
outcome of recruitment scheme

Growth in
size of customer base
degree of repeat business
amount of business gained by recommendation from existing customers

During 1990-91 the former Civil Service Commission introduced a formal "sign off" reporting and feedback system.

The commission supplied details of the outcome of a particular recruitment scheme to its customer departments and agencies who, in turn, completed and returned questionnaires giving their views on various aspects of the services provided.

On the basis of these forms, an overall satisfaction rating of 82 per cent. was achieved. The target is to increase this to 85 per cent. during 1991-92. For 1991-92, a separate rating for administration (which will include the success-rate in achieving agreed timetables) is being developed. I have set a target to meet agreed timetables in 80 per cent. of cases in 1991-92 and improve on this in future years.

Specific targets will be set by 30 September 1991 for the turnround of correspondence etc. in the light of first six months' experience of the agency's operation.

In the longer term I have asked RAS to measure and monitor growth by reference to the size of the customer base, degree of repeat business and the amount of business gained by recommendation from existing customers.

I will be looking for improvements in each of these categories over the next few years. In addition, RAS will introduce regular in-depth customer surveys, the first of which will be carried out in March 1992.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Planning Statistics

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish indices of the Welsh Office, Scottish Office and the United Kingdom planning total, excluding privatisation receipts and the reserve, with 1978-79 = 100 in *(a)* cash and *(b)* constant prices.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested for the years 1984-85 to 1993-94 is set out as follows. Much of the higher growth for the Welsh Office reflects changes in the coverage of the Welsh programme. In 1990-91, for example, the Welsh Office took over from the Department of Social Security responsibility for the payment of rent rebate subsidy to local authorities, to form part of the housing revenue account subsidy to authorities in Wales. The figures given are consistent with data published in the statistical supplement to the 1990 Autumn Statement (Cm. 1520); they do not take account of the community charge related changes announced on 17 January and in the Budget. Corresponding figures for earlier years are not available.

	Welsh Office	*Scottish Office*	*Planning total (excluding privatisation proceeds and the Reserve)*
Cash			
1984-85	100·0	100·0	100·0
1985-86	104·5	102·5	103·3
1986-87	114·2	107·4	108·8
1987-88	123·3	111·6	114·5
1988-89	134·9	120·9	118·3
1989-90	143·3	127·5	129·4
1990-91	168·8	139·1	144·5
1991-92	186·2	158·0	156·8
1992-93	192·2	163·9	165·4
1993-94	198·6	168·4	171·3
Real terms[1]			
1984-85	100·0	100·0	100·0
1985-86	99·1	97·2	98·0
1986-87	104·7	98·5	99·8
1987-88	107·3	97·0	99·6
1988-89	109·3	98·0	95·9
1989-90	109·2	97·2	98·6
1990-91	119·1	98·1	101·9
1991-92	123·9	105·2	104·3
1992-93	122·1	104·1	105·1
1993-94	121·9	103·4	105·1

[1] Figures adjusted to remove the effect of general inflation as measured by the GDP market price deflator adjusted to remove the distortion caused by the abolition of domestic rates.

Overseas Debt

Sir David Steel: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the amounts of sovereign debt still owed by Bangladesh, Brazil, Jamaica, Bolivia, Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru, Philippines, India and Argentina to the United Kingdom Export Credits Guarantee Department, the Overseas Development Administration, or any other agency of Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Total outstanding sovereign debts of the countries listed to the United Kingdom Overseas Development Administration are as set out in the table, to the nearest million pounds sterling as at 1 August 1990, the latest date at which figures are readily available.

The United Kingdom Export Credits Guarantee Department treats details of exposure levels to individual countries as confidential for commercial reasons. The total exposure to the countries listed, including previously rescheduled debts, is £2·13 billion.

	ODA £ million
Bangladesh	0
Brazil	4
Jamaica	87
Bolivia	0
Honduras	4
Nicaragua	1
Peru	5
Philippines	6
India[1]	158
Argentina	0
Total	265

[1] Note India receives an amount of local cost aid equivalent to payments in respect of old aid loans.

Economic and Monetary Union

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how it is proposed that, pursuant to article 102(d) of the draft treaty on economic and monetary

union, the Commission shall ensure that the specific recommendations on the budget balance and the control of production costs of a member state are identified;

(2) whether he will list those methods of monitoring financing of public sector deficits which will be presented in the United Kingdom, pursuant to article 109(b) of the draft treaty on economic and monetary union;

(3) whether he will set out the appropriate measures which the Council may adopt for the avoidance of excessive deficits by a member state, pursuant to article 104*(a)* of the draft treaty on economic and monetary union;

(4) whether he will list the prerogatives of the proposed European central bank which are entitled to be safeguarded, pursuant to article 173 of the draft treaty on economic and monetary union;

(5) what factors it is envisaged will be taken into account in the guidelines on the level of earnings in member states which will be issued to the Commission, pursuant to article 102*(c)* of the draft treaty on economic and monetary union;

(6) which Committee of the European Parliament it is envisaged will assist the Commission in monitoring the implementation of the guidelines on a member state's *(a)* budget balances and *(b)* production costs, pursuant to article 102*(c)* of the draft treaty on economic and monetary union;

(7) what factors will be used by the Council to determine whether the budget deficit of a member state is excessive and thus to be avoided, pursuant to article 104*(a)* of the draft treaty on economic and monetary union;

(8) how many votes will be required in the Council of Ministers for the Council to adopt the guidelines of the Commission in respect of the United Kingdom budget balances and control of production costs, pursuant to article 102*(c)* of the draft treaty on economic and monetary union;

(9) according to what principles and objectives it is envisaged that the European system of central banks will define monetary policy, as empowered by article 4(2) of the draft treaty amending the treaty of Rome with a view to achieving economic and monetary union;

(10) if it is envisaged that the European system of central banks shall be the final arbiter of the definition of monetary policy, pursuant to article 4(2) of the draft treaty amending the treaty of Rome with a view to achieving economic and monetary union;

(11) what amendments he proposes to bring forward to the Bank of England Act 1947 to ensure that Her Majesty's Government shall not seek to influence the bank, pursuant to the requirements of article 106*(a)* of the draft treaty on economic and monetary union;

(12) how many votes will be required in the Council of Ministers for the Council to adopt specific recommendations relating to the United Kingdom's budget balances and control of production costs, pursuant to article 102(d) of the draft treaty on economic and monetary union;

(13) what factors it is envisaged the Commission will take into account in submitting guidelines relating to the budget balances of member states, pursuant to article 102(c) of the draft treaty amending the treaty of Rome with a view to achieving economic and monetary union;

(14) whether he will list those items of production costs in respect of which the Commission will be issuing guidelines relating to member states, pursuant to article 102(c) of the draft treaty on economic and monetary union;

(15) whether it is envisaged that the guidelines to be issued by the Commission on the control of production costs, pursuant to article 102(c) of the draft treaty on economic and monetary union will cover wages of employees in the service sector.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The draft treaty to which the right hon. Gentleman refers is that submitted by the European Commission in December 1990 to the intergovernmental conference and is only one of a large number of submissions to the IGC. The issues raised by the right hon. Gentleman are still under discussion and no conclusion has yet been reached.

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether under the proposed rules for establishing economic and monetary union certain of the Scottish banks will continue to be able to issue bank notes.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The issue raised by the right hon. Gentleman is part of a wider question on the issuance of bank notes, which is still under discussion in the intergovernmental conference of economic and monetary union.

European Central Bank

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what will be the United Kingdom's percentage of the subscribed capital of the proposed European central bank;

(2) whether it is intended that the votes cast in the proposed European central bank shall be weighted according to proportions of the capital of the bank and foreign exchange reserves subscribed by each member state;

(3) what proportion of foreign reserve assets of the United Kingdom will be called up by the proposed European central bank;

(4) whether it is envisaged that the decisions of the proposed Council of the European central bank will be made by weighted voting;

(5) by means of what mechanism it is proposed that a directly-elected body such as the Council of Economic and Finance Ministers should control the execution of monetary policies by the Council and the executive board of the proposed European central bank.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The issue raised by the right hon. Gentleman is still under discussion in the intergovernmental conference on economic and monetary union.

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when it is expected that the Committee of Governors of the proposed central bank of member states will present provisions concerning income distribution as indicated in the chairman's report of 27 November 1990 to the President of the Council.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Committee of Governors presented a draft statute covering the issue the right hon. Gentleman refers to on 26 April 1991.

Mortgage Payments

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 18 June, *Official Report*, columns *114-16*, on mortgage payments, if he will update the table and give the information on a monthly basis.

Mr. Maude: Information for average new building society mortgages in the second quarter of 1988 is in the table. Details of average amounts outstanding on all mortgages by region are not available.

Region	Average new building society mortgages Quarter 2 1988	Monthly interest payment[1] June 1988[2]	Current[3]	Increase
	£	£	£	£
Northern region	22,200	135·98	172·74	36·77
Yorkshire and Humberside	23,000	140·88	178·97	38·09
East Midlands	27,000	165·38	210·09	44·72
East Anglia	34,800	222·95	283·24	60·29
Greater London	54,900	387·10	491·78	104·68
South East	44,500	302·17	383·88	81·71
South West	34,900	223·77	284·28	60·51
West Midlands	28,100	172·11	218·65	46·54
North West	24,300	148·84	189·08	40·25
Wales	23,900	146·39	185·97	39·58
Scotland	24,200	148·23	188·31	40·08
Northern Ireland	24,300	148·84	189·08	40·25
United Kingdom	32,900	207·43	263·53	56·09

[1]Assuming endowment mortgage, net of basic rate tax relief.
[2]At an interest rate of 9·8 per cent.
[3]At an interest rate of 12·45 per cent.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Mature Students

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will alter the regulations so as to permit a mature student married with children, to claim additional benefits during vacations to supplement the full grant to which he or she is currently restricted and which is their sole income.

Miss Widdecombe: We have no plans to do so. The regulations already provide for students with dependent children or their non-student partners to claim housing benefit or family credit in the long vacation, subject to the normal conditions of entitlement. These rules also apply in term-time and the short vacations. Income support is available to student couples with children in the long vacation and to the non-student partner of a student throughout the year subject to the normal conditions of entitlement.

Benefits, Scotland

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) which local offices in Scotland had to apply budgetary control measures in 1990-91; and to which budgets the restrictions applied;

(2) how many claimants, partners and dependants were reliant on income support in Scotland in 1990; and how many of these were children under 15 years;

(3) how many income support deductions are currently being made in Scotland for *(a)* poll tax arrears, *(b)* social fund loan payments, *(c)* fuel payment arrears and *(d)* any other purposes; and what percentage of total claimants this represents in each category;

(4) what was the total notional level of social fund per claimant allocated to Scotland in each year since its inception in *(a)* cash and *(b)* constant prices;

(5) how many, and what percentage of income support claimants in Scotland *(a)* aged over 60 years, *(b)* aged under 60 years and *(c)* in total are repaying social fund budgeting loans or crisis loans by deductions from their benefit payments.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total sum spent in Scotland in social security payments in 1989-90 and 1990-91 broken down by major benefits.

Miss Widdecombe: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency that the information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Criminal Injuries Compensation

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what goods and services the trustees may not pay for, on behalf of a victim of violent crime in receipt of a criminal injuries compensation award, without affecting his or her income-related benefits;

(2) what restrictions are applied to the way in which criminal injuries compensation awards may be spent by *(a)* people in receipt of income-related benefits, *(b)* people in paid employment and *(c)* people on unearned incomes; and if he will make a statement;

(3) on what items a victim of violent crime in receipt of a criminal injuries compensation award may not spend a weekly amount without affecting his or her income related benefits;

(4) if he will state the maximum weekly amount which a victim of violent crime may receive from trustees without

affecting his or her income-related benefits, after receiving a criminal injuries compensation award and placing it on trust.

Miss Widdecombe: Compensation payments from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board are normally made directly to the injured person. There are no restrictions on how he or she may spend these payments. However, if a person disposes of an award for the purpose of becoming entitled to, or increasing entitlement to, an income-related benefit, the independent adjudicating authority may decide to treat the person as if he or she still has the capital.

Where a compensation payment is placed on trust, the value of the fund is disregarded indefinitely in the income-related benefits. The first £10 a week of any regular discretionary payment made by the trustees is completely ignored, provided that this disregard has not already been allowed on another income, such as a war disablement pension. The injured person can spend the disregarded income in any way he or she chooses without affecting entitlement to benefit.

In addition, regular discretionary payments made by the trustees to an injured person or to a third party for goods and services are normally disregarded unless they are intended or used for accommodation charges already met by benefit, food, ordinary clothing or footwear, household fuel, the community charge or water charges. Any payment which is so intended or used will be taken into account, subject to a disregard of £10 a week if the disregard has not already been used up elsewhere.

Youth Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list *(a)* the number of youth training places in his Department and *(b)* the number of places occupied in May for each of the years 1989, 1990 and the current year.

Miss Widdecombe: In 1989 we contracted centrally on behalf of the Departments of Health and Social Security to offer 161 places on our youth training scheme. In May 1989, 60 of those places were filled.

In 1990 the scheme changed to youth training and was offered in training weeks. The contract for both Departments for 1990 was 3,976. In May 1990, 64 trainees were in place. In 1991 the contract is for the Department of Social Security only and for 2,250 training weeks. In May 1991, 43 trainees were in place.

Notes:

1. 3,976 training weeks would be used by having an average of 92 trainees in place.
2. 2,250 training weeks would be used by having an average of 43 trainees in place.

Community Charge Benefit

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing how many people are now in receipt of *(a)* full community charge benefit and *(b)* partial community charge benefit in the light of the £140 reduction in headline poll tax, also giving these figures as a percentage of the total number of poll tax payers for (i) England, (ii) Wales and (iii) Scotland; and if he will make a statement on his estimates of the number of people who are eligible but are not claiming community charge benefit for all poll tax payers and for all those aged under 25 years.

Miss Widdecombe: The latest available estimates are as follows:

Number of community charge benefit recipients, 1991-92 (also expressed as a percentage of total number of people liable for community charge in 1991-92)

Thousands

	Income support recipients	*Non-income support recipients*
England	3,500	3,250
Percentage	10	9
Wales	270	130
Percentage	12	6
Scotland	500	400
Percentage	13	11

Source: Modelled using data drawn from 1987-88 Family Expenditure Survey and 1990-91 Management Information System.

All income support recipients receive maximum community charge benefit. However, there will also be some charge payers not in receipt of income support who will receive maximum community charge benefit in 1991-92.

Estimates of the take-up of community charge benefit cannot be produced until some time after the receipt of the relevant data from the 1991 family expenditure survey. These estimates will not become available until 1993.

WALES

Dental Health

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the information that his Department holds on those schools in Wales which show a high incidence of dental caries.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Standardised small district data are not held centrally. However, data are held by DHAs for assessing local health needs and it is intended that these should be published by districts as part of the report by their director of dental public health. The first reports are due to be prepared by September 1991 to inform the annual review meetings of each DHA.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of effect of the new capitation system on the treatment of children by general dental practitioners.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: It is still too early to assess the effect of the capitation arrangements on the treatment of children. By the beginning of June about 308,000 children in Wales had been registered under the capitation arrangements. This compares well with the amount of treatment given under the old arrangements.

Health departments are carefully monitoring the new contract. The main principles, such as capitation, are established but a number of detailed changes have been made in response to representations from dentists and such fine tuning will continue where necessary.

Dentists

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many local dental committees in Wales he has met since his appointment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: None. The local dental committee is a statutory committee created to provide advice principally to the family health services authority for its locality and also to its district health authority via the district dental committee. However, our officials are in regular touch with dentists' representatives in Wales.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will consider asking the family health service authorities to conduct a survey of all dental premises to enable a quality index to be published of the quality and standards of the premises and equipment and which can be made available to patients.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: As from 1 October 1991 general dental practitioners will be obliged to compile and make available a patient information leaflet about the provision of general dental services at their practice premises. Dentists are already obliged to provide information to family health service authorities and a survey of the kind suggested is not necessary.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library the data collected by the Dental Practitioners Board on the number of patients cared for by local dental practitioners.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: At the end of June 1991 there were 1,058,548 patients registered with general dental practitioners in Wales.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library a copy of local directories of dental practices produced by the family health services authorities in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: No. By regulation FHSAs are obliged to make a copy of the local dental list available for inspection at their offices and such other places as appears to be convenient. In practice most FHSAs also arrange for copies to be placed in main libraries and post offices where they may be inspected by members of the public.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish for each family health services authority in Wales *(a)* the number of grants paid to dentists to set up a new practice or expand an existing one in an area identified by the FHSA as in need of more dentists and *(b)* the total value of those grants.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The Clwyd family health services authority is the only authority in Wales to have awarded a location incentive scheme grant to a dentist in its locality. The total value of the grant is £7,500.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends to introduce regulations to empower family health services authorities to inspect dental surgeries.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Action is being taken to consolidate the NHS (General Dental Services) Regulations and a regulation to empower family health services authorities to inspect dental surgeries will be included when these consolidated regulations are introduced next year.

Employees

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many currently in employment in Wales are (i) male full-time employees, (ii) female full-time employees, (iii) male part-time employees, (iv) female part-time employees, *(v)* male self-employed and (vi) female self-employed; and what estimate he has of the average wage or salary under each of these categories.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is given in the following tables:

Numbers in Employment (thousands)

	March 1991	
	[1]Male	*Female*
Full-time employees in employment	501	247
Part-time employees in employment		212
Self-employed	144	40

Source: Quarterly Estimate Series, Employment Department.

[1] Data for part-time males are not available separately from this quarterly series. The results of the Employment Department's Census of Employment indicated that in September 1989 there were 484 thousand full-time and 37 thousand part-time male employees in employment.

Average gross weekly earnings[1]

(£)

	April 1990	
	Male	*Female*
Full-time	258·6	180·3
Part-time	[2]n.a.	67·4

Source: New Earnings Survey, Employment Department.

[1] Employees on adult rates whose pay for the survey period was not affected by absence.

[2] The standard error for male part-time employees is too high to provide a reliable estimate from this survey.

Average annual personal income[1]

(£)

	1988-89	
	Male	*Female*
Self-employed[2]	8,150	6,000

Source: Survey of Personal Incomes, Inland Revenue.

[1] Self-employment income assessable for the income tax year 1988-89.

[2] Only those with a main source of self-employment income are included.

Special Protection Areas

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those sites so far designated or identified for designation in Wales as special protection areas under EC directive 79/409 on the conservation of wild birds or wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar convention on wetlands of international importance, especially on waterfowl habitat.

Mr. David Hunt: The designation of SPA and Ramsar sites is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. Welsh sites are designated in consultation with me.

In Wales three SPAs, Skomer (part), Dee estuary and Grassholm, and two Ramsar sites, Dee estuary and Cors Fochno, have been designated.

A further 20 areas have been identified for possible designation as SPAs and Ramsar sites. Four of these areas have been identified as being suitable for designation as both SPAs and Ramsar sites. The details are as follows:

Cors Caron (Dyfed)—Ramsar

Corsydd Mon/Lleyn (Anglesey and Lleyn Fens)—Ramsar

Crymlym Bod (Gwent)—Ramsar
Llangloffen (Dyfed)—Ramsar
Llyn Idwal (Gwynedd)—Ramsar
Llyn Tegid (Gwynedd)—Ramsar
Midland Meres Mires (Clwyd)—Ramsar
Migneint (Gwynedd)—Ramsar
Blackpill, Swansea Bay (West Glamorgan)—Ramsar and SPA
Burry Inlet (Dyfed/West Glamorgan)—Ramsar and SPA
Carmarthen Bay (Dyfed/West Glamorgan)—Ramsar and SPA
Severn Estuary (part) (South Glamorgan/Gwent)—Ramsar and SPA
Berwyn (Gwynedd)—SPA
Elenydd Mallaen (Powys)—SPA
Glannau Aberdaron/Ynys Enlli (Gwynedd)—SPA
Glannau Ynys Gybi (Gwynedd)—SPA
Pembrokeshire Cliffs (Dyfed)—SPA
Skokholm and Skomer (part) (Dyfed)—SPA
Ynys Feurig, Cemlyn Bay and the Skerries—SPA
Traeth Lafan (Gwynedd)—SPA

Water

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list *(a)* the number of people in Wales who receive water from suppliers granted relaxations to the aluminium standard under section 20(5) (b) of the Water Act 1989, *(b)* the location of each supply, by county and *(c)* the number of people served by each of those suppliers.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Under section 20(5)(b) of the Water Act 1989, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has accepted undertakings relating to the aluminium parameter from these companies appointed by him in respect of the water treatment works shown in the following table:

Location and water treatment works. Estimated population served.

	Numbers
Clwyd	
Bylchau	2,150
Cynwyd	3,120
Glascoed	50,110
Meifod	1,580
Trecastell	7,610
Alwen	89,780
Bretton	36,080
Cilcain	8,850
Dyfed	
Bontgoch	18,240
Bolton Hill	52,420
Hotwells	2,620
Preseli	36,960
Valley Court	9,700
Bryncoch	13,370
Dyfed and West Glamorgan	
Bryngwyn	73,920
Felindre	322,410
Powys	
Llanwrtyd Wells	2,280
Llandeilo Graban	5,500
Portis High Level	790
Hereford and Worcestor	
Byton	2,620
Broomy Hill	96,990
Gwent	
Cwmtillery	25,160
Nantybwch	5,500
Georgetown	7,340
Craig Ddu	8,120
Rhymney Bridge	3,060
Gwent and Mid Glamorgan	
Ponsticill	131,060
South and Mid Glamorgan	
Cantref	91,749
Llwynon	86,500
Mid Glamorgan	
Hendre Bailey	Not in use
Penderyn Borehole	5,500
Maerdy High-Level and Low Level	2,857
Wrexham and East Denbighshire Water Company	
Penycae (Clwyd)	7,500
TOTAL POPULATION	1,237,150

Population figures have been derived from the average daily output of the works when in use and therefore represent the potential number of customers. In addition, undertakings have been accepted covering all water supply zones supplied by Dwr Cymru Cyf and Wrexham and East Denbighshire water company where there is a risk that maximum concentrations or values prescribed in the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 1989 may be exceeded, because of deficiences in the distribution system. The parameters covered include aluminium.

Adult Education

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what is his estimate of the number of people undertaking courses in non-vocational adult education;

(2) what percentage of the population of the United Kingdom participated in non-vocational adult education.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is not available centrally. Adult education enrolment data does not distinguish between vocational and non-vocational study.

Family Health Services

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish for each family health services authority in Wales for the financial year 1991-92 *(a)* the budget of the authority, *(b)* the number of full-time staff employed and *(c)* the number of part-time staff employed.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Family health services authorities have received three separate cash limited allocations for 1991-92. These are in respect of their administration revenue expenditure, their contributions towards general practitioners' expenditure on practice premises and practice staff and their contributions towards GPs' expenditure on practice computer systems. The cash limits for individual FHSAs are shown in tables 1 to 3.

The number of full-time and part-time staff employed by FHSAs in Wales are shown in table 4.

Table 1
FHSA administration revenue

FHSA	*Cash allocation*[1] *(net)* *£'000s*
Clwyd	975
Dyfed	883
Gwent	1,062

FHSA	Cash allocation[1] (net) £'000s
Gwynedd	733
Mid Glamorgan	1,251
Powys	534
South Glamorgan	1,191
West Glamorgan	874
TOTAL	7,503

[1] These allocations are provisional and include a delegated capital cash limit for small capital purchases.

Table 2
GP practice premises and staff

FHSA	Cash allocation £'000s
Clwyd	4,042
Dyfed	4,521
Gwent	5,453
Gwynedd	3,506
Mid Glamorgan	5,458
Powys	1,953
South Glamorgan	4,754
West Glamorgan	3,519
TOTAL	33,206

Table 3
GP practice computers

FHSA	Cash allocation £'000s
Clwyd	288
Dyfed	172
Gwent	148
Gwynedd	52
Mid Glamorgan	131
Powys	52
South Glamorgan	104
West Glamorgan	154
TOTAL	1,101

Table 4
Number of staff employed by FHSAs in Wales (June 1991)

FHSA	Full-time	Part-time	Total
Clwyd	51	3	54
Dyfed	43	1	44
Gwent	52	0	52
Gwynedd	38	2	40
Mid Glamorgan	66	2	68
Powys	23	0	23
South Glamorgan	56	3	59
West Glamorgan	41	2	43
TOTALS	370	13	383

Signposts

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will arrange for signposts on the M4 motorway at suitable junctions to illustrate the direction to the town of Caldicot in the county of Gwent;

(2) if he will consult with Gwent county council about the erection of signposts at suitable junctions on trunk roads to illustrate more clearly the direction to the town of Caldicot.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The only trunk road junction in the vicinity of Caldicot is the motorway junction at Magor on the M4. Modification of the motorway signs will be undertaken prior to the opening of the second Severn crossing.

Further Education Colleges

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has made of the percentage of students attending further education colleges in Mid-Glamorgan who live within 10 and 20 miles of the college.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is not available centrally.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has of the annual capital and current expenditure of each of the further education colleges in Mid-Glamorgan.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department (which includes the executive agency Cadw) has 17 youth training places which are spread across the year. The number of places occupied in May of each of the years indicated is as follows:

1989—4
1990—9
1991—9

The total number of placements for the last three years is as follows:

1989—14
1990—19
1991—to date 11

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Syndicates (Investigations)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has received a copy of the recommendations from the Serious Fraud Office that have been put to the chairman or chief executive of Lloyd's, following the completion of the preliminary investigations into syndicates 317/661.

Mr. Redwood: It is not the Department's practice to comment on such matters.

Securities and Investments Board

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the number of staff employed in the public relations department of the Securities and Investments Board; and whether matters referring to the Securities and Investments Board can be referred to the Audit Commission.

Mr. Redwood: The staffing of the Securities and Investments Board is a matter for the board. I understand they employ five people full-time on press and public relations matters. The Audit Commission has no statutory responsibilities in relation to the Securities and Investments Board.

Homes (Equity)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what regulation exists of the content of, and marketing practices of, income from equity in housing schemes, home income plans and related financial products.

Mr. Redwood: The marketing of schemes which include arrangements for investing capital tied up in property will generally be subject to the Financial Services Act 1986. The Consumer Credit Act 1974 and regulations made under it may apply to the marketing and documentation of the connected secured loan.

Insurance Brokers Registration Council

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what methods of redress exist, and what compensation schemes apply, to those clients with complaints against members of the Investment Brokers Registration Council.

Mr. Redwood: I assume the hon. Member means the Insurance Brokers Registration Council. The council's rules provide for the investigation of complaints and, as appropriate, disciplinary action against registered brokers. The council also requires registered brokers to have professional indemnity insurance. In addition the council operates a grants scheme under which it can pay compensation in cases of negligence, fraud or other dishonesty, or a failure to account for clients' funds, by a registered broker.

Insurance Companies (Compensation)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the number of compensation claims under the Insurance Companies Act 1982 submitted, rejected and approved in each year since 1987, together with the total size of awards made.

Mr. Redwood: There are no arrangements for compensation under the Insurance Companies Act. The Policyholders Protection Act 1975 provides for the compensation of private policyholders in the event of an insurance company being unable to meet its liabilities. In the case of compulsory insurance, compensation is 100 per cent. of the insurer's liabilities to the private policyholder. For non-compulsory insurance, 90 per cent. of the liabilities is paid in compensation or, for life insurance, continuity of cover arranged. The Policyholders Protection Board is currently making payments in respect of:

Insolvent Company	*Claim paid*	
	Total	*Since 1987*
	£	£
Underwriters National Assurance Company	402,538	12,928
Cotton Trades Insurance Association Ltd.	120,000	1,422
Cavalier Insurance Company	21,720	4,236
Pacific and General Insurance Company	Identification of policyholders eligible for assistance ongoing	

These insolvencies occurred prior to 1987.

The board expects that they will in future need to provide compensation for some policyholders of:

Kingscroft Insurance Company Ltd.
El Paso Insurance Company Ltd.
Lime Street Insurance Company
Mutual Re-Insurance Company Ltd.

Chartered Insurance Institute

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he proposes to make membership of the Chartered Insurance Institute a condition of practice as a member of self-regulatory body under the Financial Services Act 1986.

Mr. Redwood: Standards of training and competence are in the first instance a matter for the Securities and Investments Board and the other regulators under the Act.

International Pipe Technology

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions he or his officials have had with his counterpart or officials in the United States of America about their investigation into the activity of the late Dr. Barbouti or the company known as International Pipe Technology.

Mr. Sainsbury: None.

Expo 92, Seville

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will give details of how he will solicit exhibits for the British pavilion at Expo 92, Seville;

(2) if he will give details of who will decide upon what is exhibited at the British pavilion at Expo 92, Seville.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have commissioned RSCG Conran Design, to recommend exhibits on the theme of "Original Britain", I shall decide what is exhibited on the basis of these recommendations.

Investment Services Directive

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, what was the outcome of the Council of Ministers' discussions on the Investment Services Directive on 8 July.

Mr. Redwood: No member state was able unconditionally to accept the text of the Dutch Presidency compromise on regulated markets; France and her allies in particular were not prepared to accept the text as a basis for negotiation. Further discussion was deferred pending reflection by the Commission and the Presidency about how they wish to proceed. A table round revealed considerable differences of views between member states.

I shall shortly be writing to the House of Commons Select Committee on European Legislation and the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities explaining the situation in more detail.

European Economy

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his answer of 28 June on the European Economy, December 1990, *Official Report*, column *575*, if his Department has assessed the data available on the change in volume of exports shown in table 2 of that publication, relating to Portugal and Luxembourg; and if he has anything to add to his answer of 2 July on Portugal and Luxembourg, *Official Report*, column 96.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 16 July 1991]:* In keeping with the established practice of my Department, questions on exports are answered in terms of goods only. This was the case in the reply given in the *Official Report* of 2 July 1991 at column *96*. The Department is not aware of any publication which provides export volume figures on this basis for Portugal and Luxembourg. Table 36 of the December 1990 edition of the "European Economy" shows the change in volume of exports of goods and services.

ENERGY

Energy Conservation

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what percentage saving the Government have achieved in the total energy bill for the Government estate since September 1990.

Mr. Wakeham: This information is not yet available. However it is still the Government's target to achieve savings totalling 15 per cent. over the next five years.

Electricity Companies

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will place in the Library a copy of the report from Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte on electricity companies sent to him in April.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 2 July 1991, at column *86*.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many of the electricity distribution companies achieved the Government set profit targets for the year to March 1990.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: This is a matter for the companies. However, this information is contained in the companies' annual reports and accounts for the year ending March 31 1990, copies of which were placed in the Library of the House.

Youth Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list *(a)* the number of youth training places in his Department and *(b)* the number of places occupied in May for each of the years 1989, 1990 and the current year.

Mr. Wakeham: In May 1989 one trainee was in place under the youth training scheme. The Department has no youth training places at present.

Wind Farms

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many wind farms have been established in each of the last three years in England; and what is the estimated annual subsidy paid to wind farmers.

Mr. Moynihan: The first renewables order under the non-fossil fuel obligation resulted in the first five contracts for wind farms being signed. These projects have yet to come to fruition and no annual subsidy has been paid to windfarmers.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 18 July.

Mr. MacGregor: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is conducting bilateral discussions with President Gorbachev.

Tesco, Sheffield

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make an official visit to Meadowhead, Sheffield to discuss with local residents and the developers of the proposed Tesco's superstore the implications of his newly announced environmental initiatives for such developments.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

United Nations Environment Conference

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what proposals will be put forward by Her Majesty's Government to the United Nations conference on environment and development in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992.

The Prime Minister: We are consulting widely in order to prepare our position towards the United Nations conference on environment and development, in particular the proposed action plan, agenda 21, which will be discussed at the preparatory committee next month.

Manchester Olympic Bid

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Prime Minister what is his policy on further help for Manchester's bid to host the Olympic games; and if he will make a statement on both the help so far given and that which might be considered.

The Prime Minister: The Government welcome Manchester's bid to host the Olympic games. The Minister for Sport has already met the chairman of the bid committee and representatives of the British Olympic Association and has assured them that the Government stand ready to discuss ways in which it might help promote the bid. I plan to meet representatives of the bid committee in September and will consider any suggestions they may have.

Youth Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list *(a)* the number of youth training places in the Cabinet Office and *(b)* the number of places occupied in May for each of the years 1989, 1990 and the current year.

The Prime Minister: There have been no youth training places in the Cabinet Office. However, an active work experience programme for 15 and 16-year-olds has been in operation for several years.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list *(a)* the number of youth training places in his office and *(b)* the number of places occupied in May for each of the years 1989, 1990 and the current year.

The Prime Minister: There have been no youth training places in my office.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Taxi Drivers

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether, in the light of the recent amendment in the Road Traffic Bill that facilitates vetting of those applying for a taxi driver's licence, he will issue advice to local authorities concerning the use of criminal records to determine who is a fit and proper person to hold a taxi licence on the lines of those described in HOC 102(88) which relates to the vetting of those who have access to children; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Department of Transport will draw up guidance to local authorities in consultation with the Home Office and other interested groups. The guidance is expected to cover broadly similar ground to Home Office circular 102/88.

Police National Computer

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether international police forces will have on-line access to the police national computer; what part the computer plays in the plans for an integrated European police computer network; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There are no plans to allow foreign police forces to have access to the police national computer (PNC) either directly or as part of a European information system.

Asylum

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate his Department has made of the proposed implementation of the full freedom of movement in 1992 on the number of asylum seekers entering the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There is no necessary linkage between the introduction of the single European market and numbers of asylum seekers coming to the United Kingdom. We intend to maintain immigration controls at the frontier on nationals of non-European Community countries.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will distribute copies of the scrutiny report into the wider use of criminal records in vetting to the Data Protection Registrar, the National Council of Civil Liberties and the press; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Copies of the report of the efficiency scrutiny of the national collection of criminal records will be publicly available in due course.

Gaming Board

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list *(a)* the current members of the Gaming Board, *(b)* the dates and lengths of their current appointments and *(c)* their qualifications for such appointments.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There are no statutory qualifications for appointment to the board, although experience in the law, business or the police service are particularly relevant to the board's work.

The current members of the board; the dates of their original appointments and, where applicable, of their most recent re-appointment; the lengths of their current appointments; and other positions they hold or have held are as follows:

Name	*First appointed*	*Date of last re-appointment (where applicable)*	*Length of current appointment*	*Other positions held*
Mr. Norman Ward-Jones, CBE, VRD, JP				
(Member)	1 March 1984			
(Chairman)	1 March 1986	1 July 1989	3 years	Solicitor and Magistrate
Lady Ibbs JP	1 December 1985	1 December 1990	1 year	Magistrate: formerly Chairman of the Betting and Gaming Licensing Committee of the South Westminster Justices
Mr. Michael Hogan	6 October 1986	1 October 1988	3 years	Former Secretary of the Board
Mr. William Kirkpatrick JP	1 January 1991	—	2 years	Chairman of Findlaters, Mackie and Todd plc
Sir Richard Barratt, CBE, QPM	1 July 1991	—	2 years	Formerly Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary

Mr. Hogan will serve a further three years when his current appointment expires on 30 September 1991.

Overseas Electors

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much his Department expects to spend on the campaign for registration of overseas electors in October.

Mrs. Rumbold: No expenditure on advertising or publicity to inform British citizens abroad of their voting rights is planned for this year, save for an estimated £1,400 on updating posters used in British diplomatic posts abroad.

Mr. Leslie Burnett

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, following the payment by the Metropolitan police of damages to Mr. Leslie Burnett for wrongful arrest, false imprisonment and assault, as to what disciplinary action will be taken against the police officers involved.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. this is a matter which is the responsibility of the commissioner.

War Crimes

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what criteria are used to determine whether allegations of war crimes between 1939 to 1945 in the Channel Islands can be investigated by the war crimes unit.

Mr. John Patten: The prime responsibility for dealing with allegations of offences in the Channel Islands rests with the island authorities. The war crimes unit investigates on their merits specific allegations which appear to fall within the terms of the War Crimes Act 1991.

Youth Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list *(a)* the number of youth training places in his Department and *(b)* the number of places occupied for May for each of the years 1989, 1990 and the current year.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: There is no set quota of youth training places in my Department. The number of places occupied in May for each of the years 1989, 1990 and 1991 were three, 10 and nine respectively.

Police Dogs

Sir Bernard Braine: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what effect the Dangerous Dogs Bill will have on police dog handlers and police dogs.

Mrs. Rumbold: We have tabled an amendment to the Bill to provide an exemption from the criminal offences in clause 3 in respect of dogs which are being used by the police or by people in the service of the Crown.

Immigration

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many airlines have been fined for landing immigrants without proper documents in each of the last three years; which airlines were fined; what is the total amount levied in immigration fines; and whether all the money owed by airlines in immigration fines has been received.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is not the practice to disclose information on the record of individual carriers under the Act. The total amount incurred by all carriers to 10 July was £30·694 million, of which £13·541 million has been paid. Liability in respect of £2·301 million has been waived leaving £14·851 million outstanding.

Sexual Offenders

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for the more effective treatment of sexual offenders serving prison sentences.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend announced on 7 June that, from the autumn of 1991, the prison service will be progressively introducing structured programmes for sex offenders in prison. The main features of the strategy are:

the holding of sex offenders in fewer prisons to facilitate consistency of approach in running treatment programmes, to make cost effective use of resources and skills, and to provide a safe and supportive environment.

treatment programmes are to be based on admission of offences, challenging attitudes and tackling offending behaviour. They must be practical, deliverable and sustainable and be properly evaluated.

priority for treatment will be given to those who are likely to represent the greatest risk to the community on release.

assessment will be introduced following conviction and sentence to determine which prisoners are most in need of treatment. This will take into account an inmate's previous convictions, evidence of inadequacy or addiction, evidence of sexual deviancy etc, and also reflect his behaviour during the assessment period when he will undergo psychological tests, have individual counselling and participate in group work.

two main treatment programmes will be available in the prison service. A core programme, which does not require significant specialist resources, will tackle offenders' distorted beliefs about relationships, enhance their awareness of the effect of sexual offences on the victim, and seek to get inmates to take responsibility for and face up to the consequences of their own offending behaviour.

The programme will also get inmates to develop relapse prevention strategies, identifying the nature of their offence cycles and how high risk situations can be avoided. The extended programme, for those who represent the greatest risk, will be run at establishments with appropriate specialist resources. This will, in addition, tackle problems of deviant arousal, inter-personal relationships, communications skills, anger and stress management, substance abuse, etc.

Our intention is to have the programme running in up to 20 establishments during the course of 1992. These are likely to comprise Albany, Dartmoor, Full Sutton, Maidstone, Wakefield, Wandsworth, Littlehey, Channings Wood, Featherstone, Risley, Usk, Wayland, Whatton, Grendon, Wormwood Scrubs and Swinfen Hall, and possibly also Aylesbury, Feltham and New Hall or Styal.

Firearms

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will lay before Parliament the annual report of the Firearms Consultative Committee.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have placed a copy of the annual report of the Firearms Consultative Committee in the Library today.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Audit Commission

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether matters referring to grant-maintained schools or city technology colleges can be referred to, or investigated by, the Audit Commission.

Mr. Eggar: No. CTC and GM school accounts are subject to inspection by the National Audit Office as well as by the Department. It is a requirement on both GMs and CTCs that there be annual audit reports by qualified external auditors appointed by each school or college. The Audit Commission has successfully tendered to become the external auditors of several grant-maintained schools under the provisions of section 220 of the Education Reform Act 1988. There are no plans for them to act in respect of CTCs.

Youth Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list *(a)* the number of youth training places in his Department and *(b)* the number of places occupied in May for each of the years 1989, 1990 and the current year.

Mr. Eggar: The Department has not offered any places.

School Examinations and Assessment Council

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the future organisation of the School Examinations and Assessment Council.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The School Examinations and Assessment Council is moving into a new phase of its work. Solid foundations have been laid for the introduction of a national system of assessment and testing, and for the continuing development of a rigorous and effective school examination system.

The challenge now is to build on this progress. To do so the Secretary of State for Wales and I see advantage—as in the case of the National Curriculum Council—in separating the roles of the chairman and chief executive of the School Examinations and Assessment Council. Mr. Philip Halsey who has combined those roles to date, has himself seen this as a time for change, and he will retire from the School Examinations and Assessment Council with effect from 15 August. From that date, the Secretary of State for Wales and I are appointing Lord Griffiths as part-time chairman of the School Examinations and Assessment Council. The appointment will be for two years in the first instance.

It will be for the council to appoint a full-time chief executive, with our approval, under the provisions of schedule 2 of the Education Reform Act 1988.

National Curriculum

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the future of GCSE in physics, chemistry and biology when the national curriculum for science applies to 14 to 16-year-olds from 1992.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am today publishing, together with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, a statutory proposal for regulations under section 17 of the Education Reform Act 1988 to allow schools to continue to offer courses in the separate sciences to pupils starting GCSE courses in 1992. The regulations will provide an exception from the requirements of national curriculum science for pupils in that cohort on condition that they are studying courses of study leading to GCSE examinations in all three separate science subjects: physics, chemistry and biology.

There is the option to study the three separate sciences now, and I fully intend that that option should continue to be available, as an alternative to model A or model B combined sciences, when the national curriculum requirements for science apply to pupils aged 14 to 16. However, it has not been possible to produce new syllabuses for physics, chemistry and biology, revised to meet those requirements, in time for pupils starting on their GCSE studies in 1992, though they will be available in 1993. It would clearly be unfair to deny to such pupils a choice open to their forerunners and successors. That is why the exception is necessary: to bridge a gap, for a single cohort of pupils.

I have today asked the National Curriculum Council in England to carry out consultations on the proposals, and comments should be sent to the council by 4 October. My right hon. Friend will initiate consultations in Wales. Copies of the published proposals have been placed in the Library of the House.

EMPLOYMENT

Tourism

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the Government's policy towards the European Parliament's proposal to incorporate tourism in the European treaty.

Mr. Forth: The present treaty allows for sensible co-operation between member states on tourism matters and we do not believe a case has been made for any change.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how often has the inter departmental committee on tourism met over the last three years; which Departments were represented; who attended; and what items were discussed.

Mr. Forth: The tourism co-ordination committee has met four times since the beginning of 1988. It is chaired by the Secretary of State for Employment or the Minister for Tourism, and all Departments with a significant interest in matters affecting the industry are represented at ministerial or official level. The committee has discussed a wide range of topics and policies which impinge upon the promotion and development of tourism in the United Kingdom.

Entertainment Employment Agencies

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the names of entertainment employment agencies operating and registered in Scotland under the provisions of the Employment Agencies Act 1973.

Mr. Forth: Licensed employment agencies with premises in Scotland known to be involved wholly or

mainly in entertainment work, including modelling and promotions, are as follows. Other licensed employment agencies may also be involved in these activities from time to time.

Stag Entertainments, Aberdeen
Aberdeen Actors Agency
Forefront Entertainments, Alloa
Music Scotland, Alva
West Coast Promotions, Bellfield
Showbizz Artists Ltd., Biggar
Tip-Top Entertainment, Bonnyrigg
The Music Company, Bonnyrigg
G. T. Entertainments, Bridge of Weir
Glen Dale Entertainments, Coatbridge
Juhill Entertainments, Coupar Angus
J. T. Entertainments, Dalgety Bay
Jayze Entertainments, Dundee
The Agency, Dundee
M. C. M. Enterprises, Dundee
Penguin Entertainments, Dundee
Castle Entertainments, Edinburgh
The Bechhofer Agency, Edinburgh
Cosmos Agency, Edinburgh
Emkay Entertainments, Edinburgh
Entertainment Company, Edinburgh
Pat Lovett (Inc. Esel Agency), Edinburgh
Q The Image Consultants Limited, Edinburgh
Star Agency, Edinburgh
The Stoneyport Agency, Edinburgh
Scotia Entertainments, Edinburgh
Gilded Ballon Productions, Edinburgh
Alan Dunbar Agency, Edinburgh
La Entertainments Agency, Edinburgh
Single Shot Promotions, Edinburgh
Tommy Sampson Band Agency, Edinburgh
Jim Law Entertainments, Falkirk
Chalmers Wood Limited, Glasgow
Ross Bowie Organisation, Glasgow
Peter Browne Management (Scotland), Glasgow
Neil Drover Agency, Glasgow
Bill Gordon Entertainments Agency, Glasgow
The Harry Margolis Entertainment Organisation, Glasgow
Nat Sanderson Entertainments and Personal Management, Glasgow
Royale Chimes Leisure Ltd. Glasgow
Ruth Tarko Agency, Glasgow
Young Casting Agency, Glasgow
Ken Meikle Entertainment Agency, Glasgow
The Richard Fillingham Agency, Glasgow
Just Janie Promotions, Glasgow
Carolina Entertainments, Glasgow
Castings, Glasgow
Michael Brecks Magic Shows, Glasgow
Prime Time Promotions, Glasgow
Gold Band Entertainments Agency, Glasgow
Christys, Glenrothes
Select Entertainments, Glenrothes
Gerard Toal Promotions, Glenrothes
Stax Entertainments and Promotions, Gourock
Carousel Entertainment Agency, Hamilton
Mavisbank Entertainment Promotions, Houston
Square Deal Promotions, Inverness
John Worth Entertainments, Inverness
Leisure Promotions, Inverness
Lynda Millar Entertainments, Kinross
J and S Promotions, Kirkwall
Burton Entertainments, Livingston
Frank Keenan Entertainments, Motherwell
Champion Stage Promotions, Musselburgh
Undercover Entertainments, Nairn
Scotbase Entertainments, Paisley
Big Time Promotions, Peterhead
Glenmor Agency, Peterhead
Honey's Entertainment Agency, Pitmedden
The Entertainers Agency, Polmont
Roy Wicks Entertainments, Prestwick
Thor Promotions Limited, Rutherglen
Caledonian Music Agency, Shotts
Ian Wilson Entertainments, Strathaven
Kenny Paton Entertainments, Strathaven
Prefix Artists, Whitburn
Midas Promotions, Wishaw

Farm Workers (Illnesses)

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the three most common forms of illness among farm workers related to veterinary, pesticide or other chemical formulations used in agriculture; and how he seeks to combat them.

Mr. Forth: Comprehensive comparative information on the effects of chemical exposure in agriculture, which would be necessary to determine the three most common forms of illness, is not available. Incidents involving pesticide poisoning however are reported annually by the Health and Safety Executive and the report for 1990-91 was published on 16 July. Copies of the report will be placed in the House of Commons Library.

Exposure to hazardous chemical formulations used in agriculture is subject to the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988 and, in the case of pesticides, the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986. These regulations place duties on employers to safeguard the health of employees and the public and are enforced by inspectors of the Health and Safety Executive.

The Health and Safety Executive is also sponsoring a pilot "Green Card" surveillance scheme to provide an assessment of the extent of poisoning by veterinary and pesticide products. This scheme has recently been launched in the West Midlands and Trent health authorities and will include reporting by GPs of suspected cases of poisoning and the provision of a hotline to give immediate specialist advice.

The Health and Safety Executive contributes to the suspected adverse reaction scheme operated by the veterinary medicines directorate. The executive has also recently carried out a special survey into sheep dip exposure, the results of which have been made known to the Veterinary Products Committee which is currently reviewing the licensing of sheep dip products.

Youth Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list *(a)* the number of youth training places in his Department and *(b)* the number of places occupied in May for each of the years 1989, 1990 and the current year.

Mr. Jackson: The information requested is in the following table:

	(a) Number of places available (absolute maximum)	*(b) Occupancy of ED group scheme*
March 1989	350	127
March 1990	350	178
March 1991	350	175

The figures are collected on a quarterly basis in March, June, September and December, therefore no stand alone figures exist for May.

Chester Local Plan

Sir Peter Morrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will undertake an assessment of the employment implications and the effect on future job prospects in the Chester area, resulting from the latest proposals relating to the Chester local plan.

Mr. Jackson: Employment prospects in the Chester area were one of the factors taken into account by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for the Environment, in deciding on the proposed modification to the Cheshire structure plan he published on 11 July. I have no plans to make any separate assessment.

Piers

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what Government help has been given towards pier reconstruction in England during the years 1989, 1990 and 1991 to date.

Mr. Forth: The full information could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, assistance from the national heritage memorial fund has been made available for works to Clevedon pier (£2,608 in 1989) and to Brighton West pier (£36,921 in 1989 and 1990).

Tourist Attractions

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what Government monetary resources were granted to tourist attractions based in seaside resorts in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales during the years 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Forth: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Manufacturing Employees

Mr. Robert Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of the male employed population are employed in manufacturing industry in *(a)* the United States of America, *(b)* Japan, *(c)* Germany, *(d)* France, *(e)* Italy and *(f)* the United Kingdom, respectively.

Mr. Jackson: The information available is shown in the table.

Percentage of the male civilian workforce in employment employed in manufacturing industries

	Per cent.
1988 (mid year)	
United States of America	22·6
Japan	24·5
Germany (Federal Republic) *(June 1986)*	37·4
France[1]	n/a
Italy	23·3
United Kingdom	[2]26·7

Source: O.E.C.D. Labour Force Statistics 1968-1988. Latest figures available are for 1988.
n/a = Not available.
[1] There is no male/female breakdown available for civilian employment in France.
[2] The latest available figure (March 1991) is 25·6 per cent. (Source ED)

Toxic Waste Incinerator, Gwent

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has concerning risks posed to local residents of Gwent from the explosion on 13 July at the toxic waste incinerator plant operated by Rechem at New Inn, Gwent.

Mr. Forth: Inspectors from the Health and Safety Executive are currently carrying out a full investigation into the cause of the fire at Rechem International Limited, Pontypool, Gwent on 12 July.

Information obtained from the investigation so far is that it is unlikely that local residents were exposed to any significant risk to their health and safety.

Offshore Installations

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps the Government have taken since Lord Cullen's report to improve the standard of standby vessels serving oil and gas installations on the United Kingdom continental shelf.

Mr. Forth: The Health and Safety Executive and the Department of Transport have today jointly published a revised code for the assessment of the suitability of standby vessels attending offshore installations. The revised code has been produced in consultation with the vessel owners, offshore operators and the unions and incorporates specific improvements to standby vessels recommended by Lord Cullen in his report into the Piper Alpha tragedy.

New vessels and conversions should comply with the code immediately. For existing vessels, compliance will be phased, but vessels should fully meet the requirements of the code by 31 December 1992. The United Kingdom Offshore Operators Association has agreed that standby vessels will be chartered only if they meet these requirements.

The revised code should make a very real contribution to raising the standards of standby vessels, their equipment and rescue facilities.

I have arranged for copies of the code to be placed in the Library.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Youth Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list *(a)* the number of youth training places in his office and *(b)* the number of places occupied in May for each of the years 1989, 1990 and the current year.

Mr. MacGregor: The Privy Council does not offer youth training scheme places.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Manor of Maltby

Mr. Barron: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when the Manor of Maltby was held by the Honour of Tickhill; and what is its current status.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Domesday Book records the Manor of Maltby as holding the Honour of Tickhill. However Maltby gained its independence from the Honour in or about 1232—before the Honour became part of the possessions of the Duchy in 1372.

The Manor of Maltby is now part of the possessions of the Earl of Scarborough having been in the ownership of various families in earlier times.

Youth Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list *(a)* the number of youth training places in his office and *(b)* the number of places occupied in May for each of the years 1989, 1990 and the current year.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Duchy of Lancaster has four youth training places on offer. In May 1989 two were occupied; in May 1990 two; and in May 1991 three. In addition, places are made available for school-children to gain work experience. Over a similar period 14 to 28 persons have been employed at any one time on employment training schemes on Duchy property.

The Duchy of Lancaster office in London makes a practice of offering employment to young school leavers at market rates of pay and assisting them with basic training in office skills during office hours.

DEFENCE

Air Training Corps

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many people are involved in the activities of the air training corps; and what level of funding his Department has provided to the ATC in the most recent years for which figures are available.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As at 31 March 1991, there were 38,127 cadets in the Air Training Corps (ATC) and 8,895 in the RAF section of the Combined Cadet Force (CCF(RAF)). The ATC and CCF(RAF) is administered by a full time staff of 93 Royal Air Force personnel and 208 civil servants, supported by 4,476 uniformed, 4,725 civilian volunteers and 716 chaplains. Funding has been provides as follows:

	£ million
a. 1987-88	24
b. 1988-89	27
c. 1989-90	29
d. 1990-91	30

HMS Endurance

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when HMS Endurance is due to dry dock for her survey; how long will the survey take to complete; and whether her return to the south Atlantic this autumn will be delayed as a result.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: HMS Endurance entered dock on 26 July, and the structural survey commenced as planned on 1 July. The survey results should be available in the near future. Decisions on her deployment to the Antarctic this winter will be made when the results of the survey have been assessed.

RTM 322

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how long ago the RTM 322 engine successfully completed its trials with the United States navy.

Mr. Alan Clark: I understand that the US navy completed flight trials of RTM 322 in a Seahawk helicopter in September 1988.

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many RTM 322 engines have been ordered to date by the Government.

Mr. Alan Clark: The RTM 322 engine has been selected to power the production model of the RN EH101 Merlin helicopter, orders for which have not yet been placed. We are currently evaluating bids for the prime contractorship for this project.

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much financial support the Government have given to develop the RTM 322; and how much that is of the development total.

Mr. Alan Clark: The RTM 322 development work is shared in roughly equal proportions between the United Kingdom and France. The British Government are contributing about one third of the cost of the United Kingdom work share. The precise sum is commercially confidential.

Departmental Publications

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many copies of his departmental publications "Defending the Environment" and "Sanctuary"—the Ministry of Defence conservation magazine, were distributed at his ministry's exhibition stand at the exhibition of environment, wildlife and conservation at Olympia on 6 to 11 July; what was the cost of production of the distributed documents; and how many requests for further information submitted by visitors to the exhibition were made to his departmental staff.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Ministry of Defence issued publicity material during the course of the exhibition to inform the public of the considerable efforts being made to protect and enhance the archaeological and natural history resources of the Defence estate.

It is estimated that the costs for the material were as follows:

Defending the Environment
1,500 leaflets issued at a cost of £1,125.

Sanctuary Magazine
300 copies issued at a cost of £369.

Visitors to the exhibition showed considerable interest in the MOD display and approximately 90 requests for further information were received, in addition to many oral questions.

Youth Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list *(a)* the number of youth training places in his Department and *(b)* the number of places occupied in May for each of the years 1989, 1990 and the current year.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: There is currently a total of 1,362 youth training places in the Ministry of Defence. The number of places occupied in May for each of the years 1989, 1990 and 1991 is as follows:

	Number
May 1989	1,362
May 1990	1,308
May 1991	1,453

Uranium

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what report his Department has had from Hans Blix, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency about the visits to Tuwaitha and Tarmiya in Iraq about sealing of 93 per cent. highly enriched uranium and 80 per cent. enriched uranium; and what quantities were involved.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Hans Blix, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), reported directly to the Secretary General of the United Nations on the recent IAEA-led inspections of Iraqi nuclear sites. His reports are confidential and it would be improper for the Government to publish details of IAEA documents communicated in confidence to IAEA member states. It is for the IAEA to decide how to treat any findings.

I am able to say, however, that the IAEA is satisfied that it has identified and located all the uranium held under agency safeguards by the Iraqis.

Gurkha Battalions

Mr. John Browne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will consider deploying Gurkha battalions to *(a)* Northern Ireland and *(b)* armoured infantry battalions.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The deployment of Gurkhas is kept under review.

RAF Regiment

Mr. John Browne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will consider deploying elements of the Royal Air Force Regiment in an infantry role to *(a)* Northern Ireland or *(b)* Germany.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Squadrons of the RAF Regiment are already deployed on specialist tasks in support of air operations in both Northern Ireland and Germany.

Dartmoor National Park

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much compensation was paid to farmers in the Dartmoor national park in each of the last seven years as a result of the firing of live ammunition in the national park; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Compensation is payable to registered commoners whose grazing rights within the Dartmoor training area are affected when live firing takes place. Over the last seven years the amounts agreed to be paid as a result of live firing are as follows:

	£
1985	57,970
1986	58,020
1987	81,576
1988	81,101
1989	81,101
1990	91,668
1991	91,668

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much the Ministry paid to the Duchy of Cornwall for the 21-year lease in respect of the firing of live ammunition in the Dartmoor national park.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: This information is confidential between the Duchy of Cornwall and the Ministry of Defence.

Grenadiers

Mr. John Browne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any written evidence was considered by the board of inquiry into the case of the three injured Grenadiers as to the reasons why an unexploded 76 mm HESH round was lying unmarked on the Batus training area between 1984 and 7 July.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As part of its investigation into all the circumstances surrounding the accident the board of inquiry examined the written procedures for reporting and clearing unexploded rounds. The board was satisfied with the procedures.

EUCLID

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what funds he has committed to the European co-operative long-term initiative in defence since November 1990.

Mr. Alan Clark: A total of £1 million.

Challenger Tanks

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Challenger I tanks that were sent to the Gulf in support of Operation Granby have had their engines replaced as a result of failure; and what has been the cost of maintenance of the Challenger I tanks since they were first sent to the Gulf.

Mr. Alan Clark: During the whole of Operation Granby, which included an intensive programme of exercises prior to hostilities, 190 Challenger powerpacks were replaced as a result of engine or engine-related failure. This number was within the planning parameters.

The additional maintenance cost of the Challenger tanks sent to the Gulf, including the purchase of some new engines, major assemblies and other spares is approximately £30 million.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Milk (Dioxin Contamination)

13. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to publish the names of farms which have had contamination of dioxin in milk above recommended levels during the last year.

Mr. Gummer: I have, with the permission of the farmers, passed their details to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for South Shields of 2 July, *Official Report*, column *132*, if he will indicate the locations of the two incinerators where dioxin measurements in milk have been taken in their vicinity.

Mr. Gummer: If our programme for measuring dioxin levels is to be effective, we must measure in a whole range of locations.

It is against Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food policy to provide information on specific sampling locations in this or any other programmes of regular surveillance.

Tobacco Regime

15. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate of the cumulative cost, at today's prices, of the CAP tobacco regime.

Mr. Curry: Since we joined the Community the tobacco regime has cost the EC just under £11,000 million at today's prices.

Animal Exports

16. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many representations he has received to date this year about the export of live animals.

Mr. Maclean: The Government continue to receive a large number of representations on this subject, particularly in relation to safeguards for animal welfare.

We welcome this support for the strong stance we are taking on the protection of animals.

Common Agricultural Policy

17. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate of the effect on United Kingdom farmers of the latest proposals for the reform of the common agricultural policy from the European Commission.

Mr. Gummer: It seems clear that they would disadvantage larger, more efficient farmers, many of them in the United Kingdom.

18. **Mr. McMaster:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next plans to meet his European counterparts to discuss the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) earlier today.

Dolphins

19. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any new proposals to protect dolphins and other small cetaceans.

Mr. Gummer: All cetaceans are fully protected under United Kingdom law against deliberate killing. Later this year several countries including the United Kingdom will consider a detailed plan for co-operative research on small cetaceans, following an earlier United Kingdom initiative at the North sea conference forum. We already have in hand several Government-sponsored research initiatives.

Farm Animal Welfare

20. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on progress in farm animal welfare since 1987.

Mr. Maclean: Since 1987, regulations have come into force which ban the veal crate, phase out close confinement systems for pigs, set standards for battery hens and general welfare standards for all farm livestock.

Two new welfare codes have been made.

Regulations last year implemented many of the Farm Animal Welfare Council's recommendations on the slaughter of red meat animals and on religious slaughter.

Orders have been made to give further protection to poultry during transport, and to farm animals and horses at market.

We are actively pressing for the high standards of animal welfare in this country to be extended throughout the European Community.

Cereals

21. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the cost of EC intervention stocks of cereals in 1990-91.

Mr. Curry: The EC Commission estimates the cost to the Community budget of intervention stocks of cereals in 1990 at £890 million.

Farms, Basildon

22. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to visit farms in Basildon.

Mr. Gummer: I look forward to taking up my hon. Friend's invitation to visit farms in his constituency.

Farm Price Agreement

23. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the 1991-92 farm price agreement and its effect on the food industry.

Mr. Curry: The food industry will benefit from the Government's success in ensuring that the 1991 price fixing settlement respected the agricultural guideline.

Food Marking

24. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement on the current position regarding the marking of food products with their country of origin.

Mr. Curry: The EC food labelling directive, which is implemented in the United Kingdom by the Food Labelling Regulations 1984, requires the place of origin or provenance to be shown where failure to give such particulars might mislead the consumer to a material

degree. It also requires that the name of the food must be sufficiently precise to enable the product to be distinguished from any other with which it might be confused. Information on country or place of origin may be given voluntarily so long as it is true and not misleading.

Quotas

Mrs. Irene Adams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next plans to meet his European counterparts to discuss quotas.

Mr. Curry: Measures to control production, including cuts in milk quotas, were discussed in the context of reform of the common agricultural policy at the Agriculture Council on 15 to 16 July.

Food Imports and Exports

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the balance between food imported to the United Kingdom from Europe and food exported to Europe from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Curry: In 1990, the United Kingdom imported food, feed and drink from Europe, including Turkey, valued at £8·6 billion while exports to Europe were £4·2 billion.

Eggs

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any proposals to phase out the use of sell-by or best-before labelling of hens eggs.

Mr. Curry: No. The use of sell-by and/or best-before date markings on eggs is permitted under the EC Egg Marketing Standards Regulations. The recently revised EC Egg Marketing Standards Regulations retain the option of using the term "sell-by". Although we wished the term to be withdrawn in line with the labelling of other foodstuffs for which the term "best-before" is to be used, the Commission, and a majority of member states, wished to retain it. The mandatory requirement to show a packing date remains.

Ewe Premium

Mr. Marland: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will pay with the first advance of the ewe premium the full supplement due to sheep producers in less favoured areas.

Mr. Gummer: I announced on 14 May our intention to pay two advances of this year's annual ewe premium in order to ease sheep producers' cash flow difficulties. Following a recent decision by the EC Commission, I have decided that the first of these advance payments will include the whole of the 4 ecu (about £3·12) per ewe supplement which is payable to producers in the less favoured areas. The supplement is worth some £39 million and the payment in a single sum with the first advance will provide a very welcome boost for hill farmers' finances.

This supplement is additional to the payment of the first advance of premium to all sheep producers of £3·68 per ewe in Great Britain and £5·99 per ewe in Northern Ireland. We are on schedule to make the majority of these payments as previously announced no later than early autumn.

I am conscious that sheep farmers are not having an easy time at present. This new measure will go some way towards helping alleviate the concerns of those who farm the more difficult land in this country and care for the countryside on our behalf.

Youth Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list *(a)* the number of youth training places in his Department and *(b)* the number of places occupied in May for each of the years 1989, 1990 and the current year.

Mr. Curry: There are five youth training places currently in the Department. These were not available in May 1989 or May 1990 but all five are occupied in the current year.

Set-aside Scheme

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the environmental aspects of the set-aside scheme.

Mr. Curry: Both the five-year and the one-year set-aside schemes incorporate environmental features.

Food Surpluses

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to dispose of existing food surpluses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The Government believe that more liberal world trading arrangements and more market-oriented farm policies are the best means of reducing overproduction which creates surpluses.

Equines

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects the European Council of Ministers further to consider United Kingdom minimum values legislation on the export of horses, ponies and other equines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Discussion is continuing on the Commission's proposals for new Community arrangements on the welfare of animals during transit. Discussions in the Council of Ministers are expected to take place in the autumn.

Strategic Food Stockpile

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the future of the strategic food stockpile.

Mr. Gummer: Since world war II, the Government have maintained a strategic food stockpile to help feed the civil population during a period of recovery should there be a major military attack. The stockpile contains supplies of raw and processed foods together with some items of emergency field cooking equipment.

In the light of the revised civil defence planning assumptions announced by my right hon. Friend the

Home Secretary (*Official Report*, columns 393-96 of 10 July), and of developments in food production and distribution in recent years, I have decided that a phased reduction in the size of the strategic food stockpile would now be appropriate. An orderly run-down will be set in hand over the next five years, leading to a smaller, more flexible stockpile consisting principally of ready-to-eat foods rather than raw commodities. Arrangements will also be made for the disposal of stocks of emergency feeding equipment no longer required by the Government.

We shall continue to maintain appropriate plans for the recovery of food and agriculture in the aftermath of any conceivable attack on the United Kingdom and to plan for the control and distribution of major national stocks of processed and unprocessed commodities in times of crisis. Future planning requirements will be regularly re-assessed in the light of evolving national civil defence planning assumptions.

Central Science Laboratory

Sir Michael Shaw: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the progress towards co-location of the Ministry's central science laboratory.

Mr. Gummer: I am pleased to announce that terms have now been agreed with the Church Commissioners for the purchase of a site for the construction of a new laboratory for the central science laboratory. The site is in the Ryedale district approximately six miles from the centre of York. It is anticipated that major construction works on the site will start in early 1993, but advance landscape planting and road improvements will commence this autumn. On the basis of current plans the scheme is due to be completed and ready for occupation in 1996.

The central science laboratory carries out an extensive research programme and provides advice to protect the consumer, improve the environment, and to promote safe production and storage of crops. It also supports the statutory activities of MAFF in the areas of plant health, pesticide safety and pest control. The central science laboratory will be launched as an executive agency in April 1992. Relocation from its existing dispersed sites to a new single facility will lead to greater efficiency and will equip the laboratory to provide my Department with the required services in a more effective manner.

Blue-Ear Pig Disease

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is yet in a position to relax movement restrictions imposed because of blue-ear pig disease; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[pursuant to his reply 17 July 1991]:* I have today placed in the Library of the House details of the new arrangements for the movement of pigs in and from areas restricted as a result of blue-ear pig disease. These provisions incorporate comments made by the industry and have effect from midnight tonight. They allow certain controlled movements between premises and between restricted areas. No changes have been made for movements to premises outside restricted areas.

HEALTH

Toxoplasmosis

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research is being carried out to discover the possible causes and sources of contamination of congenital toxoplasmosis ; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: We are not aware of any current research into the causes and sources of toxoplasmosis, but medical experts are agreed that the infection is usually acquired by eating raw or undercooked meat.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the number of cases of congenital toxoplasmosis recorded in England and Wales as a fraction of total pregnancies for each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Congenital toxoplasmosis is not a notifiable disease, so comprehensive figures are not available. However, reports of cases to the public health laboratory service from the Toxoplasma reference laboratories in England and Wales have averaged about 12 per year. As a proportion of the number of conceptions (between 750,000 and 850,000 per annum over the past decade), the figure is minute.

Leg Loss

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many individuals in the United Kingdom are missing one or both legs.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not held centrally.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the principal causes for the loss of legs in the United Kingdom; and what percentage of the total each of the causes forms.

Mr. Dorrell: The latest available information on the cause of leg amputations in England is given in the table. The information relating to other parts of the United Kingdom is a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Patients attending for the first time in 1989 in respect of present treatment.

	Single leg	*Double leg*	*Double leg previously single*
Accident			
Industrial	46	3	—
Home	17	—	—
Recreation	6	—	—
Armed Forces	5	—	—
Traffic:—Pedestrian	38	—	—
Traffic:—Road vehicle:			
(i) Two-wheeled: Driver	64	—	—
(ii) Two-wheeled: Passenger	6	—	—
(iii) Other: Driver	13	1	—
(iv) Other: Passenger	3	—	—
Rail	12	2	—
Other	17	—	—
Accident total	227	6	—
Disease			
Vascular Insufficiency:			
(i) Atherosclerosis	1,514	42	100

	Single leg	Double leg	Double leg previously single
(ii) Embolism	107	3	—
(iii) Thromboangiitis	13	—	—
(iv) Varicose Ulceration	22	—	—
(v) Other	43	3	—
Metabolic:—(i) Diabetes	611	29	53
(ii) Other	3	—	—
Infective:—Gas Gangrene	15	1	1
(ii) Other	61	3	—
Malignancy	112	—	—
Neurogenic Deformity:—			
(i) Acquired	6	—	—
(ii) Congenital	19	2	1
Disease—Total	2,526	83	155
Total—all causes	2,753	89	155

Source: Department of Health Statistics and Management Information Division Amputation Statistics 1989 (ISBN 1 85197 5764).

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discernible patterns of leg loss there are in terms of *(a)* age, *(b)* occupation, *(c)* socio-economic group and *(d)* area of residence.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not held centrally.

Artificial Legs

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what categories of staff are employed by the national health service to fit leg amputees with artificial legs; and what percentage each category forms of the total staff employed in providing this service.

Mr. Dorrell: Artificial legs are fitted by the specialist profession of prosthetists. These staff are not employed by the NHS but by the companies which supply artificial legs, working on NHS premises.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospitals in the United Kingdom have clinics for the fitting of artificial legs; and how many people are employed by these clinics.

Mr. Dorrell: There are 29 disablement services centres (DSCs) in England. The numbers employed in the DSCs on the fitting of artificial legs is not held centrally. The information relating to other parts of the United Kingdom is a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales, for Scotland and for Northern Ireland.

Amputations

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many amputations are performed each year in British hospitals; and what proportion of these are *(a)* above the knee, *(b)* below the knee.

Mr. Dorrell: The latest available information on leg amputations is given in the table. The information relating to other parts of the United Kingdom is a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Leg amputations in 1988-89, NHS hospitals, England

Description	Estimated number	Proportion of all leg amputations per cent.
Hindquarter amputation	40	0·7
Disarticulation of hip	25	0·5
Amputation of leg above knee	2,625	49·2
Amputation of leg through knee	357	6·7
Amputation of leg below knee	2,248	42·1
Other	*40*	*0·7*
Total	5,335	100·0

Source: Hospital Episode Statistics.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average time between the amputation of a leg and the fitting of a suitable artificial one in the national health service.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not held centrally. The time depends on clinical factors which vary between individuals. There are no waiting lists for artificial limbs.

Fostering

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the average or normal public cost per week of fostering *(a)* a six-month-old baby and *(b)* a two-year-old child.

(2) what is the average or nomal cost per week of keeping in residential care *(a)* a six-month-old baby and *(b)* a two-year-old child.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally.

Drug Surveillance Research Unit

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consideration he is giving to the work of the drug surveillance research unit at Southampton; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The results of studies performed by the drug safety research unit (formerly the drug surveillance research unit) are routinely taken into consideration by the Committee on Safety of Medicines and the Medicines Control Agency during their assessment of drug safety issues.

General Practitioners (Incomes)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average income of general practitioners net of expenses.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The intended average net income for general medical practitioners is currently £37,280 per annum and will rise to £37,975 per annum from 1 December 1991.

Anti-drug Campaign

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are his plans for the national anti-drug publicity campaign 1991-92.

Mr. Dorrell: With the agreement of colleagues in other Departments concerned with drug misuse, we have agreed that this year the focus of the campaign should be changed from national mass media work to a series of locally based campaigns which are nationally signposted. The object will be to highlight local problems and local methods of

prevention including the information needed by parents, the role of teachers and schools and the work of local voluntary bodies. We propose to extend the scope of the campaign to promote further action on misuse of solvents and other volatile substances on sale to the public.

A package of measures will be undertaken in Scotland to complement and support Great Britain-wide activity. Work will also be set in hand to prepare the ground for a major campaign on drugs prevention in 1992 during the United Kingdom Presidency of the European Community.

Youth Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list *(a)* the number of youth training places in his Department and *(b)* the number of places occupied in May for each of the years 1989, 1990 and the current year.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department of Social Security was responsible until April 1991 for the management of all youth training schemes sponsored by both the Department of Social Security and the Department of Health. I understand that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security will provide the hon. Member with the information he has requested on an aggregated basis for both Departments.

Health Authority Expenditure

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance has been given to the Audit Commission on the publication of profiles of expenditure of health authorities and comparisons between health authorities.

Mr. Dorrell: The Audit Commission has been told that the individual health authority information used to compile the profiles of expenditure has not previously been published.

RU 486 Abortifacient

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much of the data on the clinical trials on the drug RU 486 has been published.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the well-documented studies in the *British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology*, June 1990, vol. 97, pages 480-86 and in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, 8 March 1990, vol. 322, No. 10, pages 645-48, copies of which are in the Library.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the announcement that RU 486 was to receive a product licence in Britain was made.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The company wrote to all doctors (gynaecologists), a duty they have to perform before marketing a product, informing them that a licence for RU 486 had been granted for use in the United Kingdom. This communique included an invitation to attend educational seminars on the drug and to explain the strict conditions of its supply.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research submissions he took into account in reaching his decision to license the drug RU 486.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The licensing authority took account of all the data from clinical trials and usage in other countries submitted by the company for the product licence application. The licensing authority was satisfied that a product licence should be granted having consulted the independent Committee on Safety of Medicines as to the safety, quality and efficacy of Mifepristone (RU 486).

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will arrange for the full data on the clinical trials for the drug RU 486 to be published and placed in the Library.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Section 118 of the Medicines Act precludes both Ministers and the Medicines Control Agency from disclosing any information on data submitted by manufacturers in support of clinical trial or product applications.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many representations he has received in connection with the introduction of RU 486 into Britain; and if he will list the total number *(a)* in favour of and *(b)* against its introduction.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Over the past year we have received 815 representations about Mifepristone (RU 486). Twenty-one were in favour of its introduction, 772 were against and 22 sought information.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which organisations were informed before his Department's official announcement that RU 486 was to receive a product licence in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: None.

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his Department's estimate of the average cost of *(a)* an abortion taking RU 486 and prostaglandin including three hospital visits and *(b)* a surgical abortion; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 15 July 1991]:* The estimated national health service revenue cost of an abortion using RU 486 and prostaglandin with two out-patient visits and one day visit is £182. The estimated NHS revenue cost of a straightforward surgical abortion as an in-patient is £270. These estimates are based on 1990-91 prices.

The decision on the choice of treatment is a matter for clinical judgment.

In Vitro Fertilisation

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list those health authorities or trusts which either provide or fund the provision of in vitro fertilisation treatment.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not collected centrally.

The Interim Licensing Authority for Human in vitro Fertilisation and Embryology, which administers a voluntary licensing system, records in its 1991 report that 50 infertility treatment centres have now been licensed. It states that—

"One newly wholly NHS centre, the Royal Victoria Infirmary, Newcastle, has been approved, taking the total number of clinics wholly funded by the NHS to three; 28 centres are wholly private and the remaining 19 make use of some NHS facilities or receive partial funding from the NHS."

Resource Management Initiative

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost of the Brunel university health economics research group's evaluation of the resource management initiative.

Mr. Dorrell: A total of £250,000.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what policy conclusions the national health service management executive has drawn from the Brunel university health economics research group's evaluation of the resource management initiative.

Mr. Dorrell: The final report of the Brunel university health economics research group's evaluation of the resource management initiative provides retrospective support for the decision to launch the intiative taken in November 1986. The report offers detailed and helpful suggestions about the implementation of resource management, and we have distributed copies to all 270 hospitals in England that have embarked upon the resource management programme.

Drugs (Product Licences)

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many drugs received product licences in the United Kingdom in the last year for which figures are available; and how long each took to receive its licence.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: For the 12 months ended 31 March 1991, the following medicinal products were granted product licences by the United Kingdom Licensing Authority:

Application type	*Numbers*
New Drugs	[1]71
Established Drugs	657
Total	728

[1] Involving 34 new active substances.

The term "Established Drugs" refers to those applications which are based on drugs already licensed in the United Kingdom. Information regarding the time taken for each application to reach a decision cannot be given for reasons of commercial confidentiality. The average time taken to reach decisions on the 728 licences granted during 1990-91 is:

Application type	
New drugs	19 months
Established drugs	19 months if considered only by the licensing authority. 23 months if referred to a committee established under the Medicines Act 1968.

These figures are gross times and include time taken by pharmaceutical companies to respond to enquiries made by the licensing authority and time taken for committee consideration and subsequent appeals to section 4 committees and the medicines commission, where necessary.

Licensing volumes and times are included in each edition of *MAIL* (the Medicines Act Information Letter), copies of which will be placed in the Library.

Hospital Patients' Money

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will place in the Library a copy of the letter sent to health authorities and NHS trusts advising them to observe good practice in the handling of patients' moneys and to secure further reductions in the level of the balances.

Mr. Dorrell: Yes. A copy of the letter will be placed in the Library as soon as it is issued.

Prescription Charges

Mr. Robert Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of the population is exempt from prescription charges; what proportion of prescriptions dispensed are for those exempt from payment; and what is the average cost of prescription dispensed.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is estimated that 47·7 per cent. of the population are currently exempt from prescription charges. Nearly 80 per cent. of all NHS prescriptions are dispensed without charge. The average cost of a prescription item to the NHS in 1990, the latest year for which information is available, was £6·66.

Children's Homes

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance was provided to local authorities by his Department to assist them in deciding the criteria to be applied when considering the closure of a children's home with specific reference to the local authority exercising their general duty to children in care under section 18 of the Child Care Act 1980 in the years *(a)* 1988, *(b)* 1989, *(c)* 1990 and *(d)* until 30 June.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 12 July 1991]:* There have been a number of legal decisions, in particular involving the London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham in 1979, Sunderland borough council in 1983 and the metropolitan borough of Solihull in 1984 concerning the need for local authorities to ascertain, so far as is practicable, the wishes and feelings of a child in their care when decisions relating to the child are being reached. Authorities will have had to take account of these decisions.

The following publications, which have been issued to local authorities in relation to the new legislation over the period in question, all emphasise the need to consult children in matters affecting them:

The Introduction to the Children Act (published 1989);

The Care of Children: Principles and Practice in Regulations and Guidance (published 1989);

The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations—Volume 3—Family Placements (published 1991).

The same advice has been included in a number of training packs commissioned by the Department and made available to authorities in 1990 and 1991.

Under the Children Act 1989 the duties of local authorities to consult children in relation to decisions concerning them restates and amplifies the duty in this respect contained in section 18 of the Child Care Act 1980.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 19 July 1991

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

International Investments Ltd., Gibraltar

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Attorney-General whether any discussion has taken place between representatives of Her Majesty's Government and Her Majesty's Attorneys General for Gibraltar regarding the affairs of International Investments Ltd., Gibraltar, in liquidation; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I can answer only on behalf of my own Department and those whom I superintend. The company to which the hon. Member refers has been the subject of a criminal investigation leading to one person being charged in Belfast. During the course of that investigation, investigators and lawyers have liaised as necessary with their counterparts in Gibraltar including the office of the Attorney-General.

Pollution (Crown Immunity)

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Attorney-General on how many occasions since 1979 the judicial review process has been invoked in a pollution incident involving facilities protected from prosecution by Crown immunity.

The Attorney-General: The information requested is not available in the form required and can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Maydown Incinerator

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what arrangements are included in the specification for the waste incinerator proposed for the Maydown, Londonderry site to prevent gases and material being exposed to temperatures between 250 deg C and 400 deg C during combustion.

Mr. Needham: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave on 12 July, *Official Report*, column *500*.

Such details are not yet available and can be provided only if and when Du Pont (UK) Ltd. submits a planning application and accompanying environmental statement for a toxic waste incinerator at its Maydown site.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what specific design requirements apply to the incinerator proposed for the Maydown, Londonderry site to deal with halon and silicon compounds which *(a)* result from paint manufacture or *(b)* which may be offered for incineration in the furnace.

Mr. Needham: Specific design details are not yet available, but it may be that the information sought can be provided if and when Du Pont (UK) Ltd. submits a planning application and accompanying environmental statement for a toxic waste incinerator at its Maydown site. The design requirements set by the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland will ensure that the wastes to be disposed of at the plant are clearly specified.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his policy on the selection of methods of disposal of toxic and hazardous waste to be employed at incinerator plants in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: The selection of a waste disposal method is based on the determination of the "best practicable environmental option" for a particular category of waste, a process which is designed to ensure that neither public health nor the protection of the environment are endangered. High temperature incineration is one of the current options for the disposal of toxic and hazardous waste and is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) of 27 February, *Official Report*, column 511, how much of the special wastes are toxic wastes which require incineration to render them harmless; at what temperatures they are incinerated; and how much are wastes arising from the production of synthetic fibres.

Mr. Needham: The amount of toxic wastes requiring incineration included in the figure of 8,000 tonnes which I specified in my answer to the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) can be identified only at disproportionate cost. However, an independent consultant's report issued in 1990 estimates that 60 per cent. of special waste arisings are landfilled directly, with the remainder being dealt with by chemical treatment, incineration or reclamation.

The temperatures at which such wastes are incinerated vary from 900 to 1200 deg. C., depending on the time period involved and combustion conditions within the incinerator.

Statistics for the amount of special wastes arising from the production of synthetic fibres can also be identified only at disproportionate cost, but the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland has authorised the movement of 1,000 tonnes of lycra polymer waste to Finland for high-temperature incineration during the 12-month period commencing October 1990.

Departmental Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will list the new forms of working patterns introduced into each agency in his Department since its establishment; and if he will break-down by grade the numbers of staff taking up each new working pattern;

(2) how many staff were in post on the date that each agency in his Department was established; and how many staff are now in post;

(3) what group bonus schemes are in operation in each agency in his Department;

(4) if he will list those new facilities for staff which have been introduced in each agency in his Department since establishment;

(5) whether any appointments from the private sector have been made to any agency in his Department at grade 7 or above since its establishment.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is a matter for chief executives of agencies. I have asked them to write to the hon. Member. Copies of their replies will be placed in the Library and Public Information Office.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the last annual report for each agency in his Department was published; and when the next are due.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Training and Employment Agency, established on 2 April 1990, intends to publish its first annual report in September 1991.

The Rate Collection Agency, established on 1 April 1991, intends to publish its first annual report after 31 March 1992.

The Social Security Agency, established on 1 July 1991, is not due to publish its first annual report until after April 1992.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the maximum salary payable to the chief executive of each agency in his Department; and what is the length of each chief executive's contract.

Dr. Mawhinney: The chief executives of the Training and Employment Agency and the Social Security Agency are paid on the standard civil service pay scale for grade 3 and the chief executive of the Rate Collection Agency as a grade 6. The chief executive of the Training and Employment Agency is a permanent appointment and the other two chief executives are appointed for three years.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much was spent on events and publicity surrounding the launch of each agency in his Department.

Dr. Mawhinney: The amounts spent on the launch of the Training and Employment Agency and the Rate Collection Agency were £65,216·66 and £9,898·15 respectively.

The information regarding the launch of the Social Security Agency which took place on 24 June 1991 is not yet available. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member as soon as the figures are known and copies of his reply will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what first degree was obtained by the chief executive of each agency in his Department; and from which institution.

Dr. Mawhinney: As the information requested is of a personal nature, I have asked the chief executives of the agencies to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the quality of service performance indicators adopted by each agency in his Department since its establishment as an executive agency; and if he will separately identify those quality of service performance indicators already operative prior to agency status.

Dr. Mawhinney: The quality of service performance indicators are:

The Training and Employment Agency:

to measure the level of satisfaction with the agency's training consultancy and advisory service;
to survey companies sponsoring training in training centres to establish that their training needs have been satisfied;
to survey levels of customer satisfaction with the services provided by the agency's offices; and
to ensure that literature is issued within 24 hours, and that queries are followed up within one week in response to Freefone inquiries.

Quality of service performance indicators had not been established on a regular basis before agency status, although a number of ad hoc surveys of satisfaction with training centre and office provision were carried out.

The Rate Collection Agency:

Collection and Recovery of Rates—To generate refunds of 90 per cent. of ratepayers so entitled within 14 days of credits being identified.

Administration of the Housing Benefit Scheme for the Owner-Occupier Sector—To achieve 96 per cent. of housing benefit assessments free to error.

No quality of service performance indicators were operative in rating division, the Rate Collection Agency's predecessor, prior to agency status.

The Social Security Agency:

The quality of service performance indicators for the Social Security Agency are contained in its 1991-92 business plan, a copy of which is available in the Library. Of these, the indicator on customer satisfaction is the only one which was not in existence prior to the establishment of the agency.

Mental Handicap Provision

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he proposes to increase day service provision for the mentally handicapped in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The management and delivery of services at local level are the responsibility of health and social services boards. Boards are expected to determine the level of service to be provided in their respective areas.

Day care is recognised as a fundamental component of community services for people with a mental handicap. The importance of day services was stressed in the Health and Personal Social Services Regional Strategy for Northern Ireland (1987-1992); in the policy paper on community care for the 1990s, "People First"; and in the draft Regional Strategic Framework (1992-1997) which was issued recently for consultation.

Social Fund

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will carry out a review of the social fund system.

Mr. Hanley: There are no plans to review the scheme at present, but the Government will carefully consider the implications of research findings expected to become available at the end of the year.

Anti-Poverty Network

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what response he has made to the report of the Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Network, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Hanley: The Secretary of State and other Northern Ireland Office Ministers have received for information copies of a report entitled "Poverty in Northern Ireland —Establishing an Anti-Poverty Network" The report,

which records the process involved in setting up the Northern Ireland anti-poverty network, does not require a formal response but it is being read with interest and its receipt will be acknowledged.

Family Credit

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people made applications for family credit in the constituency of South Down in each year since 1 April 1988 until 31 March 1991; and, of these, how many were approved and how many were refused.

Mr. Hanley: This is now a matter for the chief executive of the Social Security Agency, but I understand that the information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Social Security

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number of income support hardship claims by claimants whose benefit had been suspended for not actively seeking work; and what were the numbers of such claims for each social security office since September 1989.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 18 July 1991]:* Social security operational matters are the responsibility of the chief executive of the Social Security Agency. He will write to the hon. Gentleman and place copies of his reply in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many social security appeals there were by claimants who had been disqualified from benefit for *(a)* not actively seeking work and *(b)* for refusing suitable employment; and what figures are available in respect of the social security appeals tribunals' findings and any subsequent appeals to the social security commissioners since September 1989.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 18 July 1991]:* Social security operational matters are the responsibility of the chief executive of the Social Security Agency. I understand, however, that there have been no appeals to the social security commissioners on these subjects since September 1989 and that the other information requested is not held centrally.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many claimants in each social security office *(a)* received warning letters regarding actively seeking work, *(b)* have had their benefit suspended, *(c)* have had their claims allowed on referral to the adjudication officer and *(d)* have had their claims disallowed on referral since 1989;

(2) how many claimants in each social security office *(a)* have had benefit suspended for refusing suitable employment, *(b)* have had their benefit restored on referral to the adjudication officer and *(c)* were disqualified from benefit on referral to the adjudication officer since September 1989.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 18 July 1991]:* Social security operational matters are the responsibility of the chief executive of the Social Security Agency. I understand, however, that the information requested is not available.

PRIME MINISTER

Iraq

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what representations he has received from Oxfam on the present state of malnutrition and risk of epidemic disease in Iraq.

The Prime Minister: I have received no direct representations from Oxfam. I am aware of its concerns, which were discussed by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development during a visit to Oxfam on 10 July.

Wild Birds

Mr. Wray: To ask the Prime Minister what action Her Majesty's Government are taking to curtail the trade of wild-caught birds into *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* EC countries.

The Prime Minister: We have asked our scientific advisers, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, to review the evidence as to whether the trade in wildlife is compatible with maintaining the populations of species at satisfactory levels. We will consider, in the light of their findings, whether any changes in existing conservation controls are required. Negotiations are continuing on Community proposals for the protection of animals during transport.

Trident

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith), *Official Report*, 27 June, column *512*, what factors he took into account in reaching his assessment that the introduction of Trident in the mid-1990s will provide the minimum capability necessary to maintain an effective independent deterrent into the next century; and what weight he gave in making this assessment to the United Kingdom obligations under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to Defence Open Government Documents 80/23, 82/1 and 87/01 available in the Library.

Genocide Convention

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Prime Minister further to his oral answer to the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) of 16 April, *Official Report*, column 162, what legal advice he has sought on the genocide convention in respect of Saddam Hussein.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 17 July 1991]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) on 7 May at column *390*.

Housing

Mr. John Home Robertson: To ask the Prime Minister if the Government has any plans to provide any special assistance to local authorities, housing associations or other providers of housing to meet the housing needs of service men and their families returning to civilian life as a consequence of "Options for Change".

The Prime Minister: The details of the force reductions required as a result of "Options for Change" are still being examined. We are considering how to deal with the housing implications as part of this work.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Mount Prison

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners have escaped from the Mount since its opening, giving the relevant dates.

Mrs. Rumbold: A total of 13 prisoners have escaped from the Mount since its opening on 15 March 1988. The chronological details are as follows:

Number of prisoners escaped

Date	*Number*
15 September 1988	1
30 October 1989	2
6 December 1990	1
3 May 1991	2
12 May 1991	3
10 June 1991	1
18 June 1991	1
21 June 1991	2

Exit Polls

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to prohibit the taking of exit polls on polling days during elections.

Mrs. Rumbold: No.

Mr. Paul Cleeland

Mr. John Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answers of 1 May, *Official Report*, column *178*, and 11 July, *Official Report*, columns *436-37*, relating to the case of Paul Cleeland, what precautions he is taking to prevent misleading comments from being inserted into similar Home Office documents in future.

Mr. John Patten: I am satisfied that every care is taken in considering representations concerning possible miscarriages of justice and all possible efforts are made to ensure that all documents relating to the case are prepared accurately.

Prisons (Energy Management)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the number of dedicated energy managers and the number of person-years devoted to energy management in the latest year in the Prison estate.

Mrs. Rumbold: There are three dedicated energy managers in the Home Office. In 1990-91 a total of about 4½ person-years was devoted to energy management.

British Citizens (Death Threats)

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is satisfied that appropriate measures continue to be fully taken to safeguard the British citizen who is under threat of death from abroad.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Yes.

Drugs (Arrests)

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many arrests there were by the central drug squad in 1988, 1989 and 1990, respectively.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the figures for arrests made by the central drug squad were as follows:

	Number
1988	274
1989	253
1990	423

Walton Prison

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average weekly cost of keeping an inmate in Her Majesty's prison, Walton.

Mrs. Rumbold: The average weekly cost per inmate held in HM prison Liverpool during 1989-90 (the latest information available) was £260.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Prisoners (Income Support)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether income support is payable to a person who is on home leave from prison; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Income support may be payable in these circumstances, depending on the terms of the prisoner's licence.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Further Education

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will specify *(a)* the number of students currently receiving education or training in the further education sector and *(b)* the number of students with special educational needs currently receiving education or training in further education.

Mr. Eggar: In 1989-90 (the latest year for which data are available) there were 1·8 million students in further education; of these 32,000 were students with special educational needs.

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will list the names of all governors so far appointed to Bacon CTC, and the dates of their appointments;

(2) when he approved the articles of government for Bacon CTC; and if he will place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has received a revised version of the memorandum and articles

of association of the college for his agreement: when agreed it will be placed in the Library. Governors have not yet been appointed.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) at what per pupil rate, for pupils *(a)* under and *(b)* over school leaving age he has agreed to pay annual per capita grant to city technology colleges (i) in and (ii) outside London for the 1991-92 academic year;

(2) what is the estimated or final amount of *(a)* annual per capita grant and *(b)* earmarked annual grant he has agreed to pay to each city technology college for the 1991-92 academic year;

(3) for how many pupils *(a)* under the *(b)* over school leaving age he has agreed to provide funding at each city technology college during the 1991-92 academic year; and what is the total number of pupils in these age groups planned for each city technology college when it becomes fully operational.

Mr. Eggar: The amount of recurrent grant available to each established city technology college in the 1991-92 academic year has yet to be finalised. However, provisional figures at financial year 1991-92 prices, derived from actual LEA out-turn expenditure in financial year 1988-89, the latest year for which this information is available, has been made available to these colleges. The information that the hon. member requested is based on these provisional figures and is as follows:

Recurrent funding of existing CTCs—academic year 1991-92

College	*(1990-91 prices)*		*Academic Year 1991-92 (1991-92 prices*						*At full capacity (1991-92 prices)*		
	Basic APG	*Weighted APG*	*Pupils Numbers*		*APG*	*EAG*	*Total recurrent costs*	*Unit costs per pupil*	*Pupils Numbers*		*Unit costs per pupil*[1]
	£	£			£ million	£ million	£ million	£			£
Existing											
Kingshurst (Opened September 1988)	2,075	2,300	USLA OSLA	720 200	2·451	0·234	2·685	2,918	USLA OSLA	900 200	2,709
Teesside (Opened September 1989)	2,075	2,300	USLA OSLA	552	1·751	0·168	1·919	3,476	USLA OSLA	900 200	2,700
Nottingham (Opened September 1989)	2,075	2,280	USLA OSLA	506 105	1·852	0·177	2·029	3,320	USLA OSLA	835 165	2,678
Bradford (Opened Septemberr 1990)	2,075	2,365	USLA OSLA	430	1·510	0·154	1·664	3,869	USLA OSLA	750 230	2,798
Harris (Croydon) (Opened September 1990)	2,345	2,600	USLA OSLA	798 89	2·954	0·207	3·161	3,563	USLA OSLA	900 200	3,016
Dartford (Opened September 1990)	2,105	2,305	USLA OSLA	840 130	2·764	0·237	3·001	3,093	USLA OSLA	1,050 200	2,697
Gateshead (Opened September 1990)	2,075	2,285	USLA OSLA	300	1·217	0·123	1·340	4,466	USLA OSLA	750 150	2,678
Opening September 1991											
Britschool (Croydon)	2,345	3,050	USLA OSLA	120 180	1·345	0·191	1·536	5,120	USLA OSLA	360 360	3,567
Bacons (Surrey Quays)	2,845	3,155	USLA OSLA	900 40	3·395	0·338	3·733	3,971	USLA OSLA	900 200	3,668
Haberdashers (Lewisham)	2,845	3,155	USLA OSLA	900 200	3·833	0·361	4·194	3,812	USLA OSLA	900 200	3,657
Telford	2,075	2,275	USLA OSLA	168 80	1·211	0·220	1·431	5,770	USLA OSLA	840 160	2,667
Corby	2,075	2,285	USLA OSLA	210 75	1·234	0·208	1·442	5,059	USLA OSLA	750 150	2,678
Wandsworth	2,845	3,270	USLA OSLA	300	1·622	0·219	1·841	6,136	USLA OSLA	750 250	3,789

[1] The unit cost at full capacity (see column 10) assumes recurrent funding at constant financial year 1991-92 prices.

Notes:

1. The per capita grant is enhanced in the early years, but on a progressively diminishing basis as student numbers build-up, to recompense the CTC for the abnormal costs in the start-up period. The unit cost in the early years before reaching full pupil capacity is therefore higher than that applying in schools which are full.

2. The amount paid to USLA and OSLA pupils in any particular year during the build-up period is the same. This is based upon the planned mix of pupils under school leaving age (USLA) and over school leaving age (OSLA) at full capacity—see weighted APG at column 3.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will set out the additional revenue related to start-up costs, for each of the city technology colleges;

(2) if he will set out the sum allowed for central administration in the budget of each of the city technology colleges, and the calculation behind the sum in each case;

(3) if he will set out *(a)* the revenue costs per pupil, for the current year, of each of the existing city technological colleges, and *(b)* the basis of the calculation for the revenue costs in each case.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his reply of 31 October 1990, *Official Report*, columns *517-18*, at what per pupil rate, for pupils *(a)* under and *(b)* over school leaving age, annual capitation grant has been paid during the 1990-91 academic year to city technology colleges operating in the London area; and what has been the total amount of annual per capita grant paid to each of these colleges for this year.

Mr. Eggar: The table sets out the recurrent grant available to each of the existing city technology colleges in the current academic year. The grants comprise an annual per capita grant (APG) in respect of each pupil; and earmarked annual grants (EAG) covering initial stocks of consumables and IT software, and continuing requirements for school meals, pupil support and INSET. The basic per capita grant this year is £2,075 for pupils under school leaving age, and is weighted in respect of those pupils over school leaving age. It is derived from actual LEA out-turn expenditure in financial year 1988-89, the latest year for which such information is available. An allowance of 7 per cent. has been added to the LEA figure to cover central administration costs, and the figure is repriced to 1990-91 values.

Provision is made within annual per capital grant for diseconomies of scale during college's start-up period, reflecting good practice in respect of new schools within the LEA maintained sector. The annual per capital grant for colleges in the London area contains a further enhancement to reflect necessarily higher operating costs.

Recurrent funding of existing CTCs—academic year 1990-91

College	Basic APG	Weighted APG	Pupils Numbers		Academic Year 1990-91 APG	EAG	Total recurrent costs	Unit costs per pupil	At full capacity Pupils Numbers		Unit costs per pupil[1]
	£	£			£ million	£ million	£ million	£			£
Kingshurst	2,075	2,300	USLA OSLA	540 150	1·900	0·195	2·095	3,036	USLA OSLA	900 200	2,459
Teesside	2,075	2,300	USLA OSLA	372	1·288	0·137	1·425	3,830	USLA OSLA	900 200	2,450
Nottingham	2,075	2,280	USLA OSLA	336 52	1·387	0·142	1·529	3,940	USLA OSLA	835 165	2,430
Bradford	2,075	2,365	USLA OSLA	180	0·975	0·200	1·175	6,527	USLA OSLA	750 230	2,540
Harris	2,345	2,600	USLA OSLA	744 13	2·671	0·281	2·952	3,899	USLA OSLA	900 200	2,736
Dartford	2,105	2,305	USLA OSLA	825 79	2·543	0·326	2·869	3,173	USLA OSLA	1,050 200	2,448
Gateshead	2,075	2,285	USLA OSLA	150	0·900	0·181	1·081	7,206	USLA OSLA	750 150	2,430

[1] The unit cost at full capacity (see column 10) assumes recurrent funding at constant 1990-91 prices.

Notes:

1. The per capita grant is enhanced in the early years, but on a progressively diminishing basis as student numbers build-up, to recompense the CTC for the abnormal costs in the start-up period. The unit cost in the early years before reaching full pupil capacity is therefore higher than that applying in schools which are full.
2. The weighted APG at column 3 is based upon the planned mix of pupils under school leaving age (USLA) and over school leaving age (OSLA) at full capacity.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his answer of 26 June, *Official Report*, columns *466-67*, to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett), if he has yet reached a decision as to whether any redundancy payments are to be made to teaching and non-teaching staff at Bacon Church of England secondary school who have not been offered equivalent employment at the new Bacon city technology college.

Mr. Eggar: I have nothing to add to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) on 26 June 1991 at columns *466-67*.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what advice he has issued on admissions policy for city technology colleges in respect of admission of siblings.

Mr. Eggar: None. It is for colleges to determine such details of admission procedures in accordance with funding agreement requirements.

Standard Assessment Tasks

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many children who were tested as seven-year-olds in the summer term of 1991 were *(a)* in mixed-age classes and *(b)* in classes of 30 or over.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is not available nationally.

Schools (Swimming)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make it his policy to ensure that all education authorities and maintained schools make provision for the teaching of swimming.

Mr. Atkins: The national curriculum working group on physical education has considered questions concerning the teaching of swimming. My right hon. and learned Friend is currently considering the working group's final report. The Government's response to the group's report will be published shortly.

Adult Education Centres

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the future of adult education centres, consequent on the publication of his White Paper "Education and Training for the 21st Century"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We have received several hundred such representations.

Primary School Class Sizes

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to ensure that class sizes in primary schools are not above 30; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 13 June 1991 at column *642*.

TRANSPORT

Motorway Bridge Numbering

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made with the motorway bridge numbering scheme.

Mr. Chope: Instructions to begin implementing the motorway bridge numbering scheme will be issued to the Department's regional offices and agent authorities by the early autumn. The work should be completed in two to three years.

Orange Badge Scheme

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his timescale for reviewing agreements amongst user groups concerning new regulations for the orange badge scheme for disabled people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I have had further helpful discussions with representative organisations and hope to make an announcement shortly.

Greater Manchester Relief Road

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his written answer of 15 July, if he will give the number of route options which will be open for public consultation in the autumn, in respect of the Greater Manchester western and northern relief road.

Mr. Chope: This is a matter still to be decided. Information on the form of public consultation will not be given until the start of that process.

Mobile Telephones

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce a specific category on police accident fault report forms to enable the identification of whether the use of a mobile phone may have been a factor in the accident.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 18 July 1991]:* The police complete a STATS19 accident report form for each personal injury road accident that occurs in Great Britain. This form records 70 different items regarding the attendant circumstances of the accident and the vehicles and casualties involved. It does not record the cause of accidents or attempt to apportion blame or find fault, as this is often difficult and sometimes impossible to determine objectively. Some police forces record additional information on injury road accidents for local purposes, but this is not collected centrally.

The content of the STATS19 form is the responsibility of the Standing Committee on Road Accident Statistics, which meets twice a year and includes representatives from the police, local authorities and central Government.

M11 Link Road

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what plans he has to upgrade the M11 link road through Leyton and Leytonstone in the light of his Department's document entitled "Transport and the Environment";

(2) if he will reissue the booklet "Transport and the Environment", with a case study on the M11 link road through Leyton and Leytonstone.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 18 July 1991]:* I have no plans for a further reissue of the booklet "Transport and the Environment" as the latest edition was published only a few weeks ago. The booklet is descriptive and does not prescribe standards to mitigate environmental impact. There are no plans to change the design of the A12 Hackney-M11 link road consequent upon publication of the latest edition.

WALES

Dentists

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish for each health authority in Wales the number of general dental practitioners on whom the Dental Practice Board has placed prior approval by targeting.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: No general dental practitioner in Wales has been placed on prior approval by targeting.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the areas of Wales which family health services authorities have identified as being in need of more dentists.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Family health services authorities have notified to our Department the following areas, as being in need of dentists, for the purpose of meeting the qualifying criteria for payment of grants under the location incentive scheme.

FHSA	*Area*
Clwyd	Queensferry
Dyfed	Gwendraeth Valley
Gwent	Ringland-Newport Blaenau Gwent
Gwynedd	Whole of Gwynedd
Mid Glamorgan	Upper Rhymney Valley Central Ogwr
Powys	None
South Glamorgan	Pentwyn-Cardiff
West Glamorgan	None

Mental Handicap Review

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was his original target for the publication of the "Review of the All Wales Strategy for the Development of Services for People with a Mental Handicap"; what is the latest estimated date of its publication; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The original target date for publication of an analysis of responses to our November 1990 paper on key issues together with our outline proposals for the future was the end of April 1991. We have received almost 120 responses which, taken as a whole, are particularly detailed, thoughtful and helpful. We have been concerned to do full justice to these comments in our consideration of the programme of action from 1993. Our proposals will be published shortly, and comments invited on them by the end of November, with the aim of having as much time for responses as the original timetable.

Home Energy Efficiency

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many dwellings have *(a)* been draught proofed and *(b)* had loft insulation carried out under the home energy efficiency scheme in Wales, and in each county: and what are the estimated numbers of properties which qualify under the scheme.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The information on dwellings which have been draught-proofed is not collected.

A total of 238,900 homes have been included in the homes insulation scheme, since its introduction in September 1978 up to the first quarter of 1991. The scheme came to an end in April 1990.

A county breakdown is available only from 1984 to 1991. The county totals for this period are as follows:

Number of dwellings insulated 1984 to 1991

County	*Number*
Clwyd	13,496
Dyfed	12,075
Gwent	15,416
Gwynedd	8,414
Mid Glamorgan	26,568
Powys	3,207
South Glamorgan	16,702
West Glamorgan	14,888
WALES	110,766

Children (Hearing Loss)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what new measures he intends to take in schools in Wales to assist children who suffer severe hearing loss.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Local education authorities have the responsibility for securing appropriate provision in schools for children with special educational needs, including those with a severe hearing loss. The Welsh Office has made support available to local education authorities under the grants for educational support and training programme for the in-service training of teachers of children with a hearing impairment. This support will also be available in 1992-93.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many children there are in Wales by each county and by category who suffer hearing difficulties;

(2) how many unfilled vacancies there were in Wales for teachers of children suffering hearing loss in January 1991 and January 1990;

(3) how many qualified teachers employed in each of the local education authorities in Wales are engaged in teaching those who suffer hearing difficulties.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he has so for taken to assist children with severe hearing loss.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave him on 6 June 1991. It is the responsibility of the relevant statutory authorities to provide services which meet the needs of all those with disabilities.

Dark Lane Infill Site

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has received any complaints about tipping at the Dark lane, Rossett, Clwyd infill site; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: A number of representations have been made by the hon. Gentleman to the Welsh Office in the past year.

British Airways

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had concerning the future of British Airways in south Wales with the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency.

Mr. David Hunt: I have regular discussions with the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency about a range of matters concerning the development of the Welsh economy.

Veterinary Officers

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many veterinary officers are employed in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food earlier today.

EMPLOYMENT

Woollen Textiles

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many redundancies in the wollen textile industry in West Yorkshire have been notified for 1991 to the most recent practicable date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The number of redundancies confirmed as having taken place in the textile industry in the Yorkshire and Humberside region during the first four months of 1991 is 584. Information is not available for the woollen textile industry, nor for West Yorkshire county.

Health and Safety

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many prosecutions for breaches of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, the Factories Act 1961 and associated subordinated legislation have been undertaken so far to the most recent practicable date in 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The information is not available in the form requested. The table shows the number of informations laid by Health and Safety Executive inspectorates and local authorities for the period January 1975 to March 1990. Figures for the period April 1990 to March 1991 are not yet available.

Information laid by HSC/E enforcing authorities and local authorities 1975—1989-90

Date of hearing	*Number of informations laid*
1975	[1]2,956
1976	[1]2,174
1977	[3]3,023
1978	[3]3,012
1979	[3]2,730
1980	[3]3,169
1981	[4]2,408
1982	[4]2,819
1983	2,749
1984	2,794
1985	2,772
1986-87	2,812
1987-88	3,062
1988-89	3,059
1989-90	3,366

[1] Information laid by Her Majesty's factory inspectorate.
[2] Information laid by Her Majesty's factory inspectorate and local authorities.
[3] Informations laid by Her Majesty's factory and agricultural inspectorates and local authorities.
[4] Informations laid by Her Majesty's factory, agricultural and mines and quarries inspectorates and local authorities.

Minimum Wage

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list those countries in the EC which have minimum wage legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Belgium, France, Greece, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain have statutory national minimum wage laws, though in Belgium the legal minimum applies only to those not covered by local sector-led agreements reached by both sides of industry. In the United Kingdom and Ireland minimum wage rates are set for some industries. Statutory wage fixing destroys jobs and should have no permanent place in the labour market.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many prosecutions for breaches of the minimum wages legislation have been undertaken so far to the most recent practicable date in 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Up to 17 July, eight employers have been prosecuted for offences under wages council legislation during 1991. The policy of the wages inspectorate under all Governments has been to seek compliance by advice and persuasion and to consider prosecution only where there is deliberate or repeated disregard for the law.

Tourism

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of Britain's gross national product is attributable to tourism for the years 1989, 1990 and 1991 to date.

Mr. Forth: The latest available estimates show that about 5 per cent. of the gross national product of the United Kingdom was attributable to the tourism industry in both 1989 and 1990.

Job Search Seminars

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many job search seminars have been held in each of the counties of Wales.

Mr. Jackson: Questions on operational matters in the Employment Service Executive Agency are the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the agency's chief executive, to whom I have referred this question for reply.

DEFENCE

Quality Assurance

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what will be the impact on the future staffing of the directorate general of defence quality assurance of his Department's decision to rely on NACCB—National Accreditation Council for Certification Bodies—certification rather than carrying out its own routine assessments of potential contractors.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The contractor assessment branch has been disbanded and the work has been passed

to DGDQA's regional directors. The number of full-time staff engaged on assessment has been reduced from 60 to 30 and it is expected that a further 10 full-time posts will be saved. DGDQA staff will continue to assess contractors' capabilities where access to highly classified records or material is involved or where no NACCB accredited organisation is able to cover the full scope of the contractor's work.

Armed Forces Rugby Unions

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 15 July to the hon. Member for Wakefield, whether the recently advertised post of youth development officer for the Royal Naval Rugby Union is to be funded from within his Department's budget for the Royal Naval Rugby Union.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the full cost to his Department of *(a)* the Armed Forces Rugby Union and *(b)* the Royal Air Force Rugby Union; and how many full or part-time posts there are within both organisations.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Armed Forces Rugby Union (in fact the Combined Services Rugby Football Committee) and Royal Air Force Rugby Union are run by executive committees, who provide their services on a voluntary basis. There are no full or part-time posts funded by the Ministry of Defence solely dedicated to the support of these organisations. MOD does provide financial assistance with both sports equipment and travel costs for officials and players but these costs are not held centrally.

Avionics Department, RAF Carlisle

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will announce his decision on whether the avionics department of RAF Carlisle 14 MU is to be transferred to RAF Sealand.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: This is a matter for the chief executive of the RAF maintenance group defence support agency. I have asked him to write to the hon. Member.

SCOTLAND

Toxoplasmosis

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what research is being carried out by his Department into the possible causes and sources of contamination of congenital toxoplasmosis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Scottish Office Home and Health Department is not currently supporting research into the possible causes and sources of contamination of congenital toxoplasmosis but favourable consideration would be given to any application for funding for soundly based research projects on this topic.

Kinross Health Centre

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on proposals for a new health centre in Kinross.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The chairman of Tayside health board has written to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross, in whose constituency the health centre is located, indicating that the provision of a new health centre for Kinross is high on the list of Tayside health board's capital priorities, and I understand that it has recently purchased some land for the new centre.

European Private Patients Group

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what hospitals in Scotland participate in the European Private Patients Group.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None.

Hospital Infection Manual

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the way in which the hospital infection manual is being implemented in Scotland by hospitals both in the national health service and the private sector.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The hospital infection manual, which has been made available for use both in the national health service and the private sector in Scotland, includes valuable advice on the control of infection and on procedures for dealing with outbreaks of infection in hospitals. The manual is highly regarded and its advice widely implemented, usually under the direction of the chief administrative medical officer.

Veterinary Officers

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many veterinary officers are employed in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given today by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Education at Home

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps are taken by his Department to promote awareness among parents of their statutory rights under section 30 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to educate their children at home.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 17 July 1991]:* The hon. Gentleman needs to distinguish between a right and a duty. It is for a parent to carry out his statutory duty under Section 30 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to provide efficient education for his child suitable to his age, ability and aptitude either by ensuring that he attends a public school or by other means.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Indonesia

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, in view of the human rights record of Indonesia, he will oppose the granting of an export licence to British Aerospace to sell to Indonesia Hawk trainer/fighter aircraft.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No application has yet been received by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the signatories to the United Nations nuclear non-proliferation treaty to the most recent practicable date.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: To date, there are 142 states parties to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. Taiwan and North Korea, not recognised as states by Her Majesty's Government, have also deposited instruments of ratification and accession to the treaty.

The list of states parties to the non-proliferation treaty is as follows:

States party to the non-proliferation treaty

1. United Kingdom
2. United States of America
3. Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
4. Afghanistan
5. Albania
6. Antigua and Burbuda
7. Australia
8. Austria
9. Bahamas
10. Bahrain
11. Bangladesh
12. Barbados
13. Belgium
14. Belize
15. Benin
16. Bhutan
17. Bolivia
18. Botswana
19. Brunei Darussalam
20. Bulgaria
21. Burkina Faso
22. Burundi
23. Cambodia
24. Cameroon
25. Canada
26. Cape Verde
27. Central African Republic
28. Chad
29. Colombia
30. Congo
31. Costa Rica
32. Cote D'Ivoire
33. Cyprus
34. Czech and Slovak Federal Republic
35. Denmark
36. Dominica
37. Dominican Republic
38. Ecuador
39. Egypt
40. El Salvador
41. Equatorial Guinea
42. Ethiopia
43. Fiji
44. Finland
45. Gabon
46. Gambia
47. Germany, Federal Republic
48. Ghana
49. Greece
50. Grenada
51. Guatemala
52. Guinea
53. Guinea Bissau
54. Haiti
55. Holy See
56. Honduras
57. Hungary
58. Iceland
59. Indonesia
60. Iran
61. Iraq
62. Republic of Ireland
63. Italy
64. Jamaica
65. Japan
66. Jordan
67. Kenya
68. Kiribati
69. Korea, Republic of
70. Kuwait
71. Lao People's Democratic Republic
72. Lebanon
73. Lesotho
74. Liberia
75. Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
76. Liechtenstein
77. Luxembourg
78. Madagascar
79. Malawi
80. Malaysia
81. Maldives
82. Mali
83. Malta
84. Mauritius
85. Mexico
86. Mongolia
87. Morocco
88. Mozambique
89. Nauru
90. Nepal
91. Netherlands
92. New Zealand
93. Nicaragua
94. Nigeria
95. Norway
96. Panama
97. Papua New Guinea
98. Paraguay
99. Peru
100. Philippines
101. Poland
102. Portugal
103. Qatar
104. Romania
105. Rwanda
106. St. Lucia
107. St. Vincent and the Grenadines
108. San Marino
109. Sao Tome and Principe
110. Saudi Arabia
111. Senegal
112. Seychelles
113. Sierra Leone
114. Singapore
115. Soloman Islands
116. Somalia
117. South Africa
118. Spain
119. Sri Lanka
120. Sudan
121. Suriname
122. Swaziland
123. Sweden
124. Switzerland
125. Syrian Arab Republic
126. Tanzania
127. Thailand
128. Togo
129. Tonga
130. Trinidad and Tobago
131. Tunisia
132. Turkey
133. Tuvalu
134. Uganda
135. Uruguay
136. Venezuela
137. Vietnam
138. Western Samoa
139. Yemen, Republic of

140. Yugoslavia
141. Zaire
142. Zambia

Notes:
1. Taiwan (not recognised as a State by Her Majesty's Government) signed the Treaty in Washington on 1 July 1968 and deposited an Instrument of Ratification in Washington on 27 January 1970.
2. North Korea (not recognised as a State by Her Majesty's Government) acceded to the Treaty on 12 December 1985 in Moscow.

Rio Group

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, during the last six months, he has met any of his counterparts from the member countries of the Rio Group.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, met the Argentine and Chilean Foreign Ministers on separate occasions in April. I attended the first meeting of the institutionalised dialogue between EC and Rio Group Ministers in Luxembourg on 26-27 April. The meeting covered a wide range of political and economic matters. I have also had bilateral meetings with the Foreign Ministers of Argentina, Brazil and Chile and with the Deputy Foreign Minister of Colombia.

India

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his assessment of India's nuclear weapons capability.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are concerned about the unsafeguarded nuclear programme in India. We have always encouraged all non-parties to accede to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty; this would engage them in an undertaking not to manufacture or acquire nuclear weapons.

HEALTH

Census Forms

Ms. Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of forms still have to be collected nationally for the 1991 census; and what percentage still need to be collected in the London borough of Lambeth.

Mr. Dorrell: Virtually all 1991 census forms have now been collected. There were problems in contacting householders to collect completed forms, particularly in city areas, and special measures were introduced to deal with this. Initially a letter, a reply paid envelope, and another form were left at such households with a request that they post a completed form to the local census manager. This was followed by the setting up of a census freepost facility; and, in selected areas, where the proportion of households from whom a return had still not been received was reported to be substantially higher than the national average, a postal reminder was issued by the census office.

The estimate of the number of addresses where no household had been contacted was made by local field staff. The follow-up action, particularly the postal reminder issued by the census office, has indicated that some of this accommodation was not occupied on census night. However, the measures described above, have reduced the initial estimate of the proportion of households which were not contacted to two-thirds of 1 per cent. for England and Wales as a whole. In the London borough of Lambeth, some 3,600 households were sent a postal reminder, and about 1,000 replies have already been received back. The overall percentage of addresses classified as non-contacts will be available only after the returns for Lambeth have been processed early next year.

A full evaluation of under-coverage, nationally and for inner London, will be possible in summer 1992 once the computer processed statistics and the results from the census validation survey are both available.

General Practitioner Contracts

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will review the general practitioner contract in respect of *(a)* the extra workload on general practitioners required for assessment activities, and *(b)* the deprivation allowance to general practitioners so that it is more closely related to the Jarman deprivation index.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We do not see a need to review the general practitioner contract in these areas.

Any extra workload resulting from assessment activities is taken into account by the Doctors and Dentists Review Body when making its annual recommendation on general practitioners' pay.

The Government already use the Jarman index as the basis for delivery of deprivation payments to general practitioners. Our objective is to target payments on those practices that serve areas with the highest levels of deprivation.

Community Health Councils

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to require the exclusion of community health service observers from district health authority or family health service authority meetings to be permitted only in exceptional circumstances and on the submission of explicit reasons.

Mr. Dorrell: Community health council (CHC) observers have the right to attend district health authority and family health services authority meetings that are open to the public. It remains for the authority concerned to decide to which of its meetings that are closed to the general public a CHC observer may be invited to attend.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to enhance the position of community health councils in respect of *(a)* rights of audience at district health authority or family health services authority meetings, *(b)* involvement in joint planning of health and care services and *(c)* access to information.

Mr. Dorrell: There is no need to enhance the position of community health councils (CHCs).

It remains a matter for decision by the relevant authority whether a CHC representative should be invited to speak at its meetings. Responsibility for joint planning of health and care services rests with the relevant authorities. However, NHS authorities should consult CHCs when formulating strategies for health are so that their views can be taken into account at an early stage of the decision making process.

CHCs are entitled to receive such information from their respective NHS authorities as they may reasonably require in order to carry out their duties.

GP List Sizes

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the Medical Practices Committee will revise the rules governing list sizes which are required before an area may be designated an open one; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have consulted the medical practices committee and understand that the classification of practice areas by average list size of general practitioners is indicative only and not absolute. In determining whether additional doctors are required in any area the medical practices committee considers each case on its merits, having regard to particular local needs.

Trichinosis

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what incidence of trichinosis has been recorded in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Dorrell: Cases of trichinosis in humans reported to the communicable disease surveillance unit of the Public Health Laboratory Service for the last 10 years are set out in the table.

Laboratory reports to CDSC, England and Wales, Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, Channel Islands and the Isle of Man: Annual totals 1980 to 1990

Year	*Laboratory reports and available details*
1980	—
1981	17 cases in soldiers returning from Hong Kong
1982	1 case
1983	—
1984	—
1985	2 cases
1986	1 case
1987	2 cases: one from Southern Africa
1988	—
1989	—
1990[1]	—

[1] Provisional.
Source: Form 20s to 1988; Oracle database from 1989.

Occupational Health

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to occupational health in the single market, to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Dorrell: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 4 November 1991 to 11 November 1991.

Mental Illness

Mr. Bellotti: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the costs per person per week for long-stay patients in NHS mental hospitals.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is not available centrally. Data on expenditure and activity are collected by specialty, and costs for long stay and short stay patients are not separately identified in the returns submitted by health authorities. The average cost of a bed occupied by an in-patient in a psychiatric specialty in 1989-90, the last year for which figures are available, is estimated at about £450 per week.

Mr. Bellotti: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the costs per person per week for residents in local authority mental after-care homes.

Mr. Dorrell: The 1990-91 estimates published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy give the gross average cost per place filled in local authority residential hostels for mentally ill people in England and Wales, excluding capital charges, as £213 per resident per week.

Cochlear Implants

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Health why it was decided not to include Bradford in the list of centres for the cochlear implant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: In selecting centres to participate in the cochlear implant programme the aim was to provide a reasonable geographical spread across the country; to provide both single and multi-channel implantation and to ensure both adults and children were included in the programme. Account was also taken of experience in implantation and the availability of suitable rehabilitation procedures. Bradford did not match these criteria as well as the centres chosen for funding.

Bereavement (Staff Training)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what code, practices and staff training procedures have been implemented by local health authorities regarding the provision of bereavement support for the family and friends of terminally ill patients.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not available centrally. Health authorities have been asked to plan and co-ordinate services for terminally ill people and their families, including the identification of training needs. Progress reports are expected later this year. The Department is supporting the production of training materials in this area by the Open university.

Electronic Foetal Monitoring

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consultations he has had with the Royal College of Midwives concerning recent medical evidence that electronic foetal monitoring may have a correlation to specific pattern of foetal heart rates.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We meet with the Royal College of Midwives (RCM) regularly. Many different areas are discussed, though electronic foetal heart monitoring has not recently been one of them. If the RCM has particular points that it wishes to make about this form of monitoring, I shall be glad to hear from it.

Children's Homes

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consultations he has had with the local authority social services departments regarding the standards set for the administration and care provision in children's homes.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We will shortly be issuing comprehensive guidance and regulations on the provision of residential care for children to accompany the implementation of the Children Act 1989. In preparing the guidance and regulations the Department consulted local authorities.

Dental Practice Board

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the total expenditure for the dental practice board for *(a)* 1990-91 and *(b)* the estimated expenditure for 1991-92; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Total administrative expenditure by the Dental Practice Board in 1990-91 was £21,152,823. The board's expenditure plans for 1991-92 remain the subject of discussions between the board and health departments for England and Wales.

Generic Pharmaceuticals

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether it remains his intention to promote the prescribing and dispensing of generic pharmaceuticals in original packs as announced by his Department on 8 November 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Progress on systematic introduction of original pack dispensing was originally halted by the failure of the medical bodies and the manufacturers to agree on common standard pack sizes. We plan to institute a new round of consultations with the medical and pharmaceutical professions and the pharmaceutical industry with a view to resolving this difficulty.

Community Pharmacists

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will publish the total remuneration paid to community pharmacists in England and Wales for the years 1988, 1989 and 1990; and indicate in each case the proportion attributable to the costs of providing pharmaceutical services and the proportion attributable to profit.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: 1988-89 was the final year of the cost-plus contract which allocated a specific amount of remuneration to profit and to the costs of providing pharmaceutical services.

The total amount paid in 1988-89 was £468·2 million of which £20·6 million was attributed to profit. A sum of £20·9 million was also paid, which was arrears owing from 1987-88.

For 1989-90 £496·5 million was paid in fees and £63·4 million in lump sums in respect of earlier periods.

For 1990-91 £543·1 million was paid in fees and a lump sum of £10·1 million for 1990-91 will be paid in 1991-92.

Salmonella

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the total number of salmonella cases reported in 1990 and in the first six months of 1991.

Mr. Dorrell: The total numbers of human isolations of salmonella reported by the public health laboratory service division of enteric pathogens in England and Wales for the periods in question are contained in the January and July 1991 issues of the public health laboratory service/state veterinary service update on salmonella infection, copies of which are in the Library.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Meat Inspection

Mr. Gill: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to make meat and poultry inspection standards and charges universal throughout the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: I, along with other Agriculture and Health Ministers, commissioned in April a detailed study of the costs and benefits of alternative methods of providing day-to-day meat inspection and hygiene control in fresh meat, poultry meat and game plants in Great Britain.

The study has now been completed and my colleagues and I will be carefully considering the results. We expect to announce our decision early in the autumn. In making decisions on future enforcement arrangements a number of factors will need to be taken into account, including the ability of the enforcement system to ensure evenness of standards and consistency of charges throughout the country.

Veterinary Officers

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the number of veterinary officers employed in England in the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The number of veterinary officers in Great Britain is as follows: England, 246; Scotland, 58; Wales, 33. The number of veterinary officers employed by the state veterinary service is maintained at a level commensurate with its responsibilities.

Pigs, Warwickshire

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food why the movement restrictions imposed on pigs in Warwickshire have not been included in his Chief Veterinary Officer's report to the European Community, as placed in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Blue-eared pig disease has not yet been confirmed in the restricted premises in Warwickshire and investigations there are continuing. Only those parishes in which the disease has been confirmed are notified to the European Commission.

Agriculture and Food Research Council

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to appoint an hon. Member to the Agriculture and Food Research Council.

Mr. Gummer: None. Last year my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science appointed my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) to the council with effect from 1 January 1991. His appointment will run until 31 July 1994.

Veterinary Investigation Centres

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will place copies of the annual reports for 1990 of all the veterinary investigation centres in the Library.

Mr. Gummer: It is not the practice for veterinary investigation centres to prepare annual reports for publication.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

RECHAR

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the value of the RECHAR funds earmarked for the United Kingdom at present frozen by the European Commission pending the outcome of his review of additionality.

Mr. Leigh: The United Kingdom's 11 RECHAR programmes for our coalfield areas, which are at present awaiting approval by the Commission, apply for a total of some £109 million of European Community grant.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the terms of reference for this review of the additionality issue in respect of RECHAR funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: Discussions are continuing between the Departments concerned and the Commission on a range of issues relating to the operation of the structural funds in the United Kingdom. I attach great importance to the United Kingdom's RECHAR programmes and hope that they will be approved by the Commission very shortly.

ICI (Hanson Bid)

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has received any approach from Hanson plc seeking guidance on whether any takeover bid would be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Lilley: I have received no such approach. A bid involving a combined turnover in excess of five billion ecu, unless predominantly within one member state or outside the Community, would fall within the European Commission's jurisdiction.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was learned from the Le Quesne inquiry into Barlow Clowes about the use made by Barlow Clowes of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International and about the proprieties of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International's role in that case.

Mr. Redwood: Sir Godfray Le Quesne's report contains no reference to the Bank of Credit and Commerce International.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Soviet Union

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on United Kingdom help for the Soviet Union, including individual republics, through the know-how fund and the Council of Europe Demosthenes programme.

Mrs. Chalker: On 18 July my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced that in addition to the £10 million available in 1991-92, the know-how fund for the Soviet Union will be increased from £10 million to £20 million in 1992-93 and a further £20 million will be made available in 1993-94. The objective of the fund is to support the transfer of British skills and expertise essential to making the change to a market economy in four key sectors: food distribution, small business creation, energy and financial services. Projects in individual republics are eligible for support.

The United Kingdom is one of 25 members of the Council of Europe, whose Demosthenes programme enables the countries of eastern and central Europe to take advantage of the Council's work and expertise in the rule of law, human rights and a pluralist democracy. The Soviet Union has "special guest status" in the Council's Parliamentary Assembly and can benefit from this programme.

THE ARTS

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister for the Arts, pursuant to his answer of 18 June, *Official Report*, column *113*, with which other Departments his office shares accommodation.

Mr. Renton: My office has two locations: the Government Offices, Great George street, London SW1 and the St. Christopher House annexe, Sumner street, London SE1. The former is shared with the Cabinet Office, Treasury, Central Statistic l Office and Ministry of Defence; the latter with the Department of Health and Ministry of Defence.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Pensions

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many personal pension (i) schemes and (ii) individual policies the Fees Office administers on behalf of hon. Members' staff; and how many whole-time equivalent staff are employed to administer them.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 17 July 1991]:* The Fees Office, on behalf of hon. Members, currently makes payments towards a total of 1,021 individual pension arrangements for Members' staff.

The Fees Office employs the equivalent of two full-time staff to administer these arrangements.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Lord President of the Council how much money was available to be paid into personal pension schemes for hon. Members' staff in 1990-91; and what proportion of it was paid into hon. Members' staff policies.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 17 July 1991]:* Staff of an honourable Member are eligible for pension contributions of up to 10 per cent. of their gross salaries paid from the Member's office costs allowance. In the financial year 1990-91 the total salaries paid amounted to £12,141,417, making £1,214,142 available for pension contributions; £998,099, representing 82·2 per cent., was actually paid.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list each pension scheme currently in operation for people employed in the House of Commons, including hon. Members, and indicate the category and number of personnel eligible.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 17 July 1991]:* Membership of the following pension schemes is open to Members of Parliament, all House of Commons permanent staff and staff employed by hon. Members and paid from their office cost allowances.

Parliamentary Contributory Pension Fund

With the exception of the Speaker, the Prime Minister and former Prime Ministers, whose pensions are payable from the Consolidated Fund, all Members of Parliament are eligible for Membership.

House of Commons Staff Pension Scheme

All House of Commons permanent staff and those with period appointments, 1,039 at 30 June 1991, are eligible for membership.

Hon. Members Staff Pensions Arrangements

All staff of hon. Members who are paid salaries from the Members' office costs allowance—1,312 at 30 June 1991—are eligible for a contribution not exceeding 10 per cent. of their salary to be paid towards an individual pension arrangement.

Other persons employed in the House of Commons are subject to pension arrangements provided by their employers.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Lord President of the Council what is his estimate of the cost to the House of Commons Fees Office of administering the pension provision for hon. Members' staff as a proportion of contributions paid to their policies for the year 1990-91.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 17 July 1991]:* Salary costs as a proportion of premiums paid in 1990-91 was 3 per cent.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Child Care

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson), of 9 July, *Official Report*, column *301*, if he will list the other relevant factors of which he estimates the TRAC—Campaign for Child Relief on Child Care—estimates take no account.

Mr. Maude: The TRAC estimates do not appear to take any account of the likelihood that some of those induced to return to work by tax-free child care would replace existing workers, or displace jobs elsewhere in the economy. To the extent that that happened, net employment gains would be overstated. Nor do they take account of the deadweight costs arising from switches into employer-assisted child care by those who are already employed.

Youth Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list *(a)* the number of youth training places in the departments for which he is responsible and *(b)* the number of places occupied in May for each of the years 1989, 1990 and the current year.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 18 July 1991]:* The information is not held centrally, but provisional figures are as follows:

	Number
Youth training places	
May 1989	25
May 1990	39
May 1991	43
Places occupied	
May 1989	13
May 1990	32
May 1991	43

ENERGY

South Wales Electricity

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has had from the South Wales Electricity company concerning purchases of its shares by Welsh Water; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We have been informed by South Wales Electricity plc that further shares have been purchased by Welsh Water plc and that the directors are opposed to a merger.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy pursuant to his answer of 25 June, *Official Report*, column *436*, if he will give for each Department the progress made so far towards the target of a 15 per cent. reduction in weather-corrected energy consumption per unit of floor area.

Mr. Wakeham: Information on energy consumption in Departments for 1990-91 is being collected by my Energy Efficiency Office, and will be published in the annual report of the ministerial group on energy efficiency in the autumn.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy pursuant to his answer of 25 June, *Official Report*, column *436*, if he will give the formula used to adjust energy consumption according to the weather.

Mr. Wakeham: The formula used to adjust energy consumption according to the weather applies to the space heating of a building and is:

$$\text{Adjusted consumption} = \frac{DDO}{DD} \times \text{Total space heating consumption}$$

DDO is the 20-year average of degree days, and DD is the number of degree days for the current year. This information is prepared on a regional basis by the Meteorological Office. DDO and DD should refer to the same region.

Executive Salaries

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy further to his oral answer of 15 July to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, *Official Report*, column 8, if

he will list the other organisations which produced reports on executive pay, indicating in each case the name of the organisation which retained their services and over what period.

Mr. Wakeham: Other reports on executive pay were produced for a number of the now privatised electricity companies and are a matter for those companies.

Nuclear Fuel Reprocessing

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what volumes of low-level radioactive wastes will be created in the reprocessing of foreign spent nuclear fuel already contracted to be processed in the British Nuclear Fuel Ltd. thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: British Nuclear Fuels plc estimates that some 36,000 cu m of conditioned low-level radioactive waste will arise from the reprocessing of overseas spent nuclear fuel currently contracted to be reprocessed in the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

Clerk's Department

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, (1) what percentage of the staff in the House of Commons Clerk's Department of grade 7 equivalent and above did not graduate from Oxford or Cambridge;

(2) what percentage of the staff in the House of Commons Clerk's Department of grade 7 equivalent and above did not have arts degrees;

(3) what percentage of the staff in the House of Commons Clerk's Department of grade 7 equivalent and above were not educated at private schoools.

Mr. Beith *[holding answer 2 July 1991]:* No central records are kept, but from information obtained by way of questionnaire, the approximate percentage figures are 30 per cent., 37 per cent.[1] and 40 per cent.

[1] The definition used for a "non-arts" degree includes degrees in science, mathematics, law and social sciences. If only science and mathematics degrees were included, the figure would be 7 per cent.

ENVIRONMENT

Rent Arrears

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the local authority rent arrears level in London by borough for each year since 1979.

Mr. Yeo: I have today placed in the Library tables listing cumulative rent arrears of London boroughs, and arrears as a percentage of rent roll, for each year since 1981. The corresponding figures for earlier years are not available centrally.

Cumulative rent arrears at the end of March 1981 to 1985

London boroughs	*1981*		*1982*		*1983*		*1984*		*1985*	
	Arrears £ million	*Arrears as percentage of rent roll* per cent.	*Arrears* £ million	*Arrears as percentage of rent roll* per cent.	*Arrears* £ million	*Arrears as percentage of rent roll* per cent.	*Arrears* £ million	*Arrears as percentage of rent roll* per cent.	*Arrears* £ million	*Arrears as percentage of rent roll* per cent.
Barking and Dagenham	0·50	3·00	0·70	3·20	1·10	4·80	1·20	5·20	0·70	3·10
Barnet	0·50	3·80	0·70	4·30	0·90	4·30	1·00	4·60	1·00	4·50
Bexley	0·30	4·10	0·40	4·60	0·40	4·30	0·30	2·80	0·30	2·70
Brent	1·50	15·60	2·80	20·60	3·60	23·20	4·90	31·40	5·30	32·20
Bromley	0·30	2·80	0·50	3·20	0·40	2·70	0·90	5·30	0·30	3·20
Camden	2·40	17·20	1·60	8·40	2·50	9·60	2·70	9·90	3·10	11·20
City of London	0·02	1·30	0·04	2·40	0·05	2·40	0·06	2·60	0·08	3·30
Croydon	0·40	4·60	0·90	6·10	0·90	5·30	0·60	4·10	1·10	6·00
Ealing	0·70	4·80	0·90	5·10	1·10	5·50	1·40	6·80	1·50	7·30
Enfield	0·50	4·40	0·40	2·70	0·60	3·20	0·70	3·50	1·30	6·30
Greenwich	1·20	6·80	1·40	5·60	2·00	7·20	1·60	5·90	3·00	10·80
Hackney	1·40	12·80	1·00	7·00	3·30	10·20	3·60	10·90	9·20	27·20
Hammersmith and Fulham	0·90	10·10	1·00	7·30	1·10	6·90	1·10	6·10	1·50	7·50
Haringey	1·50	14·80	1·40	9·10	3·50	18·50	2·50	13·20	2·90	15·20
Harrow	0·40	6·20	0·50	5·80	0·40	5·10	0·60	6·60	0·70	8·40
Havering	0·60	5·80	0·60	4·50	0·40	3·10	0·70	5·10	0·70	4·80
Hillingdon	0·50	3·80	0·50	2·50	0·60	3·30	0·50	2·70	0·50	2·30
Hounslow	0·20	2·30	0·50	3·60	1·20	8·20	1·40	8·60	1·60	9·30
Islington	0·60	3·40	3·20	12·80	5·50	17·40	4·50	14·50	4·90	15·10
Kensington and Chelsea	0·50	7·30	0·50	5·60	0·90	7·70	0·90	7·30	1·10	8·20
Kingston Upon Thames	0·05	1·00	0·20	2·60	0·20	2·80	0·10	1·80	0·10	1·50
Lambeth	3·70	29·00	7·40	40·00	n/a	n/a	7·90	20·80	9·40	24·00
Lewisham	2·10	17·60	2·80	14·90	4·30	12·90	6·70	20·30	7·30	22·30
Merton	0·70	7·80	1·20	10·60	1·30	10·40	1·20	8·80	1·20	7·90
Newham	0·60	4·40	0·80	4·20	1·60	6·70	1·80	7·30	2·30	9·10
Redbridge	0·30	4·10	0·60	5·50	0·60	4·70	0·60	4·70	0·60	4·80
Richmond Upon Thames	0·07	1·10	0·10	1·20	0·10	1·00	0·10	1·30	0·20	2·00
Southwark	5·10	16·10	5·10	11·30	6·80	13·50	8·80	17·20	11·00	20·50
Sutton	0·20	2·00	0·30	3·00	0·40	3·10	0·40	3·00	0·40	2·60
Tower Hamlets	0·50	7·30	0·70	6·40	1·00	7·40	0·80	6·00	0·90	6·20
Waltham Forest	0·40	4·60	0·70	6·10	1·20	8·10	2·80	16·50	3·10	17·80
Wandsworth	2·70	11·00	4·50	13·10	5·70	15·10	5·40	14·20	5·40	12·30
Westminster	1·00	7·20	1·50	8·30	1·60	7·60	1·50	6·80	1·80	6·80

Source: Housing Subsidies and Grants: Second Advance Claim Forms.
Note: Large year to year changes in arrears up to 1987 may be due to changes in reporting (ie high figures may include arrears of rates or service charges). From 1987 onwards figures for rent arrears only have been estimated where necessary (indicated by *).

Cumulative rent arrears at the end of March 1986 to 1990

London boroughs	1986		1987		1988		1988		1990	
	Arrears £ million	Arrears as percentage of rent roll per cent.	Arrears £ million	Arrears as percentage of rent roll per cent.	Arrears £ million	Arrears as percentage of rent roll per cent.	Arrears £ million	Arrears as percentage of rent roll per cent.	Arrears £ million	Arrears as percentage of rent roll per cent.
Barking and Dagenham	1·20	4·90	0·70	3·00	0·80	3·20	0·80	3·20	0·70	2·70
Barnet	1·00	4·90	0·60	3·00	0·80	3·70	1·00	4·40	1·30	5·80
Bexley	0·30	2·80	0·30	2·80	0·30	3·00	0·30	3·20	0·30	2·80
Brent	11·00	63·00	6·50	38·50	*8·10	46·90	*13·70	49·00	15·80	44·60
Bromley	0·50	3·20	0·40	2·70	0·40	2·00	0·60	3·10	0·70	3·50
Camden	4·40	15·60	4·60	16·00	4·70	15·30	5·80	15·20	7·50	17·80
City of London	0·10	4·80	0·10	2·40	0·10	1·90	0·10	3·30	0·20	4·30
Croydon	1·70	8·20	1·20	5·60	1·30	6·00	1·40	5·60	1·80	6·60
Ealing	1·70	8·20	1·90	8·90	2·20	10·20	5·70	26·20	5·70	18·30
Enfield	1·00	4·80	1·10	5·70	1·20	5·10	1·70	6·50	1·00	3·50
Greenwich	2·90	10·00	3·50	12·10	4·80	15·30	5·50	14·10	8·10	18·00
Hackney	5·50	16·20	6·60	19·80	8·40	24·10	12·40	30·30	15·30	29·50
Hammersmith and Fulham	1·70	7·50	1·90	7·90	2·20	8·40	3·70	10·50	6·40	17·40
Haringey	5·60	28·50	3·20	16·50	4·10	18·80	7·20	25·60	11·90	30·30
Harrow	0·60	6·30	0·40	4·30	0·40	4·00	0·60	5·90	0·70	6·60
Havering	0·70	4·30	0·50	3·00	0·50	2·80	0·60	3·30	0·60	3·10
Hillingdon	0·50	2·50	0·40	2·30	0·50	2·50	0·50	2·80	0·60	3·00
Hounslow	0·90	4·90	1·10	5·60	1·10	5·60	1·00	4·70	1·60	5·20
Islington	6·20	18·30	6·50	19·60	9·80	27·40	13·10	28·90	6·50	12·10
Kensington and Chelsea	1·20	8·40	1·00	7·20	1·10	7·00	1·30	8·20	1·70	9·90
Kingston upon Thames	0·10	1·60	0·10	1·80	0·10	1·70	0·30	3·00	0·30	3·10
Lambeth	10·00	24·00	7·50	18·00	12·60	29·90	17·50	35·70	17·40	32·50
Lewisham	6·80	19·50	4·20	12·00	4·70	12·20	5·70	12·80	5·80	11·90
Merton	1·20	7·40	1·10	7·70	0·80	5·20	0·70	5·00	1·30	7·60
Newham	2·70	10·70	3·10	11·40	3·60	12·10	5·40	16·00	9·90	21·60
Redbridge	0·60	3·90	0·70	4·90	0·80	5·50	1·30	8·50	1·60	8·70
Richmond upon Thames	0·20	2·00	0·20	2·00	0·30	2·90	0·40	4·00	0·80	5·80
Southwark	13·40	24·40	14·70	27·80	19·00	29·30	*26·80	35·50	27·00	31·90
Sutton	0·40	2·70	0·40	2·60	0·40	3·10	0·80	5·60	0·70	4·50
Tower Hamlets	2·30	6·80	2·30	5·60	2·20	4·90	2·20	4·70	3·10	6·10
Waltham Forest	4·40	23·60	2·70	14·10	3·10	16·00	4·40	20·60	3·20	13·80
Wandsworth	2·80	6·80	2·50	5·40	2·40	5·30	3·40	6·90	3·80	8·10
Westminster	1·80	6·20	1·90	6·50	1·80	6·10	1·70	5·60	2·00	5·50

Source: Housing Subsidies and Grants: Second Advance Claim Forms.
Note: Large year to year changes in arrears up to 1987 may be due to changes in reporting (ie high figures may include arrears of rates or service charges). From 1987 onwards figures for rent arrears only have been estimated where necessary (indicated by *).

Housing

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the drafting of his Department's circular 7/91; and if he has any plans to amend it.

Sir George Young: We have received a number of letters from hon. Members, local authorities and other interested bodies about circular 7/91 on "Planning and Affordable Housing". I have also discussed the circular at meetings with local authority representative bodies, including the Housing Consultative Council.

Many local authorities and others have welcomed the clarification of policy on the use of planning mechanisms to encourage the provision of affordable housing where it is needed. The circular emphasises the important role of local plans which may, after careful analysis of the need, incorporate appropriate planning policies on affordable housing. The circular makes it clear that matters unrelated to land use, such as tenure or the income of the occupier, should not be regulated through the planning system. In view of this, the best way of ensuring that such housing remains affordable is through planning agreements that provide for a housing association or similar body to retain an interest in the ownership sufficient to control the occupation.

We have no plans at present to amend the circular. In due course, the advice will be incorporated in the revised planning policy guidance note 3, with whatever minor changes may then be appropriate.

No. 7 Millbank

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 27 March, *Official Report*, column *461*, what progress has been made with his inquiries into the suitability of 7 Millbank as offices for hon. Members and staff.

Mr. Yeo: A number of options is still under consideration.

Local Authority Staff (Pay)

Mr. Bellotti: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will encourage local authorities to settle the pay claim of local authority administrative, professional, technical and clerical staff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: This is entirely a matter for local government. Local authorities themselves are best placed to decide on the levels of pay settlements for their staff.

Burglary

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce higher standards for materials used in housing construction to ensure their greater resistance to burglary.

Mr. Yeo: The warranty schemes for new houses operated by the National Housebuilding Council and the Housing Standards Company include requirements relating to basic security measures, such as door and window locks. Housing associations adopt similar standards. In addition, my Department has produced guidance on security measures in both new and existing housing. Research is being undertaken to monitor the effectiveness of these measures, and the results will be made available to the British Standards Institution so that they can review the relevant British standards.

British Waterways

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* those sites referred to in paragraph 2.91 of his Department's annual report—Cm 1508—where British Waterways are planning developments.

Mr. Baldry: No. The identification of particular sites for development is a matter for the British Waterways Board.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department was represented at the 1991 summer school on radioactive waste management, decommissioning and clean-up, held at Jesus college, Cambridge on 8 to 11 July.

Mr. Baldry: Yes. Several members of the Department attended and gave papers.

Water Abstraction Licences

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions owners of fishing rights have applied for revocation or variation of water abstraction licences under the provisions of the Water Resources Act 1963 since that Act came into force; and how many such applications have been determined in favour of the applicant, either by revocation or variation of the licence, or by the award of compensation.

Mr. Trippier: This information is not available.

Mental Illness

Mr. Bellotti: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the costs per person per week for residents of housing associations providing mental after-care.

Mr. Yeo: The costs for residents vary from scheme to scheme and information is not at present assembled centrally. Housing associations are, however, required under the tenants' guarantee to ensure that charges to residents can be afforded by those on low incomes. The Housing Corporation also intends to keep charges to residents in special needs schemes under review as part of its monitoring of the new funding arrangements introduced this April.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received seeking a compensatory mechanism for the losses incurred by local authorities following the closure of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: We have received a number of representations from local authorities on this subject but none specifically seeking compensation.

Steel Cans (Recycling)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether assistance is provided to facilitate the recycling of steel cans to any local authorities or other organisations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The Government provide a range of assistance to facilitate the recycling of various materials, including steel cans. Industry can seek funding through the ETIS scheme, operated jointly by my Department and the Department of Trade and Industry, and the DEMOS and EUROENVIRON schemes, administered by the Department of Trade and Industry. Voluntary organisations may apply for grant through the environmental grant fund.

We have also distributed £12 million of supplementary credit approvals for 1991-92 to enable local authorities to invest in recycling. Seventy-eight of the 96 authorities which received SCAs received approvals for schemes involving the recycling of cans.

West End Development, Bradford

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in the examination of the application for city grant by 3Ds Ltd. for the west end development in Bradford, what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that Old Court Ltd. can contribute sufficient income from its publishing activities to finance the scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: An application from 3Ds has been received, but cannot be appraised in its present incomplete form. When we are able to carry out a full appraisal the Department will, of course, satisfy itself that the developer is in a position to undertake the project.

Heritage Grants

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discretionary grants are available from his Department for national projects undertaken by voluntary organisations involved in heritage work.

Mr. Yeo: National projects undertaken by voluntary organisations involved in heritage work are eligible for funding under two grant schemes operated by my Department.

The main source of funding for such projects is the special grants programme which assists voluntary organisations for activities relevant to the Department's interests.

They can also be eligible for the environmental grant fund which aims to support the work of voluntary groups on innovative projects which will help take forward the policies set out in our White Paper "This Common Inheritance".

Keighley Picture House

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the amount of grant aid provided for the refurbishment of Keighley picture house.

Mr. Key: Under the urban programme, the Department of the Environment has contributed £273,000 towards the refurbishment of the picture house.

Pentachlorophenol Discharges

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has concerning the average levels of pentachlorophenol in industrial discharges in the Rossendale and Darwen constituency; what is the highest level of measured discharge of pentachlorophenol; and what is the maximum permitted discharge level.

Mr. Baldry: Available information on discharges to rivers and sewers is held for rivers by the north-west region of the National Rivers Authority, and North West Water plc for sewers. Discharge levels are constrained by the requirements of EC directive 86/280/EEC which sets a limit of 2mg per litre for individual discharges. The directive also sets an environmental quality objective of 2 microgrammes per litre, which has been taken into national law in the Surface Water (Dangerous Substances) (Classification) Regulations 1989 and which, as required by the Water Act 1989, we aim to meet in all areas so far as it is practicable.

Planning

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to establish a voluntary register of interests for planning inspectors.

Mr. Yeo: We have no proposals to establish such a register.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 22 July 1991

TRANSPORT

Toy Rockets

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the possible threat to aircraft from toy rockets now on sale in the United Kingdom.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am advised by the Civil Aviation Authority that as aircraft structures are certificated to withstand the impact of birds weighing far more than these toy rockets, they believe that such rockets do not pose a major hazard to aircraft. Nevertheless, the CAA is examining amendments to the Air Navigation Order which would place restrictions on the use of such toys in close proximity to aerodromes. Currently under the provisions of the Air Navigation Order it is an offence for anyone recklessly or negligently to hazard an aircraft and the use of such rockets in such a manner constitutes an offence.

Railway Station Design

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what modifications have been made to the design of main rail stations since the terrorist bomb outrage at Victoria station;

(2) if he will meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss the improvement of the design of major stations in order to make them less dangerous in the event of a terrorist attack.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. and learned Friend meets the chairman regularly to discuss a range of railway matters. British Rail attaches high priority to security and safety and has undertaken a further review of security at stations since the bomb explosion at Victoria. It would not be in the public interest to disclose details of the further measures that BR has put in hand.

Road Accidents, Tower Hamlets

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list annual figures for road accidents in Tower Hamlets for each year since 1979.

Mr. Chope: The statistics available cover road accidents involving personal injury reported to the police. The table shows the number of such accidents each year in the London borough of Tower Hamlets, classified by severity of accident.

Accidents involving injury, by severity: London Borough of Tower Hamlets: 1979 to 1989

Number

Year	*Severity*		
	Fatal	*Serious*	*Slight*
1979	14	217	984
1980	14	176	950
1981	13	136	975
1982	16	166	1,162
1983	20	146	1,021
1984	19	162	1,078
1985	8	235	895
1986	16	244	978
1987	9	210	936
1988	14	223	974
1989	12	269	1,032

LT Tendering Bus Unit

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport under what rules the LT's tendered bus unit operates; who are the members; and by whom they were appointed.

Mr. Freeman: The tendered bus division is a management unit of London Transport, staffed by LT employees. It is answerable to, and operates under the rules approved by, the LT board.

Recovery Services

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the minimum standards of equipment and personnel training for recovery services used in contra-flow situations.

Mr. Chope: The minimum standards of equipment and personnel training for recovery services at trunk road and motorway roadworks sites are those recommended by the Association of Vehicle Recovery Operators. These standards are currently being reviewed jointly by the Department, AVRO and the Road Rescue Recovery Association.

Slough-Windsor Railway Line

Mr. Watts: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether, when he next meets the chairman of British Rail, he will discuss the scope for further development of the Slough-Windsor line; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail currently runs a well-used shuttle service between Slough and Windsor for both commuters and tourists. The introduction of new turbo rolling stock next year will being an even better quality of service.

I understand that BR is also investigating the potential for further developing tourist services in co-operation with the private sector. In the short term, and with some infrastructure development, there may be opportunities for occasional visiting steam trains to run into Windsor. Looking further ahead, it might be possible to develop a park-and-ride service which would help to relieve traffic congestion in Windsor. This would require a major new road scheme as well as more extensive rail infrastructure, including laying a second track, to cater for a greater frequency of service. The additional services could be provided by BR or as a joint venture with a private sector operator. In both cases it would be for the private sector to finance the necessary infrastructure work.

Luton-Dunstable Rail Service

Mr. Madel: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether, when he next meets the chairman of British Rail, he will discuss the scope for the private sector operating a rail service between Luton and Dunstable; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I should like to encourage any private sector firm with a commercial proposition for running a public transport service over the route of the redundant freight line between Luton and Dunstable—for a rail service making use of the existing track, or an alternative proposal making use of the track bed—to approach BR.

Any proposal would have to be fully self-financing, should not interfere with existing BR services and must, of course, be consistent with safe operation. I know that BR will treat any sensible approach seriously and will seek to co-operate fully. Indeed, BR is already co-operating with Luton and District Bus Company, which is investigating the scope for converting the track bed into a dedicated bus way. I must stress that approaches should not impose any cost burden on BR, or divert BR resources from other urgent tasks, such as the major resignalling programme.

If no commercial proposals for a rail service are forthcoming, BR plans to recover materials from the Luton-Dunstable branch for re-use elsewhere on the network. Proposals should therefore be submitted to BR no later than the end of September 1991.

National Bus Company (Accounts)

Mr. Forman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive the National Bus Company's final set of accounts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The company's final report and accounts, covering the period from 1 April 1990 to 1 April 1991, have now been prepared and audited in accordance with the provisions of the National Bus Company (Dissolution) Order 1991.

These show that the surplus from the sale of National Bus Company now stands at over £168 million, of which £46 million arose from the sale of the subsidiaries and £122 million from the surplus on the pension funds. In cash terms the Exchequer has received much more. The original capital debt and later long-term loans amounting to some £96 million were repaid together with interest and early redemption penalty of nearly £31 million. Inland Revenue will in total receive £91 million by way of tax on the pension surplus, capital gains and depreciatory transactions. In total this successful privatisation of the National Bus Company has released £386 million to the Exchequer.

A copy of the accounts has been deposited in the Library of the House.

"A Bus Strategy for London"

Mr. Forman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will announce the Government's conclusions following the recent consultation on "A Bus Strategy for London".

Mr. Rifkind: The Government published "A Bus Strategy for London" on 11 March. It asked for comments to be sent in by 7 May. To date, 205 responses have been received. The Government expect to receive further comments in the coming weeks and months, but conclude that it would be appropriate to make a statement, at this stage, setting out preliminary conclusions on some of the key issues raised in the consultation exercise. Most of those who responded shared the Government's assessment that buses are likely to have an increasing part to play in meeting London's transport needs. There is widespread agreement that promoting the use of buses is a desirable and important policy goal. Although the consultation exercise showed a marked divergence of view about how this goal should be achieved, there was very little disagreement that the goal was the right one.

The Government believe that deregulation will bring greater freedom of choice to both bus operator and passenger. Operators will have an incentive to provide the services the public wants. The operating environment will ensure that no one operator has an unfair advantage over another. The passenger will benefit from an increased number and variety of services. And there will be safeguards to ensure the provision of socially necessary services, and of adequate bus facilities. The Government's policy remains, as it has been since the Transport Act 1985 was introduced into Parliament, that the London bus market should be deregulated and privatised as soon as possible.

Although a proportion of respondents commented unfavourably on this policy, no new or persuasive arguments against deregulation emerged during the consultation exercise. The Government are not persuaded by the argument that bus operators will target their services on a few key profitable routes in central London. The assumption that central London routes are the most profitable is not necessarily true: although revenue returns are higher in central London, so are cost levels. In fact, this criticism bears no relation to the actual plans of bus operators. As for the related argument that some less central areas will be left with few or no bus services, the bus authority will be charged with providing services which it judges to be socially necessary but which the commercial network has not provided. This will ensure an adequate Londonwide network of buses.

Most of the responses received addressed the question what sort of body should be constituted as the bus authority for London. One option was to establish a passenger transport authority for London, whose responsibilities would cover bus, underground and rail services. The Government have already made it clear that they consider that it is not appropriate for nationalised industries such as BR and LT to be under local authority control. Moreover, the Government do not want London Transport to be distracted from the major challenges facing it in relation to London Underground and Docklands light railway. They have therefore ruled out this option. Of the other options discussed in the consultation paper, there was considerable support for vesting the responsibilities with London Transport, which has done so much already to improve the quality of service provided by buses in London. There was some support for creating a bus-only PTA or a new governmental agency to take on this role, but very little support for vesting responsibility in the individual London boroughs. In this matter, the Government have given particular weight to the views of bus operators, who expressed serious reservations about asking London Transport to take on this role. It was felt that an independent body, not distracted by the major challenges which London

Transport faces in expanding and renewing London's underground system, would be better placed to promote the provision of bus services in London.

The Government have decided, therefore, to create a London bus executive, with members appointed by the Secretary of State for Transport, which will concentrate exclusively on bus-related issues. The London bus executive will be responsible, in particular, for securing the provision of bus services on socially necessary but uneconomic routes. In discharging this responsibility, it will work closely with the London boroughs. It will also be responsible for ensuring the adequate provision of bus stops, shelters, stands and stations. And it will ensure that any gaps in the passenger information provided by bus operators are plugged. It will be funded mainly by Government grant. London Transport will remain responsible for the London Buses Ltd. subsidiaries until privatisation. Their experience and expertise will enable them to play a key role in helping to provide a smooth transition to the new regime.

Many respondents expressed concern about the future of concessionary travel in London. This concern was unfounded. The consultation paper made it clear that there is no question of deregulation or privatisation leading to the demise of concessionary travel in London. The Government's proposals on this matter are as follows. Responsibility for setting the terms of a Londonwide concessionary travel scheme will remain with the boroughs. They will be required to publish, by 31 December each year, the details of a scheme for the coming financial year and of the terms on which operators will be reimbursed for carrying holders of concessionary travel passes. If no new scheme is published, the previous year's travel concessions will automatically be rolled forward. The London boroughs will have the same discretion as local authorities elsewhere to vary the terms of their concessionary travel arrangements. However, they will continue to be required to operate a Londonwide concessionary travel scheme. Bus operators will have an automatic right to participate in any scheme in their area, and the boroughs will have a power to compel bus operators to participate in the Londonwide scheme. There will be provision for appeals on matters relating to participation in the scheme and the terms of reimbursement for doing so.

Concern was also expressed about the future of Travelcard in London. Experience elsewhere in the country suggests that commercially priced common-ticketing systems such as Travelcard fill a strongly felt market need, offering advantages to both operators and passengers. Travelcard schemes will be able to continue after deregulation. The Government will be working actively with operators in the coming months to encourage them to come up with their own proposals for such schemes after deregulation. It was therefore decided that it is neither necessary nor appropriate to legislate to secure the future of the present Travelcard scheme or to ensure that a suitable successor scheme is devised. The Government have also concluded, however, that it is appropriate to legislate to secure the right of operators to enter Travelcard schemes operating in London, thus helping safeguard the position of new, smaller operators wishing to enter the London bus market.

Some respondents criticised the absence of any reference in "A Bus Strategy for London" to the future of services, such as Dial-a-Ride and Taxicard, which are provided specifically for elderly and disabled people with serious mobility problems. The reason for not mentioning these services is that it was never the Government's intention that they should be affected in any way by the deregulation and privatisation plans. LT's disabled passenger unit will remain intact, and the specialised services which it is responsible for providing will be unaffected by the proposed legislation. In addition, the London bus executive will be given a duty to have regard to the need of elderly and disabled people in the discharge of its responsibilities.

The Government looked again, in the light of comments received, at the question of the future of the London Regional Passengers Committee. The Government conclude that the LRPC should continue to deal only with questions relating to services provided by or on behalf of London Transport and British Rail. It will have no formal role in relation to bus issues. There is no other part of the United Kingdom where transport consumer bodies have such a statutory role. Open competition in a deregulated market is the best safeguard of consumer interests.

Many bus operators, including subsidiaries of London Buses Ltd., expressed concern about the timetable for deregulation and privatisation. There is no need for decisions on these points to be taken at this stage. However, the Government are sympathetic to the view that privatisation of the LBL subsidiaries should take place sooner, rather than later.

Many detailed comments were received on other issues and initiatives dealt with in the consultation paper. In particular, many responses made suggestions relating to the introduction of bus priority measures and to the powers of the traffic commissioner and highway authorities to deal with cases where the introduction of new bus services was found to aggravate congestion problems. The Government will be considering these points further in the months ahead. The Government will also want to have available to them the results of the research referred to in paragraphs 98 to 103 of the consultation paper, before taking final decisions on such matters.

As indicated in "A Bus Strategy for London", primary legislation will be needed to give effect to a number of these proposals. The Government intend to legislate on these points as soon as possible in a new Parliament.

Statistics

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how international freight transport statistics into and out of the United Kingdom will be collected after the elimination of custom checks following the completion of the single market.

Mr. Chope: Statistics on international road transport in United Kingdom powered vehicles will continue to be prepared, to meet EC directive 78/546, by means of the Department's "international road haulage survey" of United Kingdom hauliers; the contribution from other EC vehicles will also be available, from data collected by the country in which the vehicles are registered, to meet the same directive. International freight traffic statistics by rail will also continue to be available to meet EC directive 80/1177.

Information adequate for government use on the contribution made by unaccompanied trailers will be

available from the Department's annual port traffic returns, completed by harbour authorities. This source also provides information on transport by sea of containers and non-unitised traffic.

Information on international freight transport with non-EC countries will still be available from Customs sources after 1992.

Mr. Barry Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he is satisfied with the quality of transport statistics provided to the European Commission by his Department.

Mr. Chope: The Department is responsible for supplying a variety of statistics to the European Commission, directly and through the Statistical Office. The one area where I have not been satisfied with the quality of statistics supplied relates to international road haulage by United Kingdom hauliers. The survey concerned has now been made statutory and I am confident that these statistics will be of good quality in the future.

Nuclear Fuel Flask Accident

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what reports he has received from *(a)* British Rail, *(b)* British Nuclear Fuels and *(c)* Cumbria county council of lessons learnt from the recently conducted exercise involving a spent nuclear fuel flask accident in Millom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Exercises to test the emergency procedures in the event of a fuel flask incident are held at regular intervals and the recent one at Millom was attended by a representative of my Department.

Control and administration of these exercises is a matter for the nuclear industry and I am satisfied that such exercises reflect, as far as possible, any likely scenario should a real incident occur.

Tree Planting

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what evaluation has been made of the cost-effectiveness for investment approval of a planting programme of evergreen trees at railway line sides to protect overhead wires in high winds.

Mr. Freeman: I understand that British Rail has conducted a preliminary technical evaluation on the planting of evergreen trees along track sides, and is now considering whether to undertake a fuller study.

Road Surfaces

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of trunk roads and motorways completed for his Department over the past three years have been finished in concrete and blacktop, respectively.

Mr. Chope: Of the 400 km of trunk roads and motorways which have been completed since 1 August 1988, about 10 per cent. have a concrete surface. The remaining 90 per cent. have a black-top surface, and of these a significant proportion use concrete within the construction.

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the European limits on carbon dioxide emissions; and when he intends to introduce legislation to introduce stricter limits.

Mr. Chope: The European Community and member states are willing to take action aimed at stabilising the total carbon dioxide emissions by the year 2000 at the 1990 level in the Community as a whole. This assumes that other countries make similar commitments and acknowledges individual member states' own targets. The Environment White Paper published last year set out a first tranche of measures to control United Kingdom carbon dioxide emissions. The Government will publish a report in the autumn showing how our efforts are being put into practice.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* his policies and *(b)* his Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; and if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those such monitoring.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government continue to place a high priority on helping small businesses, through improvements to the business climate, through deregulation and other measures and through specific programmes of support and assistance.

The Department of Transport's policies and performance indicators are published annually in the departmental report (Cm. 1507). Businesses both small and large benefit from the Department's encouragement of a fair and competitive market for transport services, from investment in transport infrastructure which helps to reduce congestion saving both time and money, and from the lifting of burdens caused by unnecessary regulation. Departmental procurement procedures also encourage the use of small firms.

Gibraltar Airport

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 8 July, *Official Report*, column *294*, what are the reasons for Gibraltar airport not benefiting from the European Community liberalisation packages until the Gibraltar airport agreement is implemented.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Community noted that arrangements concerning the use of Gibraltar airport had yet to come into effect and decided that the liberalisation measures should not apply to Gibraltar until the Gibraltar airport agreement, relating to such arrangements, had been implemented. This temporary suspension will be lifted as soon as the agreement is implemented.

London Transport

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the real fares index for *(a)* London Transport bus services and *(b)* London Transport bus and underground combined in each year since 1971, using 1971 = 100.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is given in the table.

London Transport real fares indices: 1971-1990

1971 = 100

Year	*London Transport bus services*	*London Transport bus and underground services*
1971	100	100
1972	104	106
1973	96	99
1974	83	86
1975	82	89
1976	100	100
1977	103	113
1978	109	119
1979	109	119
1980	128	138
1981	122	127
1982	139	153
1983	136	137
1984	118	119
1985	122	122
1986	126	125
1987	125	125
1988	131	131
1989	136	136
1990	135	136

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many passenger miles were travelled by London Transport buses, including tendered routes, in each year since 1971.

Mr. Freeman: The figures are as follows:

Year	*Passenger Miles*
1971	2,907
1972	2,856
1973	2,958
1974	3,061
1975	3,039
1976	2,980
1977	2,919
1978	2,819
1979	2,690
1980	2,578
1981	2,511
1982	2,330
1983	2,440
1984	2,587
1985	2,562
1986	2,698
1987	2,786
1988	2,769
1989	2,728
1990	2,713

Vehicle Licences

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many *(a)* heavy goods vehicles and *(b)* public service vehicles are licensed under the operators' licences requirements.

Mr. Chope: The latest information is that there are 453,139 heavy goods vehicles and 72,900 public service vehicles licensed under the operator licensing system.

Urban Development Corporations

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what powers and responsibilities he exercises in relation to roads promoted by urban development corporations.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. and learned Friend has no direct responsibility for roads which are constructed under the urban development corporations' own planning powers rather than by a highway authority under the Highways Act 1980. He may, however, be required to confirm certain local authority orders relating to such roads if they are adopted as highways.

Lighthouses

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what information he has on what has been the change in the average weekly number of employees employed at the head office of each of *(a)* Trinity house, *(b)* the commissioners of northern lighthouses and *(c)* the commissioners of Irish lights between 1985-86 and 1989-90;

(2) what information he has on what has been the change in the average weekly number of employees of *(a)* Trinity house, *(b)* the commissioners of the northern lighthouses and *(c)* the commissioners of Irish lights employed at manned lighthouses between 1985-86 and 1989-90.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 19 July 1991]:* The following is the information requested:

	Head office	*Lightkeepers*
Trinity House:		
1985-86	181	216
1989-90	[1]30	145
Northern Lighthouse Board:		
1985-86	88	223
1989-90	80	156
Commissioners of Irish Lights:		
1985-86	91	202
1989-90	73	107

[1] Following amalgamation of some former head office functions with functions already located at outstations.

Bus and Coach Accidents

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list, for each of the last 10 years, the number of road traffic accidents involving buses and coaches by the age of the bus or coach involved.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 19 July 1991]:* The information requested is as follows.

The statistics available cover road accidents involving personal injury reported to the police. The table shows the number of such accidents involving buses or coaches in Great Britain each year.

Bus and coach accidents involving injury, Great Britain: 1980 to 1989

Year	*Accidents*
1980	13,613
1981	12,915
1982	12,738
1983	12,618
1984	12,647

Year	Accidents
1985	12,313
1986	11,988
1987	11,603
1988	11,898
1989	12,499

Source: Road Accidents Great Britain, HMSO.

The following table shows the number of buses and coaches involved in these accidents, by vehicle age group.

Buses and coaches in injury accidents, by vehicle age group, Great Britain: 1980 to 1989

Year	Vehicle age (years)[1]				
	0 to 4	5 to 9	10 to 14	15 or more	Unknown
1980	5,204	3,477	1,802	637	2,694
1981	4,831	3,498	1,417	662	2,675
1982	4,942	3,639	1,352	891	2,087
1983	4,634	3,576	1,385	1,045	2,123
1984	4,304	3,854	1,531	1,078	2,035
1985	3,835	4,233	1,634	1,295	1,471
1986	3,421	4,203	1,721	1,028	1,764
1987	3,211	3,896	2,143	929	1,587
1988	3,199	3,861	2,594	958	1,474
1989	3,367	3,792	3,011	1,125	1,416

[1] Approximate. Based on prefix/suffix letter of registration mark.

ENERGY

Electrical Appliances

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what progress the Government have made in encouraging the European Community to set minimum efficiency standards for certain categories of domestic and industrial appliances which vary widely in their use of energy since September 1990;

(2) since his answer to the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) of 25 February, *Official Report*, column *343*, what progress has been made towards introducing a scheme for labelling electrical appliances with information about their energy efficiency.

Mr. Wakeham: The Government have encouraged and participated in the Commission's development of a proposal for a framework directive on mandatory appliance labelling, which is expected to be submitted to the Council in the near future. We are exploring with retailers and manufacturers the possibilities for an interim voluntary scheme which would enable the early introduction of labelling in the United Kingdom.

Agreement on energy efficiency labelling is an essential first step towards the successful introduction of minimum standards for appliances, and we support the Commission's intention to establish minimum energy performance levels, in the first instance by negotiating voluntary agreements with manufacturers.

Combined Heat and Power

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what action he has taken since September 1990 to promote the wider use of combined heat and power.

Mr. Wakeham: Earlier this year my Department successfully completed the privatisation of the electricity supply industry in Great Britain, thereby enhancing the market opportunities for independent power projects, including combined heat and power. The Energy Efficiency Office continues actively to promote CHP through its best practice programme. It also works closely with the Combined Heat and Power Association and has recently collaborated with it on the power plus initiative.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what new initiatives have been taken since September 1990 to encourage people to use energy more efficiently; and what further action the Government intend to take in the longer term.

Mr. Wakeham: The Energy Efficiency Office, whose budget for 1991-92 has been increased to £42 million, has pursued a number of initiatives since the publication of the White Paper on the environment in September 1990. These initiatives include:

establishment of the ministerial group on energy efficiency, under my chairmanship, which aims to promote awareness of and raise the profile of energy efficiency and monitor the effectiveness of the Government's energy efficiency programmes;

introduction on 1 January 1991 of the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme, which offers grants towards the cost of insulation measures in low income households;

increased resources for the Best Practice programme, which continues to offer independent and authoritative advice and information on energy efficiency;

reorganisation and strengthening of the EEO's regional energy efficiency office;

encouragement for manufacturers and retailers in their current promotion of high efficiency lamps, which have already achieved substantial increases in take-up; and

participation, in conjunction with other Departments, in a programme of some 80 seminars for public and private sector organisations;

Further initiatives already announced, and on which work continues, include:

a major new three-year publicity campaign, conducted jointly with the Department of the Environment, has been announced and will begin this autumn. It is aimed at promoting energy efficiency in the home and explaining the impact of energy use on the environment;

a new promotional campaign aimed at the senior management of top energy users in the UK with headquarters in London and operational sites throughout the country; and

further progress with the campaign on the Government estate.

Continuing support is also being given to the promotion of home energy labelling and the development of a voluntary scheme for appliance labelling in advance of mandatory proposals from the EC. I will be publishing in the autumn a report on the achievements of the ministerial group during the first 12 months of operation.

British Coal (Capital Investment)

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will make a statement on the action taken in response to the recommendations concerning British Coal's business planning in the 1989 report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the corporation's capital investment programme.

Mr. Wakeham: On 19 July 1990, at columns *702-4*, I informed the House that the British Coal Corporation had provided a second response to the MMC report on the corporation's capital investment programme, and that a copy had been placed in the Library of the House. Although the normal arrangements for following up MMC recommendations arising from section 11 inquiries do not require a further response from British Coal until 1992, I said that I would ask for an additional report this year on the steps taken to strengthen its business planning. British Coal has provided this, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

Since British Coal last reported I have appointed Mr. Neil Clarke as chairman of the corporation in succession to Lord Haslam, and he has carried out, with my support, a restructuring of the board. I very much welcome Mr. Clarke's decision to charge a director, Dr. Moses, with the specific responsibility of developing and co-ordinating the corporation's strategic planning, and I am confident that this will satisfy many of the concerns expressed by the MMC. I believe that these and other arrangements put in place by the board will enable British Coal to meet the challenges of the future with confidence.

British Coal will be submitting a final report to me next year on its implementation of all the MMC's recommendations. I shall inform the House when this further report has been made.

UKAEA (Financial Target)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what financial target has been set for the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority for 1991-92.

Mr. Wakeham: The United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority's financial target for 1991-92 will be 6·8 per cent. return on net assets on a current cost basis.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* his policies and *(b)* his Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; and if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring.

Mr. Wakeham: The Government continue to place a high priority on helping small businesses, through improvements to the business climate, through deregulation and other measures, and through specific programmes of support and assistance.

In developing and implementing my Department's policies, full account is taken of the needs of small businesses. They have benefited from measures to encourage competition and stimulate energy efficiency.

Following the raising of the licensing limits in the Coal Industry Act 1990 there has been an increase in the number of licensed—non-British Coal—opencast sites from 141 to 157 in the 12 months to March 1991, and an increase in the average size from 39,000 tonnes to 68,000 tonnes. The Government have continued to make available funding for British Coal Enterprise Ltd., resulting in a cumulative total of over 70,000 job opportunities, many of which are in small businesses, in 3,184 individual projects—this compares with 61,000 and 2,865 respectively in 1990.

In August 1990, the Department's Offshore Supplies Office launched a one-year scheme to give support of up to 75 per cent. of costs for preliminary research and feasibility studies by small companies aimed at developing new technologies applicable to oil and gas drilling and production.

The new regime for the electricity supply industry is having the effect of opening up the supply of electricity to competition, is giving small businesses a choice of electricity supplier, and is putting downward pressure on the prices they pay.

The Department continues to encourage the use of small firms for departmental purchases of goods and services where this is consistent with obtaining value for money. About 47 per cent. of purchases have been from them in 1990-91, compared with 43 per cent. in 1989-90 and 38 per cent. in 1988-89.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Land Law

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who were employed by his Department as consultants before the publication of the draft land law proposals; from what dates they were employed; and what was the cost to public funds.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 18 July 1991]:* The Department of Finance, as it then was, appointed Professor J. C. W. Wylie as its consultant on land law reform on 4 April 1980. Professor Wylie was appointed on an individual basis in accordance with the normal conditions for such appointments. It is not our usual practice to disclose an individual's earnings.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Data Protection

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to publish the recommendations of the Interdepartmental Committee on Registration Procedures under the Data Protection Act 1984.

Mrs. Rumbold: The report of the interdepartmental review of the Data Protection Act was laid in the Library on 28 November 1990. Free copies may be obtained on request from room 677A, Home Office, 50 Queen Anne's gate, London SW1H 9AT.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the advice of the Data Protection Registrar on the procedure put forward in the European Commission's draft directive on data protection for a general requirement of notifying individuals whenever information about them is communicated to a third party; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The views of the Data Protection Registrar on the notification requirements in articlee 9 of the draft directive are contained in appendix I of his seventh annual report, published on 17 July.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from the press and broadcasters on the European Commission's draft directive on data protection.

Mrs. Rumbold: We have received written representations about the draft directive from press and broadcasting organisations, all concerned about its likely effects on their operations.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recommendations he has received from the Data Protection Registrar on the registration procedures in the Data Protection Act 1984 and the notification scheme proposed in the European Commission draft directive on data protection.

Mrs. Rumbold: In his fifth annual report to Parliament the registrar recommended that registration should be limited to sensitive data. On the draft directive's proposal for notification to supervisory authorities of data about to be communicated, he has recommended that this should be optional for member states which should be free to choose other methods of satisfying the data protection principles.

Greyhounds

Dame Janet Fookes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what representations he has received seeking an investigation into the prevalence of healthy young greyhounds being put down when no longer required for racing purposes;

(2) if he will introduce legislation to ban the export of greyhounds to countries which cannot guarantee their well-being.

Mrs. Rumbold: We have not received any representations about the destruction of young racing greyhounds. The humane killing of animals is not against the law. The Home Office is responsible for the law on domestic animals in England and Wales, but not for the law on the sale or export of animals to EC countries or beyond.

Dame Janet Fookes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to require the greyhound racing organisations to set aside increased sums of money for the welfare of retired greyhounds.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government believe that the welfare of retired greyhounds is ultimately the responsibility of the owners themselves. However, we are now considering the recent report of the Home Affairs Committee on the financing of greyhound racing, which included a recommendation on greyhound welfare, and will publish our response in due course.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* his policies and *(b)* his Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; and if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Home Office continues to place a high priority on helping small firms to obtain business from the various divisions of the Department by improving access and the information necessary to ensure they have opportunities to submit competitive bids. We have continued to distribute our booklet: "Selling to the Home Office" which summarises our purchasing needs and lists contact points for potential suppliers. In addition, we have been represented at several "Meet the Buyer" functions, seminars and conferences including those organised by manufacturers' associations and the Instutition of Purchasing and Supply.

Home Office performance indicators on purchasing continue to be directed toward obtaining better value for the money we spend. We do not differentiate between the size of firms to which contracts are awarded and we cannot, therefore, provide statistical information about the volume of business we place with small firms.

Phone Tapping

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will obtain for his departmental library a copy of the video cassette and transcript of the "World in Action" programme on phone tapping broadcast on 15 July.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: My Department is well aware of the content of that broadcast.

Risley Female Remand Centre

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his plans to close the female remand centre at Risley on a temporary basis; where the prisoners and staff will be housed; when it is planned they will return to Risley; and what numbers of staff and prisoners will be housed at the new establishment.

Mrs. Rumbold: There are no plans to close the female remand centre at Risley, but some reduction in the population will occur later in the year because the electrical and central heating services are not adequate for the winter months.

I will write to the hon. Member when the detailed plans have been completed.

Police Cells, Greater Manchester

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the latest figures for prisoners held in police cells in Greater Manchester; and how he expects those numbers to alter over the next three months.

Mrs. Rumbold: On Friday 19 July there were 237 prisoners in Greater Manchester police cells.

Over the next three months there will be significant increases in accommodation available to the prison service in the north of England. Occupation of part of the new accommodation in Full Sutton prison is in progress and 150 refurbished places in Manchester prison itself should be available next month. As the hon. Member is aware, prison service management is also seeking to bring into use the second Full Sutton wing and 150 places at Acklington. In addition the opening this month of Moorland young offender institution and remand centre will enable management to clear large numbers of young men on remand from local prison accommodation. It is planned to

use places made available in this way to clear prisoners from police cells in the north of England, subject to the resolution of continued difficulties in accommodating some of the young men on remand who must be kept close to the Manchester courts. I hope, therefore, that over the next few months the present use of police cells in the north-west will be substantially reduced.

Airline Passengers (Documents)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has had over the Government's proposals to double fines for airline passengers entering the United Kingdom without valid documents.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On 19 July representations relating to the raising of the charge payable under the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987 had been received from four hon. Members; the International Air Transport Association; the Board of Airline Representatives in the United Kingdom; and 25 individual carriers.

Security Industry

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has concluded his consideration of the report on the self-regulation of the security industry his Department received in July 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I am considering a wide range of options for improving the regulation of the security industry.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Out-of-School Provision

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many children have been catered for in *(a)* after school and *(b)* holiday provisions for each of the last 10 years and in each local authority.

Mr. Fallon: The information requested is not available centrally.

Undergraduates

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what trends have been identified in the numbers of pupils from state schools and private schools going to universities.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The table shows the proportion of school leavers from maintained schools and from independent schools in 1984-85, 1986-87 and 1988-89, whose intended destinations were degree courses at university.

School leavers—England
Percentages of school leavers whose intended destinations were degree courses at university (not including polytechnics)
By school type—1984-85, 1986-87 and 1988-89

	Maintained	*Independent*
1984-85	4·0	27·6
all leavers (000s)	690·99	45·22
1986-87	4·2	24·7
all leavers (000s)	671·20	44·79
1988-89	4·9	27·0
all leavers (000s)	571·02	46·70

Workers Educational Association

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the allocations made to each local education authority to support the activities of the Workers Educational Association under the education support grant programme for *(a)* 1990-91 and *(b)* 1991-92.

Mr. Eggar: The level of expenditure approved for the WEA activity in the education support grants (ESG) programme for *(a)* 1990-91 and *(b)* 1991-92 is shown for each LEA in the table below.

Local Education Authority	*(a) 1990-91 (£)*	*(b) 1991-92 (£)*
Barking	690	800
Barnet	9,445	10,700
Bexley	6,920	8,300
Brent	1,125	1,400
Bromley	6,920	8,300
Croydon	1,210	1,500
Ealing	1,820	2,200
Enfield	1,905	2,300
Haringey	695	700
Harrow	7,555	9,100
Havering	810	1,000
Hillingdon	3,645	4,400
Hounslow	1,125	1,400
Kingston upon Thames	1,905	2,300
Merton	1,210	1,500
Newham	1,125	1,400
Redbridge	2,020	2,200
Richmond upon Thames	3,035	3,600
Sutton	1,125	1,400
Waltham Forest	605	1,000
Camden	17,810	21,400
Greenwich	430	500
Hackney	1,735	2,100
Hammersmith and Fulham	430	500
Islington	430	500
Lambeth	650	800
Lewisham	430	1,700
Southwark	1,515	1,800
Tower Hamlets	865	1,000
Birmingham	9,145	11,300
Coventry	15,695	11,300
Dudley	3,135	3,800
Sandwell	3,135	3,800
Walsall	6,280	7,500
Wolverhampton	5,480	6,600
Knowsley	3,255	3,900
Liverpool	29,340	35,200
St. Helens	3,255	3,900
Sefton	4,070	4,900
Wirral	7,330	8,800
Bolton	9,375	11,300
Bury	1,485	1,800
Manchester	12,550	15,100
Oldham	3,720	4,500
Rochdale	3,500	4,100
Salford	3,060	3,700
Stockport	7,470	9,000
Tameside	3,000	4,000
Trafford	9,625	11,600
Wigan	2,922	3,300
Barnsley	4,450	5,300
Doncaster	3,505	4,200
Rotherham	9,680	11,600
Sheffield	18,455	22,100

Local Education Authority	(a) 1990-91 (£)	(b) 1991-92 (£)
Bradford	6,505	7,800
Calderdale	2,395	2,900
Kirklees	3,990	4,800
Leeds	16,500	19,800
Wakefield	4,070	4,900
Gateshead	3,290	4,000
Newcastle upon Tyne	9,870	11,800
North Tyneside	3,375	4,100
South Tyneside	2,665	3,200
Sunderland	10,615	12,700
Avon	24,345	29,200
Bedfordshire	5,305	6,400
Berkshire	20,025	24,000
Buckinghamshire	21,455	25,700
Cambridgeshire	11,375	13,700
Cheshire	23,405	28,100
Cleveland	11,630	14,000
Cornwall	17,355	20,800
Cumbria	23,925	28,700
Derbyshire	27,753	33,100
Devon	40,500	48,600
Dorset	12,340	14,800
Durham	16,445	19,700
East Sussex	10,835	13,000
Essex	26,980	31,800
Gloucestershire	11,830	14,200
Hampshire	31,000	37,400
Hereford and Worcester	12,555	15,100
Hertfordshire	16,760	20,100
Humberside	18,125	21,800
Isle of Wight	1,075	1,000
Kent	24,500	29,400
Lancashire	21,320	25,600
Leicestershire	19,840	23,800
Lincolnshire	18,845	22,600
Norfolk	10,615	12,700
North Yorkshire	27,580	33,100
Northamptonshire	6,065	7,300
Northumberland	6,545	7,800
Nottinghamshire	40,215	48,300
Oxfordshire	30,040	36,000
Shropshire	6,280	7,500
Somerset	7,610	9,100
Staffordshire	13,340	16,000
Suffolk	12,890	15,400
Surrey	6,340	7,600
Warwickshire	5,180	6,200
West Sussex	18,665	22,400
Wiltshire	19,720	23,600

Economic and Social Research Council

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the Economic and Social Research Council to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 14 October to Friday 18 October.

Speech Therapy

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will issue formal guidance to local education authorities on the implication of the recent Appeal Court judgment concerning local education authorities' duties to provide speech therapy for pupils with statements of special education needs; and what plans he has to ensure that the implications of this judgment are known to parents and relevant voluntary organisations.

Mr. Fallon: The Department intends to issue for consultation a draft addendum to DES circular 22/89 on assessment and statement procedures shortly. DES circulars offer advice and guidance to local education authorities. They are also sent to relevant voluntary organisations some of which represent and advise parents. In addition, local education authorities and the Department would be expected to advise parents, as necessary, as individual cases arise.

Standard Assessment Tasks

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether results of the 1991 assessments of seven-year-olds will be collated in such a way that it will be possible to identify the class size and the age mix of classes with their results; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to him on 19 July 1991 at column *302-3*.

Mr. David Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from school governors concerning the conduct of standard assessment tests for seven-year-olds; and what measurements he has made of the effectiveness and value of these tests in relation to the time spent on them by teachings

Mr. Eggar: An extensive evaluation of the first national tests for seven-year-olds in English, mathematics and science is now taking place. The School Examinations and Assessment Council is gathering a range of qualitative and quantitiative information about the performance of the tests and Her Majesty's inspectorate have held a series of regional conferences to get reactions direct from teachers. The Department has also received a number of letters and reports from schools and governors, which will be taken into account as part of the evaluation.

The Government will come to a final view about the effectiveness of the 1991 tests and about the nature and coverage of the 1992 tests when the full evidence of this evaluation work is available in the autumn.

Student Awards, Tower Hamlets

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students in Tower Hamlets received *(a)* discretionary awards and *(b)* mandatory awards for each year since 1979.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Data in the form requested are not available for Tower Hamlets, which formed part of the Inner London education authority until 31 March 1990.

GCSE

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list by education authority in London, in rank order, the percentage of all pupils gaining *(a)* one GCSE certificates of grade A to C, *(b)* two, *(c)* three, *(d)* four, *(e)* five, *(f)* six, *(g)* 7-10 and *(h)* 11 and above in 1990.

Mr. Eggar: This information is not available in the form requested.

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in rank order the English local education authorities, showing for the most recent year available, and the national averages *(a)* the proportion of pupils of maintained schools obtaining five or more GCSEs at grades A to C and *(b)* the proportion of such pupils obtaining grade A to C in GCSE in English, mathematics and a modern language.

Mr. Eggar: The table shows for each English local education authority the proportion of school leavers from maintained schools gaining five or more grades A to C in GCSE, O-level or grade 1 CSE, and the proportion of those gaining grade A to C in English, mathematics or a modern language, and also the rank order.

Maintained school leavers in England
Aggregated over 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89

Local education authority	*Percentage of leavers with 5 grades A-C*	*Rank*	*Percentage of leavers gaining 5+ grades A-C GCSE/O-level/CSE gaining 1 or more pass at grade A-C in the subject shown* Mod Lang	*Rank*	*Mathematics*	*Rank*	*English*	*Rank*
Barking	11·3	95	35·4	94	83·7	71	87·1	96
Barnet	38·9	2	58·6	8	92·8	1	94·0	81
Bexley	28·5	28	46·5	62	84·5	65	96·7	31
Brent	20·6	78	46·9	57	84·6	61	97·2	20
Bromley	29·9	20	53·2	26	84·7	59	97·2	17
Croydon	22·1	70	53·0	28	83·6	72	95·0	64
Ealing	22·5	67	41·1	84	86·3	36	90·9	95
Enfield	26·9	41	55·8	19	90·3	4	93·4	88
Haringey	16·6	89	45·6	67	82·8	78	94·5	74
Harrow	38·6	3	42·7	81	85·8	43	98·7	2
Havering	24·4	57	44·1	72	87·4	22	96·9	26
Hillingdon	22·7	65	46·6	59	86·7	32	93·9	83
Hounslow	25·2	50	47·6	53	78·7	95	95·0	67
Kingston upon Thames	32·2	10	58·8	6	85·3	47	96·1	42
Merton	24·6	55	53·0	29	90·1	5	95·0	65
Newham	14·9	93	29·7	96	79·7	92	91·4	94
Redbridge	25·5	48	47·8	52	84·9	56	92·4	91
Richmond upon Thames	32·4	8	60·9	5	85·7	44	96·0	44
Sutton	39·1	1	66·8	3	90·3	3	97·1	21
Waltham Forest	12·7	94	38·0	93	75·2	96	97·0	23
Birmingham	19·1	85	49·3	46	83·4	76	95·8	51
Coventry	21·2	76	43·7	75	81·3	87	95·9	47
Dudley	25·5	47	52·6	30	81·1	88	95·9	45
Sandwell	15·5	92	38·6	89	81·6	86	96·9	25
Solihull	31·7	12	58·3	9	86·8	29	97·1	22
Walsall	23·4	61	51·2	39	80·2	89	95·9	48
Wolverhampton	19·9	81	47·9	51	82·1	82	94·8	69
Knowsley	8·5	96	38·3	92	79·7	93	93·9	82
Liverpool	19·4	84	46·7	58	79·6	94	95·8	49
St. Helens	20·5	79	57·5	12	89·7	7	98·8	1
Sefton	28·5	27	51·1	40	83·5	73	97·3	13
Wirral	27·8	32	56·6	16	85·3	46	97·4	11
Bolton	28·7	24	51·5	37	86·6	33	95·2	61
Bury	27·7	34	42·8	79	89·2	11	93·4	90
Manchester	16·4	90	45·3	69	84·8	58	93·7	85
Oldham	18·1	86	55·7	20	89·2	12	97·5	9
Rochdale	20·9	77	39·4	88	87·5	21	94·5	75
Salford	23·2	62	46·4	64	81·8	85	96·2	37
Stockport	28·6	25	51·5	36	85·2	50	98·3	3
Tameside	27·1	40	45·4	68	86·0	39	97·6	6
Trafford	30·7	16	70·0	1	92·1	2	95·8	52
Wigan	30·2	18	55·2	21	83·4	75	97·3	14
Barnsley	19·7	82	45·0	70	88·4	17	93·5	87
Doncaster	21·7	73	43·0	78	87·4	23	95·3	59
Rotherham	23·0	63	53·1	27	87·1	26	94·7	71
Sheffield	22·2	69	50·0	42	82·5	80	96·1	39
Bradford	16·9	88	50·5	41	86·8	30	97·5	8
Calderdale	21·5	75	54·4	23	82·1	83	97·5	7
Kirklees	25·6	46	58·1	11	85·9	40	96·9	24
Leeds	22·0	71	51·6	35	86·0	38	95·4	57
Wakefield	17·5	87	52·3	32	84·5	63	95·9	46
Gateshead	20·4	80	38·6	90	83·9	69	95·3	58
Newcastle upon Tyne	21·6	74	48·3	50	79·9	91	92·1	92
North Tyneside	27·5	36	41·9	83	82·0	84	97·9	5
South Tyneside	22·2	68	49·0	47	88·8	14	96·2	38
Sunderland	21·8	72	38·5	91	80·1	90	94·2	78
Inner London	15·9	91	43·2	77	82·3	81	94·2	80
Avon	27·8	31	49·7	43	84·7	60	97·2	19
Bedfordshire	24·9	53	46·4	63	83·0	77	95·5	54
Berkshire	32·3	9	56·2	17	89·5	8	96·4	34
Buckinghamshire	36·0	5	67·8	2	90·1	6	97·9	4

Local education authority	Percentage of leavers with 5+ grades A-C	Rank	Percentage of leavers gaining 5+ grades A-C GCSE/O-level/CSE gaining 1 or more pass at grade A-C in the subject shown: Mod Lang	Rank	Mathematics	Rank	English	Rank
Cambridgeshire	28·0	30	57·1	14	84·4	67	95·8	50
Cheshire	29·1	23	54·4	22	85·0	53	96·1	40
Cleveland	26·5	43	44·1	73	88·3	18	95·1	63
Cornwall including Isles of Scilly	30·0	19	43·8	74	85·3	48	97·3	12
Cumbria	28·0	29	46·6	61	88·3	19	93·5	86
Derbyshire	24·6	54	45·6	66	86·3	35	96·1	41
Devon	26·3	44	44·2	71	84·5	64	95·5	55
Dorset	27·6	35	57·1	13	85·0	55	96·8	28
Durham	23·4	60	41·0	85	85·9	41	96·7	30
East Sussex	31·4	13	45·8	65	85·2	49	97·2	15
Essex	27·4	37	53·9	25	89·0	13	96·2	36
Gloucestershire	31·2	14	55·8	18	86·5	34	94·9	68
Hampshire	29·6	21	48·5	48	88·7	15	94·6	73
Hereford and Worcester	29·2	22	48·4	49	83·5	74	95·3	60
Hertfordshire	31·9	11	58·2	10	87·1	28	96·8	29
Humberside	22·6	66	52·1	33	86·1	37	94·2	79
Isle of Wight	19·5	83	34·2	95	84·4	66	93·4	89
Kent	27·3	38	58·6	7	89·4	10	97·2	16
Lancashire	26·8	42	52·0	34	84·9	57	95·0	66
Leicestershire	25·1	51	39·6	87	87·3	25	96·8	27
Lincolnshire	25·2	49	57·0	15	88·5	16	97·5	10
Norfolk	24·5	56	47·5	54	89·4	9	94·3	76
North Yorkshire	34·5	7	61·9	4	87·8	20	95·7	53
Northamptonshire	22·8	64	42·7	80	83·9	70	96·2	35
Northumberland	30·7	15	42·4	82	87·1	27	95·2	62
Nottinghamshire	23·4	59	43·7	76	86·8	31	96·6	33
Oxfordshire	27·7	33	49·5	44	84·3	68	93·7	84
Shropshire	30·3	17	51·5	38	85·0	54	94·6	72
Somerset	27·1	39	47·4	55	85·8	42	91·9	93
Staffordshire	24·9	52	47·4	56	85·0	52	94·8	70
Suffolk	24·2	58	41·0	86	85·1	51	94·3	77
Surrey	38·0	4	46·6	60	84·6	62	97·2	18
Warwickshire	28·5	26	54·0	24	87·3	24	96·7	32
West Sussex	35·5	6	52·4	31	85·4	45	96·1	43
Wiltshire	25·9	45	49·4	45	82·7	79	95·4	56
All England	25·8		50·3		85·9		95·8	

East London TEC

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the percentage of English school leavers within the area covered by the East London TEC.

Mr. Fallon: The information is not available in the form requested.

Compulsory Courses

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the provision in secondary schools and sixth form colleges of compulsory courses on the effects of leaving home to go into further education.

Mr. Fallon: Section 1 of the Education Reform Act 1988 requires that the curriculum of every maintained school shall prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. It is for individual schools to decide how this requirement should be fulfilled.

Reading Standards

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science which body is now responsible for quantifying changes in reading standards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The national curriculum sets clear national targets for reading and provides for pupils' progress in relation to those targets to be tested at the ages of 7, 11, 14 and 16. The School Examinations and Assessment Council is responsible for advising the Government on the testing arrangments and, as a function of that, will be monitoring and evaluating the results. In order to undertake this latter aspect of its work, the School Examinations and Assessment Council has taken over the Department's former assessment and performance unit which now forms the council's evaluation and monitoring unit. My right hon. and learned Friend has also asked Her Majesty's inspectorate to continue to monitor reading standards and to provide regular reports.

Expenditure

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of Britain's gross domestic product is spent on education.

Mr. Eggar: Gross domestic product is calculated on a United Kingdom basis. Provisional outturn data indicate that central Government and local authority expenditure in the United Kingdom on education and science in 1990-91 was 4·9 per cent. of the gross domestic product for that year.

Source: Cm. 1520 Public Expenditure Analyses to 1993-94, tables 2.1 and 2.2.

Smoking

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards education on the dangers of smoking for children in primary and secondary schools.

Mr. Fallon: The statutory order for national curriculum science requires that primary school pupils should know that tobacco is a harmful substance, and that its avoidance contributes to good health; and that secondary school pupils should consider its effects on the human body. The National Curriculum Council's guidance on health education advises that both primary and secondary school pupils should study topics relating to the dangers of smoking.

Hospital Education

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what guidelines nationally cover provision of education in hospitals for children; and what monitoring of the service takes place.

Mr. Fallon: It is for LEAs to decide on the type of educational provision to be made for children in hospital and to monitor the services which they provide. At the national level, Her Majesty's inspectorate's reviews include hospital and home education services.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* his policies and *(b)* his Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; and if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring.

Mr. Eggar: The Government continue to place high priority on helping small businesses, through improvements to the business climate, through deregulation and other measures and through specific programmes of support and assistance. Consonant with this, the Department operates a policy of including small firms on tender lists where appropriate. In 1990-91 it is estimated that about 35 per cent. of the Department's orders were placed with small firms: of the estimated £15·9 million which the Department spent on goods and services, some £4 million benefited small firms. Comparable estimates for last year are £11·5 million and £4·2 million. The Department is developing mechanisms to monitor more closely the proportion of its orders placed with small businesses.

Seven-year-olds (Assessment)

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department has commissioned any public opinion research on parental attitudes to assessment of seven-year-olds.

Mr. Eggar: The Department has commissioned market research into the format for reporting the progress of five to 14-year-olds to their parents which was issued to all schools earlier in the year. The School Examinations and Assessment Council (SEAC) has also, at Ministers' request, commissioned market research into the reporting to parents of the results of the pilot tests for 14-year-olds deployed in a sample of secondary schools this summer.

Leeds General Hospital

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the staffing complement of the hospital teaching service at Leeds general infirmary in *(a)* 1988, *(b)* 1989, *(c)* 1990 and *(d)* 1991; and what is the proposed staffing complement in 1992.

Mr. Fallon: This information is not collected centrally.

Arnewood School, Hampshire

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions he held with parents of children at Arnewood school, Hampshire prior to his visit to the school.

Mr. Eggar: None.

Free School Meals

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish figures showing the number and proportion of children receiving free school meals in 1989 and 1990 as a percentage of the numbers of children in attendance.

Mr. Fallon: The number of children in maintained schools in England receiving free school meals on the census date in January 1989 and 1990 were 781,362 and 764,641 respectively. The figures represent 11 per cent. of the total pupils on roll for each year.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish the latest figures for the number and proportion of children who are in families on supplementary benefit/income support who are not taking up their entitlement to free school meals.

Mr. Fallon: Pupils are entitled to free school meals only if they or their families are in receipt of income support, not supplementary benefit. In May 1990, the latest date for which figures are available, 1,010,815 children aged between five and 16 were in families in England who received income support. The take-up of free school meals in English schools on the census date in January 1990 was 764,641.

School Premises (Political Events)

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what guidance his Department has issued to local education authorities and grant-maintained schools on the use of school premises for party political events; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: None. Under the Education Acts, responsibility for the conduct of schools and the use of their premises lies with school governing bodies. At elections, candidates have the use of school buildings for meetings, free of charge and at reasonable times, under the Representation of the People Act 1983.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Police Inquiries

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Attorney-General (1) if he will make a statement on the role of the Crown prosecution service and the Director of Public Prosecutions in determining whether the evidence in any particular case is such as to justify the institution of police inquiries;

(2) if he will make a statement on the role of the Crown prosecution service and the Director of Public Prosecutions in advising the Metropolitan police on whether evidence in particular cases justifies the institution of police inquiries; and what formal powers are exercised in such circumstances.

The Attorney-General: The duties of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Crown prosecution service, of which the Director is head, are set out in section 3(2) of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985. Section 3(2)(e) of the Act states that it shall be the duty of the Director to give, to such extent as he considers appropriate, advice to police forces on all matters relating to criminal offences.

In deciding whether the evidence in any particular case is such as to lead the Director or the service to advise the police that inquiries would be justified, the Director and the service may take a number of factors into account. One of these factors would be the likelihood of such inquiries disclosing sufficient evidence to justify the institution of criminal proceedings. In determining whether the evidence in any particular case is sufficient to justify the institution of criminal proceedings the Director and the service will apply the criteria set out in the code for Crown prosecutors issued pursuant to section 10 of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985.

Mr. Tam Dalyell: To ask the Attorney-General what discretion the Metropolitan police have to disregard the advice of the Director of Public Prosecutions or Crown prosecution service that the evidence in a particular case is not such as to justify the institution of police inquiries.

The Attorney-General: Neither the Director of Public Prosecutions nor the Crown prosecution service has any responsibility for, or operational control over, any police force. It is a matter for the chief officer of police to decide whether the evidence in any particular case is such as to justify police inquiries. In reaching that decision the chief officer will no doubt take into account any advice that the Director or service may offer, but the chief officer is not obliged to accept it or follow it.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Attorney-General (1) in how many cases since 1 January the Director of Public Prosecutions has advised the Metropolitan police that the evidence in a particular case is not such as to justify the institution of police inquiries;

(2) in how many cases since 21 September 1990 the Metropolitan police have sought the view of the Director of Public Preosecutions or Crown prosecution service on whether the evidence in a particular case justifies the institution of police inquiries.

The Attorney-General: The information requested is not collated in records maintained by the Director of Public Prosecutions or Crown prosecution service and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* his policies and *(b)* his Department and the Lord Chancellor's Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; and if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring.

The Attorney-General: The Government continue to place a high priority on helping small businesses through improvements to the business climate, through deregulation and other measures and through specific programmes of support and assistance.

The Departments for which I am responsible are the legal secretariat to the Law Officers, the Treasury Solicitor's department, the Crown prosecution service and the Serious Fraud Office. The services provided by the first two are largely internal to government. The functions of the Crown prosecution service and the Serious Fraud Office relate purely to the criminal justice system. While both organisations are aware of the serious consequences caused by some criminal offences when perpetrated against small businesses, decisions to prosecute are taken in accordance with the evidential sufficiency and public interest criteria laid down in the code for Crown prosecutors. The provisions of the code do not specify classes of victim, and accordingly do not distinguish between small businesses and other victims.

As regards purchasing, all the Departments for which I am responsible have regard to the desirability of encouraging small businesses in line with the policy of the Government as a whole.

The Lord Chancellor's programme of reforms to streamline procedures in the civil courts will benefit all litigants, including small businesses. For example, higher value claims can now be brought in a county court following the removal, on 1 July this year, of the financial limits to the county courts' general jurisdiction. From the same date, the level at which defended claims are automatically referred to the informal small claims arbitration procedure has been lifted from £500 to £1,000. The effect of these changes on the number of cases brought in the county courts will be monitored, but no separate statistics are kept in relation to small businesses.

In its purchasing activities the Lord Chancellor's Department continues to encourage the use of small businesses as suppliers. The Department recognises that the prompt payment of bills is a matter of concern to small businesses and has agreed to participate in an interdepartmental exercise to help monitor payment performance generally. The Department's estimated total expenditure with small businesses in 1990-91 was £16 million, as against £14 million in 1989.

Select Committee on Trade and Industry

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Attorney-General what action he has taken on the papers sent to him by members of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry relating to the alleged harassment of members of that Committee; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The question of what action may be appropriate in response to the matter to which my hon. Friend refers is at present under consideration.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Written Answers

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many parliamentary questions for written answer have been answered by his Department so far in the current Session, and in the comparable period for the last Session; and if he will publish a table of how many answers *(a)* do not give the information requested because of (i) disproportionate cost or (ii) other reasons, *(b)* give an undertaking to write to the hon. Member who asked the question and *(c)* were referred for answer to the chief executive of a next steps agency.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is a matter of public record.

VAT

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many businesses *(a)* registered for VAT and *(b)* deregistered for VAT in Tower Hamlets giving the reasons for deregistration if known, for each year since 1979.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The table gives figures for VAT registrations and deregistrations for the Stratford local VAT office. The local VAT office at Stratford covers areas in addition to Tower Hamlets, but a more detailed breakdown is not available. No distinction is made between businesses registering for the first time and other registrations, for example a sole proprietor taking on a partner on forming a limited company.

Years end December	*New registrations*	*Deregistrations*
1980	1,560	1,521
1981	1,467	990
1982	1,825	1,910
1983	2,023	1,849
1984	2,137	1,877
1985	2,232	1,946
1986	2,455	2,349
1987	2,458	2,118
1988	2,496	2,150
1989	3,000	2,370
1990	2,216	1,774

Government Staff

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the number of staff in post in central Government Departments at 1 April.

Mr. Mellor: On 1 April 1991 there were 553,863 staff in post in central Government. Of those, 490,041 were non-industrials and 63,822 were classified as being in industrial work.

Income Tax

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish the changes in the rates of income tax for each year for which the information is readily available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The changes in the main rate of income tax since 1900 are shown in the table. The table does not show the various reduced rates of tax which applied nor any difference between the rate of tax on earned and unearned income.

Rates of income tax, 1900 onwards

Government	*Party*		*Rate of tax*
1900 to December 1905	Conservative	1900	1s 0d Uniform rate
		1901	1s 2d Uniform rate
		1902	1s 3d Uniform rate
		1903	0s 11d Uniform rate
		1904 to 1905	1s 0d Uniform rate
December 1905 to May 1915	Liberal	1906	1s 0d Uniform rate
		1907 to 1908	1s 0d Standard rate
		1909 to 1913	1s 2d Standard rate
		1914	1s 8d Standard rate
		1915	3s 0d Standard rate
May 1915 to October 1922	Coalition	1916 to 1917	5s 0d Standard rate
		1918 to 1919	6s 0d Standard rate
		1920-21 to 1921-22	6s 0d Standard rate, (30%)
		1922-23	5s 0d Standard rate, (25%)
October 1922 to January 1924	Conservative	1923-24	4s 6d Standard rate, (22·5%)
January 1924 to November 1924	Labour	1924-25	4s 6d Standard rate, (22·5%)
November 1924 to June 1929	Conservative	1925-26 to 1927-28	4s 0d Standard rate, (20%)
		1928-29	4s 0d Standard rate, (20%)
		1929-30	4s 0d Standard rate, (20%)
June 1929 to August 1931	Labour	1930-31	4s 6d Standard rate, (22·5%)
		1931-32	5s 0d Standard rate, (25%)

Government	*Party*		*Rate of tax*	
August 1931 to May 1940	National	1932-33 to 1933-34	5s 0d Standard rate,	(25%)
		1934-35 to 1935-36	4s 6d Standard rate,	(22·5%)
		1936-37	4s 9d Standard rate,	(23·75%)
		1937-38	5s 0d Standard rate,	(25%)
		1938-39	5s 6d Standard rate,	(27·5%)
		1939-40	7s 0d Standard rate,	(35%)
		1940-41	8s 6d Standard rate,	(42·5%)
May 1940 to May 1945	Coalition	1941-42 to 1945-46	10s 0d Standard rate,	(50%)
May 1945 to July 1945	Conservative	—	—	
July 1945 to October 1951	Labour	1946-47 to 1950-51	9s 0d Standard rate,	(45%)
		1951-52	9s 6d Standard rate,	(47·5%)
October 1951 to October 1964	Conservative	1952-53	9s 6d Standard rate,	(47·5%)
		1953-54 to 1954-55	9s 0d Standard rate,	(45%)
		1955-56 to 1958-59	8s 6d Standard rate,	(42·5%)
		1959-60 to 1964-65	7s 9d Standard rate,	(38·75%)
October 1964 to June 1970	Labour	1965-66 to 1969-70	8s 3d Standard rate,	(41·25%)
		1970-71	41·25%, Standard rate	
June 1970 to March 1974	Conservative	1971-72 to 1972-73	38·75%, Standard rate	
		1973-74	30%, Basic rate	
March 1974 to May 1979	Labour	1974-75	33%, Basic rate	
		1975-76 to 1976-77	35%, Basic rate	
		1977-78	34%, Basic rate	
		1978-79	33%, Basic rate	
May 1979 to	Conservative	1979-80 to 1985-86	30%, Basic rate	
		1986-87	29%, Basic rate	
		1987-88	27%, Basic rate	
		1988-89 to	25%, Basic rate	

Civil Service Relocation

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many civil service jobs have been relocated from London in the past five years; and how many he estimates will be so relocated in the next five years.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Comprehensive data for the period prior to 1988 are not held centrally. However, posts relocated or located outside London totalled over 11,000 over the past five years; and over the next five years, a further 20,000 posts will follow.

Civil Servants (Salary Advances)

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement about the arrangements for making advances of salary available to civil servants for travel.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Civil servants may receive an advance of salary to purchase a season ticket for public transport. It is proposed to extend this scheme in two ways. Departments will be able to offer junior civil servants advances of salary to purchase season tickets for car parking and advances of salary of up to £100 to assist civil servants in the purchase of a bicycle for home to office travel.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement about the arrangements for making advances of salary available to civil servants, both for house purchase and for travel to the office.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: When civil servants move in the public interest, they may be eligible for an advance of salary to assist with the purchase of a property at the new station. The current maximum advance payable is six months' pay, repayable over 12 years.

The arrangements have recently been reviewed for civil servants whose bridging loans exceed the selling price of their property as a result of changes in the housing market. In these exceptional cases, it is proposed that the maximum advance should be 12 months' pay, repayable over a maximum of 15 years.

On the question of travel, I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave today to my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes).

VAT

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what grounds VAT was imposed on fuel and energy from 1 July 1990; and in what circumstances it is imposed.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 19 July 1991]:* The standard rate of value added tax was applied to fuel and power for non-domestic use from 1 July 1990. This followed a judgment of the European Court of Justice in 1988 that zero rating by the United Kingdom of fuel and power other than to final consumers was contrary to European Community law. Fuel and power for domestic use, and also for use by a charity for its non-business activities, remains zero-rated.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the dates on which he has discussed the trading position or other matters relating to BCCI with Governors of the Bank of England in the past two years.

Mr. Maples *[holding answer 17 July 1991]:* My right hon. Friend has discussed a number of supervisory cases, including BCCI, with the Governor of the Bank of England on a number of occasions since becoming Chancellor; but was not aware that fraud had been uncovered until 26 June.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he was first informed by the banking authorities of their doubts concerning BCCI.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 17 July 1991]:* I was informed in very general terms that fraud had been uncovered on 26 June. I was given the gist of the section 41 report on 28 June.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what meetings he, or his predecessors, have had with executives or directors of BCCI in the last five years.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 17 July 1991]:* Neither I nor any of my predecessors have, so far as I am aware, had any meetings with executives or directors of the BCCI in the last five years in an official capacity.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will establish an independent inquiry into the closure at the Bank of Credit and Commerce International, including the role of the Bank of England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maples *[holding answer 18 July 1991]:* I refer the hon. Member to the statements made by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor last Friday, *Official Report*, columns 715-16, and by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister today.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the major shareholders of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International were informed of the closure of the bank by the Bank of England.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 18 July 1991]:* The main supervisory authorities concerned met the official representative of the major shareholder of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International on the morning of 5 July, and informed him then of the action they proposed to take.

Bank of England (Authorised Institutions)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what role his officials play in drawing-up the Bank of England's list of authorised institutions under the Banking Act 1987.

Mr. Maples *[holding answer 17 July 1991]:* The Treasury plays no role in drawing up the list of authorised institutions.

Pensions

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentages of national income were spent in *(a)* 1975, *(b)* 1980 and *(c)* 1985 and the latest available date on (i) national insurance retirement pensions, (ii) supplementary pensions/income support for the elderly, (iii) public sector occupational pensions in payment and (iv) private sector occupational pensions in payment.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The latest estimates are given in the table; 1989 is the most recent year for which estimates are available for all the items.

	As percentages of national income			
	1975	*1980*	*1985*	*1989*
National insurance retirement pensions	5·3	5·9	6·1	5·3
Supplementary pensions/ income support for the elderly	0·5	0·5	0·5	0·5
Public sector occupational pensions in payment	1·8	2·5	2·9	2·8
Private sector occupational pensions in payment, including payments under life assurance policies	3·0	2·8	4·6	5·5

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South Africa

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he discussed nuclear matters during his recent visit to South Africa.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Yes. During my right hon. Friend's discussions, the recent decision by South Africa to accede to the non-proliferation treaty was raised. He made clear our warm welcome for this step.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy in respect of the accession by the Government of South Africa to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We warmly welcome South Africa's recent accession to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. This important step will serve to strengthen the treaty which is a pillar of our hopes for peace and security, both in southern Africa and internationally. We hope that South Africa's accession will set an example to all states which have yet to accede to the treaty.

Iraq

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has regarding the possession and use by Iraq of calutrons to enrich uranium.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Two inspection teams from the International Atomic Energy Agency, acting under the authority of United Nations Security Council resolution 687, visited Iraq between 15 and 21 May and 22 June and 3 July. A third inspection has just been completed.

On 17 July the IAEA submitted to the Security Council a consolidated report No. S/22788 dated 15 July 1991 providing details of the first two inspections relating to Iraq's nuclear capabilities. A copy of this report will be placed in the Library of the House.

Information from the third inspection visit is not yet available. It will be for the IAEA to decide how it treats any findings.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his policy on securing Iraqi compliance with Security Council resolution 687.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Security Council resolution 687 sets out Iraq's obligations in detail. We shall continue to work to secure Iraq's compliance in full with the terms of the resolution.

Southern Afria

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will discuss with each of those Southern African front-line states which are not already members the question of their accession to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As a depository state of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty—NPT—it is our policy to take every suitable opportunity both to raise the importance of nuclear non-proliferation with all non-parties to the NPT and to lobby them to accede to the NPT as soon as possible.

Soviet Union

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Soviet Government about their failure to grant an exit visa to Yefin and Lilya Rokhvarg, Faina and Ilya Rayerg and Alexander Perliy all of Leningrad and Yakov Orlov of Perm.

Mr. Douglas Hogg We understand that Yefin and Lilya Rokhvarg have now received permission to leave the Soviet Union. We can certainly raise with the Soviet authorities the cases of Faina and Ilya Rayerg, Alexander Perliy and Yakov Orlov, but in order to make our representations most effective we shall need further details.

A list of those refusenik cases previously raised with us was brought to the attention of the Soviet authorities during President Gorbachev's visit last week.

Baltic States

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those bilateral and collective agreements made by Her Majesty's Government in respect of the Baltic states before 1941; which are currently operative; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A large number of bilateral treaties and agreements were signed by Her Majesty's Government and the Baltic governments before 1941. These included agreements with all three Baltic states on the extradition of fugitive criminals, on legal procedures and on commerce. Because we recognise de facto, although not de jure, the incorporation of the Baltic states into the Soviet Union, none of these pre-1941 agreements is currently operative.

Yugoslavia

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise at the United Nations the need during the current unrest in Yugoslavia to safeguard nuclear power stations from attack; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Countries that operate civil nuclear power programmes are responsible for ensuring the safety of plants. The restoration of peace in Yugoslavia would be the best guarantee of the safety of its nuclear power plants. The plan agreed between the European Community troika and Yugoslav representatives at Brioni on 8 July offers a basis upon which negotiations for a peaceful resolution of the Yugoslav crisis can restart.

United Nations Security Council

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the special meeting of the five permanent member states of the United Nations Security Council in Paris on 8 July.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Representatives of the permanent five, as the world's leading arms exporters, met to discuss ways of promoting greater responsibility in conventional arms transfers and preventing proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. They agreed to work together to develop guidelines for restraint in arms transfers, and to set up a mechanism for continued consultation and exchange of information on these issues. They also agreed to support our proposal for a United Nations arms transfer register. This work will be taken forward at further meetings in London in the autumn.

Syria

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's current assessment of Syria's contacts with or involvement in international terrorism; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: At the time of our resumption of diplomatic relations with Syria in November 1990, we received credible assurances from the Syrian Government on their attitude towards international terrorism. We have no evidence that the Syrian Government have changed their attitude.

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his reasons for proposing to the Foreign Affairs Council and the European Commission that the arms embargo on Syria should be lifted.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I did not make any such proposal. What I said was that should our EC partners decide that the EC arms embargo be lifted we would not, now that our relations with Syria have been restored, raise any objection.

Palestinians

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement on Her Majesty's Government's support for the Palestinian people who live in the occupied territories.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: All British bilateral aid to the Palestinian people in the occupied territories is dispersed through United Kingdom non-governmental organisations under the supplementary programme to the occupied territories—SPOT. Projects currently being undertaken are:

	Grants given £	
Appropriate Health Resources and Technologies Action Group (AHRTAG)		
1. Production of health education materials	55,887	(1990-92)
2. Women's development	52,073	(1990-93)
Christian Aid		

	Grants given £	
1. Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee Fodder	3,300	(1991)
Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP)		
1. Paediatric Nurses training	42,250	(1990-91)
2. Upgrading skills of staff for children with learning difficulties	15,900	(1991)
3. Intensive Care Nursing	33,500	(1991)
Oxfam		
1. Gaza blood bank project	78,715	(1989-92)
2. Water reclamation development project	113,670	(1989-92)
Quaker Peace and Service		
1. Training women as health workers in village clinics	7,197	(1990-91)
Save The Children Fund		
1. Physiotherapy training	97,300	(1988-91)
2. Revolving loan fund for small farmers and business	240,000	(1990-91)
3. Provision of kindergarten in Nablus refugee camp	42,000	(1991-93)
4. Care of disabled children	18,000	(1991-93)
5. Assistance to women's self-help activities	45,000	(1991-93)
United Nations Association International Service (UNAIS)		
1. Women's Co-operatives development worker	20,744	(1988-91)
2. Business administrative project	20,328	(1990-92)
3. Seed propagation botanist	20,328	(1990-92)
4. Food technology project	20,328	(1990-92)
5. Development research project	20,328	(1990-92)
Universities Educational Fund for Palestinian Refugees (UNIFAL)		
1. Physiotherapy training at Bethlehem University	9,400	(1989-92)
Y Care International (YMCA)		
1. Rehabilitation programme for these injured by Intifada	150,000	(1991-93)

There is also an ODA contribution of £6 million via the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for 1991-92 and a contribution of approximately 19 mecu to the European Community's total aid to the occupied territories for 1991.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* his policies and *(b)* his Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; and if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievments and the statistical results of such monitoring.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Government continue to place a high priority on helping small businesses, through improvements to the business climate, through deregulation and other measures and through specific programmes of support and assistance.

During 1990-91, both wings of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office continued to place a considerable part of their business with small firms. In the diplomatic wing, the value of this business over the last three years was:

	£ million	*Percentage of expenditure*
1988-89	16·3	15·9
1989-90	32·8	22·5
1990-91	33·9	23·8

The ODA uses procurement agencies to undertake purchasing and supply on behalf of recipient Governments in developing countries. Its register of agents includes several small businesses. The ODA also encourages small firms to compete for aid-financed consultancy contracts overseas.

In the diplomatic wing, the director of purchasing provides information and guidance to purchasing departments about buying from small firms. He ensures that, whenever possible, small firms are included in invitations to tender and that they are awarded contracts if their offer is the best on a value-for-money basis.

Diplomatic service posts overseas provide a range of export promotion services to British firms. In line with the British Overseas Trade Board's forward plan, particular emphasis is placed on supporting small and medium-sized firms in the development of their export business. Performance indicators for the use of these services do not indicate company size.

Expo 92

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has a policy of excluding any exhibit from Gibraltar, irrespective of its merits, from Expo 92 in Seville.

Mr. Garel-Jones: No, but I would refer the hon. Member to my answers to previous questions.

G7 Summit

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the conclusions of the G7 summit on conventional arms transfers and nuclear, biological and chemical proliferation.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The summit declaration on conventional arms transfers and non-proliferation is aimed at encouraging greater responsibility in the international arms trade. The declaration sets out three principles governing arms sales: transparency, consultation and action. The summit strongly supported our initiative on a UN register of arms transfers. The non-proliferation section of the declaration contains a number of important steps forward, notably a commitment to give immediate consideration to imposing severe measures against any state that is shown to have used chemical or biological weapons.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the conclusions drawn by the G7 summit on Iraqi aggression and the ensuing Gulf war.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The political and arms control declarations issued by the summit draw the necessary lessons from the Gulf war. The G7 agreed to maintain sanctions against Iraq until all the relevant resolutions of the Security Council have been implemented in full and the people of Iraq, as well as their neighbours, can live without

fear of intimidation, repression or attack. The summit agreed that the Iraqi people deserve the opportunity to choose their leadership openly and democratically. Preventive diplomacy to help avert future conflicts by making clear to potential aggressors the consequences of their actions will also be a top priority.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) when he was first informed that the Bank of England had doubts about the operation of BCCI;

(2) when he was first informed of the allegations of fraud at BCCI.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My right hon. Friend first heard of the doubts about the operation of BCCI arising from the report commissioned under section 41 of the Banking Act 1987 on 3 July.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations his Department had with the Governor of the Bank of England about his visit to Abu Dhabi to meet officials concerning the BCCI issue.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As is often the case when he makes an overseas trip, the Governor was in touch with the FCO before he left for Abu Dhabi.

Sheikh of Abu Dhabi

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the Sheikh of Abu Dhabi.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend had the pleasure of meeting the ruler of Abu Dhabi, who is also President of the United Arab Emirates, during his visit there on 12 and 13 January.

China

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his policy on co-operation with China in opposing Iraqi aggression and other regional issues.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, China has played a full part in discussions at the UN on the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions and measures to ensure Iraqi compliance. We shall remain in close touch with the Chinese over the need to ensure that Iraq meets its obligations and over other topical regional issues.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

South Africa

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the South African Government on issues of land return and reform.

Mrs. Chalker: We have often discussed land reform with the South African Government. The Land Acts of 1913 and 1936 were repealed on 27 June this year and we understand that the South African Government are consulting various parties about the consequences through their advisory commission on land allocation.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response he received from the Government of South Africa in his discussions with them on organised violence and on the protection of all citizens.

Mrs. Chalker: President de Klerk confirmed that the South African Government would shortly establish a standing judicial commission on violence. He also reaffirmed both his own determination to do all in his power to reduce the violence and his support for efforts which other parties are making to the same end.

Palestinians

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list aid projects currently being undertaken to help Palestinian people in the occupied territories.

Mrs. Chalker: All British bilateral aid to the Palestinian people in the occupied territories is disbursed through United Kingdom non-governmental organisations under the supplementary programme to the occupied territories —SPOT. Projects currently being undertaken are:

	Grants given £	
Appropriate Health Resources and Technologies Action Group (AHRTAG)		
1. Production of health education materials	55,887	(1990-92)
2. Women's development	52,073	(1990-93)
Christian Aid		
1. Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee Fodder	3,300	(1991)
Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP)		
1. Paediatric Nurses training	42,250	(1990-91)
2. Upgrading skills of staff for children with learning difficulties	15,900	(1991)
3. Intensive Care Nursing	33,500	(1991)
Oxfam		
1. Gaza blood bank project	78,715	(1989-92)
2. Water reclamation development project	113,670	(1989-92)
Quaker Peace and Service		
1. Training women as health workers in village clinics	7,197	(1990-91)
Save The Children Fund		
1. Physiotherapy training	97,300	(1988-91)
2. Revolving loan fund for small farmers and business	240,000	(1990-91)
3. Provision of kindergarten in Nablus refugee camp	42,000	(1991-93)
4. Care of disabled children	18,000	(1991-93)
5. Assistance to women's self-help activities	45,000	(1991-93)
United Nations Association International Service (UNAIS)		
1. Women's Co-operatives development worker	20,744	(1988-91)
2. Business administrative project	20,328	(1990-92)
3. Seed propagation botanist	20,328	(1990-92)
4. Food technology project	20,328	(1990-92)
5. Development research project	20,328	(1990-92)

	Grants given £	
Universities Educational Fund for Palestinian Refugees (UNIPAL)		
1. Physiotherapy training at Bethlehem University	9,400	(1989-92)
Y Care International (YMCA)		
1. Rehabilitation programme for these injured by Intifada	150,000	(1991-93)

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Metric Units

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) when he received the report of Lady Attlee's metric sense campaign; and what conclusions he has reached;

(2) what steps his Department is taking to ensure that metric units are user friendly;

(3) whether his Department has carried out any study on the comprehension of metric units.

Mr. Leigh: Lady Attlee first wrote to my Department about her campaign on 22 June 1987.

The Secretary of State announced the Government's proposals for ending the use of most imperial units on 2 July. The Department is currently preparing draft legislation and there will be further consultation when this work has been completed.

My Department has not carried out any studies on the comprehension of metric units but has received a number of studies from Lady Attlee.

Space Activities

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what funds were made available for support for space activities by Her Majesty's Government in each of the last five years.

Mr. Leigh: Government expenditure on support for civil space activities in the last five years has been:

Year	£ million
1986-87	116
1987-88	122
1988-89	137
1989-90	143
1990-91	148

Medicines

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many representations he has received from United Kingdom generic manufacturers *(a)* not in favour of any supplementary patent provision for medicinal products and *(b)* in support of the principle of supplementary protection but with a shorter period than that proposed by the European Commission, since 12 June.

Mr. Leigh: The only representation we have had from United Kingdom generic manufacturers since 12 June was when the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Technology met representatives of the European Generics Forum on 27 June. The representatives were not in favour of any supplementary patent protection for medicinal products.

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received from the generic manufacturers who belong to the Standard Formulary Medicines Register of the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry, expressing support for the EC proposal on patent term restoration for medicinal products; and what proportion these manufacturers represent of generic sales to the national health service.

Mr. Leigh: The Standard Formulary Medicines Register of the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry has expressed support for the EC proposal subject to changes to make it easier for generics manufacturers to carry out development work before expiry of protection. I do not have information on the proportion of generic sales to the national health service represented by the companies on the register.

Toy Rockets

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about his inquiries into the safety of and risks posed by large toy rockets now on sale in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Leigh: We have tested these rockets and have found them to be safe in normal use provided that the users obey the instructions and stand at a reasonable distance. The Civil Aviation Authority has advised us that the rockets are unlikely to damage aircraft coming into land, but that they could distract the pilot. We are looking into what might be done to restrict the use of such products within five miles of a major airport.

Accountancy Bodies

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what powers he has to seek revisions to the royal charters of the accountancy bodies.

Mr. Redwood: My right hon. Friend has no express power to initiate revisions to the royal charters of the accountancy bodies. However, he will have certain powers under part II of the Companies Act 1989 relating to compliance with the criteria for recognition, international obligations and competition, the exercise of which might result in changes being sought to the royal charters of the charters recognised supervisory bodies and recognised qualifying bodies. In addition, the exercise of the Secretary of State's functions under the Insolvency Act 1986 and the Companies Act 1985, in relation to insolvency practitioners and large partnerships, respectively, could prompt the chartered accountancy bodies to seek revisions to their charters.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on how many occasions in the past five years BCCI failed to file its annual accounts with the authorities within the statutory time limits.

Mr. Redwood: The Bank of Credit and Commerce International SA (BCCI) has established places of business

in both London and Glasgow and has registered with the registrars of companies in both England and Wales and in Scotland. At no time during the past five years has the bank failed to deliver its accounts to either registrar within the statutory time limits.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will appoint departmental inspectors under the Companies Act to investigate BCCI.

Mr. Redwood: There is already an investigation by the Serious Fraud Office into the company and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has just announced an independent inquiry into the supervision under the Banking Acts of Bank of Credit and Commerce International SA. There would appear to be no purpose in having another inquiry under the Companies Acts which would inevitably overlap with those already in train.

Auditing Standards

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what powers he has under which he can launch an independent investigation of the auditing standards of individual companies.

Mr. Redwood: I have no power to investigate the standard of work performed by a company's auditors, although the matter may arise in the course of an investigation into the affairs of the company. However, under the Companies Act 1989, which will provide a new supervisory system for company auditors, a recognised supervisory body must have effective arrangements for the investigation of complaints against persons eligible under its rules to be appointed as company auditors, including complaints referred to it by my Department.

Supervisory Bodies

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to review proxy voting procedures under *(a)* the Building Societies Act and *(b)* bodies offered recognition as supervisory bodies under the Companies Act 1989.

Mr. Redwood: Questions arising under the Building Societies Act 1986 are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. No supervisory bodies have yet been recognised under the Companies Act 1989. All matters relevant to recognition of a body as a supervisory body under the Companies Act 1989 will be taken into account before recognition.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has any plans to seek Parliament's approval of the supervisory body applications made by the accountancy trade association.

Mr. Redwood: The use of the power in paragraph 2 of schedule II to the Companies Act 1989, to recognise supervisory bodies, is not subject to parliamentary approval.

Non-audit Fees

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on what date the statutory instrument relating to publication of non-audit fees will come into force.

Mr. Redwood: I expect to make these regulations soon, but no decision has been taken on the date on which they will come into force.

Securities and Investments Board

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about the procedure and responsibility for the appointment of the chairman of the Securities and Investments Board.

Mr. Redwood: The chairman of the Securities and Investments Board is appointed by the Secretary of State and the Governor of the Bank of England acting jointly.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about his responsibilities in respect of the operations policy and expenditure of the Securities and Investments Board.

Mr. Redwood: The operations, policy and expenditure of the Securities and Investments Board are the responsibility of the board. Section 117 of the Financial Services Act requires SIB to report at least once in each year to the Secretary of State on the discharge of functions transferred to it under section 114 of the Act, and requires the Secretary of State to lay copies of the reports before Parliament.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his answer of 24 June, *Official Report*, column *391*, what proportion of the global billing of the Property Services Agency for energy consumption was attributed to his Department in 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Mr. Leigh: I do not have this information.

Insolvency

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many companies in Scotland and Strathclyde are in receivership; and if he will name them.

Mr. Redwood: There are 716 Scottish companies in receivership. Figures can be supplied only for Scotland as a whole and cannot be broken down into any specific region. It is not possible to supply a list of company names within the parliamentary question timescale, but the chief executive of Companies House executive agency will write direct to the hon. Gentleman, enclosing the list, as soon as possible.

Computer Security

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action his Department is taking to encourage greater computer security *(a)* in government and *(b)* in the private sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 15 July 1991]:* The DTI is supporting a three-year programme, directed mainly at smaller and medium-sized enterprises, which aims to raise awareness of the importance of security in all aspects of information technology. A major purpose of the awareness programme is to stimulate business users of computer systems into examining their security requirements and to help them adopt appropriate practical solutions that meet their needs effectively.

The campaign, now in its second year, provides advice and guidance on the measures which businesses can take to combat both deliberate and accidental threats to their computer systems. A key message of the campaign is that action taken to prevent such threats is more effective than dealing with breaches of security after they have occurred.

The DTI is also involved in promoting greater awareness of the Computer Misuse Act 1990, and of its implications for business.

In a further initiative, launched on 1 May 1991, DTI has introduced a national scheme for the evaluation and certification of the security of IT systems and products. The purpose of the scheme is to promote an efficient and effective market in IT security, offering benefits to users and vendors alike. The scheme provides for independent security evaluation services to be made available to all sectors of industry, commerce and government. These services are backed by a certification scheme whereby evaluations performed by commercial bodies licensed as commercial licensed evaluation facilities (CLEFs), are certified as meeting the necessary standard.

A primary objective of the scheme is to provide for international mutual recognition of evaluation certificates and by such means to make the market place an international one, with a wider choice of certified products available.

The DTI, in consultation with other Government Departments, is now promoting co-ordination of IT security studies, and research and development activities across European Community programmes. It is thus seeking to ensure that the security needs of business within the soon to be completed internal market can be met.

Within government, a range of security measures has been developed to protect computers and the data that they process according to an assessment of the threats they face. It is the responsibility of individual Departments to apply these measures to their own systems, taking account of interdepartmentally agreed guidance. This guidance is kept under constant review.

Youth Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list *(a)* the number of youth training places in his Department and *(b)* the number of places occupied in May for each of the years 1989, 1990 and the current year.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 18 July 1991]:* The information is as follows:

	1989	*1990*	*1991*
Number of places	40	40	24
Places occupied in May	9	19	24

PRIME MINISTER

Greenhouse Gases

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Prime Minister what steps have been taken by Her Majesty's Government to stabilise the concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere to combat global warming.

The Prime Minister: The Environment White Paper (Cm. 1200) sets out the first set of measures to limit the United Kingdom's carbon dioxide emissions and we will publish a report in the autumn showing how our efforts are being put into practice.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to raise nuclear non-proliferation with his Chinese counterpart.

The Prime Minister: As a depository state of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, it is our policy to take every opportunity both to raise the importance of nuclear non-proliferation with all non-parties to the NPT and to lobby them to accede to the NPT as soon as possible.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Prime Minister what is Her Majesty's Government's current assessment of the capability of *(a)* Israel and *(b)* Pakistan to make a nuclear weapon.

The Prime Minister: We have no firm evidence either to confirm or to deny rumours that Israel may have a nuclear weapons programme. As regards Pakistan, I refer the hon. Member to the reply my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs gave him on 27 February at column *497*.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what recent ministerial meetings have taken place with other depository powers of the non-proliferation treaty; what matters relating to the treaty were discussed; and what future meetings he proposes to hold in 1991.

The Prime Minister: The Government attach great importance to nuclear non-proliferation and the subject is frequently raised during bilateral ministerial meetings with the United States and the Soviet Union. However, no recent ministerial meetings specifically to discuss the NPT have taken place nor are any currently planned.

Regular trilateral and bilateral meetings of the depository powers of the NPT take place at official level, most recently in June.

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Graham: To ask the Prime Minister how many Government Ministers have visited Renfrew, West and Inverclyde on official business since 1987; and if he will list the events and the Ministers concerned.

The Prime Minister: The information can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Colin Wallace

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will institute a full review, under the direction of the head of the civil service, of the case of Mr. Colin Wallace with a view to *(a)* bringing to book those responsible for conspiring to pervert the due process of the Civil Service Appeal Board, *(b)* ensuring that those responsible for misleading Ministers so as to mislead Parliament are disciplined and *(c)* that safeguards are put in place to prevent a repetition of these events.

The Prime Minister: No. I do not accept the hon. Member's description of what occurred. Safeguards are already in place to prevent a repetition of what went wrong.

Army Boards of Inquiry

Mr. John Browne: To ask the Prime Minister if he will bring forward legislation to require Army boards of inquiry in cases which may lead to claims for compensation *(a)* to provide full discovery of documents to those seeking to prove negligence, *(b)* to take evidence in person from all relevant witnesses and *(c)* to recommend ex gratia payments in special circumstances.

The Prime Minister: There are no plans to introduce such legislation.

Migrant Workers

Dr. Godman: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow on 1 July, *Official Report*, column *35*, when the hon. Gentleman can expect to receive a letter on migrant workers; and if he will place a copy of his letter in the Library.

The Prime Minister: I have replied to the hon. Member today.

Government Expenditure

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what are the sizes of the total committed and target expenditure by Her Majesty's Government for the next financial year on *(a)* the environment, *(b)* overseas aid and *(c)* defence.

The Prime Minister: Table 4.4 of the statistical supplement (Cm. 1520) sets out the latest plans for central Government expenditure on environmental services, overseas aid and defence in 1992-93. Data on local authority plans for expenditure on environmental services in 1992-93 are not available.

EC Intervention Grain

Mr. Michael: To ask the Prime Minister whether he will make it his policy to press for the grain stored by the EC to be used to combat the plight of people who currently face starvation in Africa.

The Prime Minister: The European Commission is already using substantial quantities of grain drawn from intervention stocks to meet the needs of the special programme of food aid for Africa which was agreed in May. We strongly support this, when appropriate cereals are available and their use is cost-effective. Many surplus commodities held in stock, including cereals such as barley are, however, not generally suitable for use as emergency food aid.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 17 July, what was the actual date on which he was told of the fraud.

The Prime Minister: I was informed on 28 June.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 17 July, what action he took, with regard to BCCI, following the information given to him that there was fraud.

The Prime Minister: The action, following the uncovering of the widespread fraud, was for the Bank of England, using its statutory powers. The Government entirely supported the action they proposed to take.

CIVIL SERVICE

Next Steps Agencies

40. **Mr. Lester:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how many next steps agency chief executives have been appointed through open competition.

Mr. Renton: The Government's objective in appointing agency chief executives is to get the right person for the job. Open competition is now the presumption and 29 of the current chief executives have been recruited in this way.

Equal Opportunities

41. **Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will publish his Department's equal opportunity policy; and if he will make a statement about the way it is monitored.

Mr. Renton: My Department's basic equal opportunities policy statement is made available to all members of staff. The position is kept under review.

Recruitment

42. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when he next expects to meet civil service trade union leaders to discuss methods of recruitment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I meet civil service trade union representatives from time to time to discuss a variety of matters.

Occupational Health Service

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how much was spent on events and publicity surrounding the launch of the occupational health service as an executive agency; and whether the cost was borne by the parent Department or the new agency.

Mr. Renton: This is a matter for the chief executive and I have asked him to write to the hon. Member direct.

THE ARTS

Southern Arts

29. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what proportion of the Arts Council grant in 1991-92 has been allocated to Southern Arts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: In 1991-92 Southern Arts received 6·3 per cent. of the total Arts Council grant to the 12 English regional arts associations.

Arts Companies (Income)

30. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what proportion of the income of the Royal Shakespeare Company, Royal National theatre, Royal Opera house, and English National Opera is now raised by the companies themselves.

Mr. Renton: In 1990-91 the Royal Shakespeare Company raised 64 per cent. of its income; the Royal

National theatre 52 per cent.; the Royal Opera house 63 per cent.; and English National Opera 47 per cent. The comparable figures for 1980-81 were: Royal Shakespeare Company 62 per cent.; Royal National theatre 35 per cent.; Royal Opera house 48 per cent.; and English National Opera 30 per cent. in 1983-84, the earliest year in which comparable figures are available for that company.

Local Authorities (Arts Spending)

31. **Mrs. Currie:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what advice he gives local authorities on their expenditure on arts and libraries.

Mr. Renton: The Government believe that local authorities themselves are best placed to take decisions on arts and libraries expenditure in the light of local needs, priorities and resources.

In the case of libraries, local authorities have a duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service and as part of my oversight of their services I issue guidance on good practice.

I also work with the regional arts associations, both directly and through the Arts Council, to promote local authority support for the arts.

European Art Objects

32. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he plans any discussions with his EC counterparts on a policy towards art objects of European origin held in museums and art galleries in member states.

Mr. Renton: I most recently met my European Community counterparts in Luxembourg on 7 June. At that meeting the European Commission indicated that it planned to issue proposals on external frontiers and on a possible restitution scheme for objects illegally exported after 1992. I will be attending a further meeting under the Dutch presidency in the autumn this year.

Museums

33. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how many museums have registered under the scheme being administered by the Museums and Galleries Commission.

Mr. Rentoa: By July 1991, 830 museums and galleries had been accepted on to the Museums and Galleries Commission's register.

WALES

Technical and Vocational Education Initiative

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much the Training Agency invested in the technical and vocational education initiative in 1990-91, and is proposing to invest in 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. David Hunt: In 1990-91 the amount invested by the Training Agency/Training Enterprise and Education Directorate in the training and vocational education initiative was £9,104,301. In 1991-92 and 1992-93 planned investment by TEED in TVEI is £9,319,197 and £8,350,865 respectively. Provision in each year is determined by the patterns of expenditure proposed by local education authorities.

Casualty Animals

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the threat to human, animal and environmental health from the improper disposal of the carcases of casualty animals; and if he proposes to take any further action to require the proper disposal of such animals.

Mr. David Hunt: The improper disposal of animal carcases is both illegal and environmentally unacceptable. The state veterinary service monitors the disposal of such carcases, and liaises with local authorities on the enforcement of the relevant legislative controls.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will introduce measures to prohibit the use of unprocessed or uncooked casualty farm animals as animal feed.

Mr. David Hunt: Existing controls are already adequate. Under the Processed Animal Protein Order 1989 and the Diseases of Animals (Waste Food) Order 1973 (as amended) material derived from animals must be processed or rendered microbiologically safe before it can be included in feeding stuffs for livestock or poultry.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the threat to animal health from tape worm infection from parasites spread by hunting dogs fed on uncooked sheep carcases.

Mr. David Hunt: No specific assessment has been made. Observations by the veterinary investigation service indicate that infestations regularly occur among farm livestock in Wales, but these infestations will have been derived from farm and other dogs as well as hunting dogs.

Colliery Buildings

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will request Cadw to evaluate the heritage value of the Penallta pithead baths and other colliery buildings.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The inspectorate of historic buildings has visited those of British Coal's working, deep mines in South Wales where buildings of possible interest have been identified. My right hon. Friend will be considering whether statutory protection should be extended to any structure in the light of their advice, and consultations with local authorities and British Coal. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman when a decision is made and place a copy in the Library of the House.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to place interim protection orders on historic colliery buildings to prevent their demolition before Cadw has completed an evaluation of their heritage value.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on my right hon. Friend to list buildings of special architectural or historic interest. The Act requires that certain consultations are undertaken before my right hon. Friend decides to list a structure. The same legislation enables a local planning authority to serve a building preservation notice, which lasts six months, where it appears that a structure of special interest is in danger of demolition.

Fox Control

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will introduce a registration scheme to regulate the activities of those fox control societies currently operating in Wales and which are not registered with the Masters of Fox Hounds Association.

Mr. David Hunt: I have no plans to do so.

Tegryn Hunt

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will undertake an inquiry into the activities of the Tegryn hunt in relation to animal health.

Mr. David Hunt: Monthly visits are being undertaken to all known hunt kennels and knackers by state veterinary service staff.

Child Runaways

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest estimates for the number of children who have run away from *(a)* private households and *(b)* local authority care in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The number of children who have run away from private households is not held centrally.

There were eight children in local authority care who had absconded for more than one week from local authority residential accommodation in Wales on 31 March 1990.

Dentistry

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish for each health authority in Wales the number, and percentage, of children registered with a dental practitioner.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The information, which relates to children under the age of 18 registered at the end of June 1991 in each FHSA area, is given in the following table.

FHSA	*Number of children registered*	*Percentage of relevant population*[1]
Clwyd	43,361	46
Dyfed	34,807	45
Gwent	46,022	44
Gwynedd	22,986	43
Mid Glamorgan	51,782	40
Powys	10,676	42
South Glamorgan	46,847	49
West Glamorgan	43,174	53

[1] 1989 mid-June estimated population figures used.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the population per dentist in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* for the latest available date for each health authority area in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The information, by FHSA area, is given in the following table:

Population per dentist as at 1 October

FHSA	*1979*	*1990*
Clwyd	5,501	3,704
Dyfed	4,719	3,598
Gwent	4,738	3,574
Gwynedd	4,270	3,490
Mid Glamorgan	5,485	4,016
Powys	5,637	3,435
South Glamorgan	3,756	3,085
West Glamorgan	3,426	2,688

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he intends to increase the capitation rates paid to dental practitioners for the treatment of children.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: All dental fees, including capitation rates, are recommended to the Secretaries of State by the independent Dental Rates Studies Group. All are kept under review.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the percentage of school children in Wales inspected by the community dental service in the latest available year and for previous years for which data are available.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The information is given in the following table:

Percentage of school children[1] inspected by Community Dental Service

Year	*Number*
1971	58
1972	56
1973	66
1974	54
1975	59
1976	47
1977	55
1978	59
1979	57
1980	65
1981	70
1982	68
1983	72
1984	71
1985	72
1986-87	72
1987-88	71
1988-89	64
1989-90	61

[1] School children aged over 5 in maintained schools.

Housing Renovation Grants

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many extra staff have been employed by all district and city councils in Wales as a direct result of the implementation of the new housing renovation grant regime in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: This information is not held centrally.

Children in Care

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total number of children in care in Wales in 1983, 1985, 1987 and 1989.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: There were 4,387, 3,752, 3,481 and 3,263 children in local authority care at 31 March 1983, 1985, 1987 and 1989 respectively.

Oral Cancer

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* for each health authority in Wales for each of the last 10 years the number of deaths from cancer of the lips, the oral cavity and the pharynx, separately, distinguishing *(a)* all ages and *(b)* persons over 65 years of age.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The available information is given in the following table:

Number of deaths from malignant neoplasm of lip, oral cavity and pharynx (ICD 140-149)

DHA	*Age*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*
Clwyd	All ages	22	8	14	16	11	18	18	14	13	14
	65 and over	16	5	12	10	6	12	13	11	11	6
East Dyfed	All ages	13	10	7	7	12	15	7	15	10	8
	65 and over	9	7	4	3	7	10	5	11	6	8
Pembrokeshire	All ages	7	4	2	0	2	3	3	6	3	6
	65 and over	4	3	0	0	1	2	2	5	2	4
Gwent	All ages	16	12	12	15	15	12	17	10	12	18
	65 and over	10	10	7	11	10	4	10	5	8	12
Gwynedd	All ages	6	15	7	9	6	7	9	4	12	14
	65 and over	5	9	3	9	3	3	8	2	10	9
Mid Glamorgan	All ages	18	14	21	23	12	25	21	25	21	18
	65 and over	14	11	14	14	8	15	16	16	14	11
Powys	All ages	7	3	3	2	4	8	2	4	4	7
	65 and over	3	2	0	1	2	5	1	3	3	4
South Glamorgan	All ages	18	21	11	17	16	10	13	12	16	8
	65 and over	11	11	6	12	8	8	7	6	10	5
West Glamorgan	All ages	13	15	9	10	22	13	16	11	14	13
	65 and over	7	8	6	7	11	9	8	7	9	8

Source: Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* his policies and *(b)* his Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; and if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring.

Mr. David Hunt: The Government have continued to place a high priority on helping small businesses, through improvements to the business climate, through deregulation and other measures, and through specific programmes of support and assistance.

Support for local enterprise agencies

There are currently 22 local enterprise agencies in Wales. Two organisations were approved as local enterprise agencies by me in the year to June 1991, while another two are being considered for approval. In order to strengthen the network of agencies to improve the enhance services to small businesses two mergers have also occurred.

Training and enterprise councils

TECs took over responsibility from the WDA for delivering the small firms counselling services from 1 April 1991. TECs are building in local employer-led flexibilities and have integrated these into their other enterprise programmes. All TECs in Wales are now operational.

Regional selective assistance, regional enterprise grant

Small businesses continue to take advantage of the help available under regional selective assistance. In the year to the end of June 1991, 167 small firms, employing up to 200 people, accepted offers of RSA; an increase of 15 per cent. on 1990. The value of these offers in 1991 amounted to £20·5 million, nearly 80 per cent. higher than in 1990. A further 188 small firms, employing fewer than 25 people, accepted offers of regional enterprise grant totalling £1·73 million. This compares with 289 small firms accepting offers of £2·52 million in the previous 12 months.

Enterprise Wales

Launched in January 1988, the consultancy initiatives have proved extremely popular in Wales. More than 4,240 companies have applied. In 1990-91 alone 1,440 applications were received, 18 per cent. above the economic weight, and 1,384 business reviews were commissioned, 16 per cent. above the economic weight.

Small firms merit award for research and technology (smart)

Last year 16 awards, worth up to £37,500 each, were made to Welsh companies compared with 14 awards during the previous year. Seven stage 2 awards (worth up to £50,000 each) were made compared with nine during the previous 12 months.

In both years Welsh companies received approximately 9 per cent. of the total number of stage 1 awards nationwide. Stage 2 awards are normally restricted by the rules of the competition to 50 per cent. of those companies receiving a stage 1 award during the previous year. On a per capita basis Wales does better than most other regions in this annual competition.

Hospitals

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the annual budget and number of non-manual staff of each of the district general hospitals in Wales for the last two years for which figures are available.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The budget for each district general hospital is a matter for the health authority concerned. The available information concerning non-manual staff, which relates to staff in pay units associated with district general hospitals is given in the following table. Medical and dental staff in post figures are not available below DHA level.

District general hospital	Staff in post (numbers) as at 30 September[1] 1989	1990
Ysbyty Glan Clwyd	838	905
Ysbyty Maelor	1,566	1,575
Bronglais General	472	495
West Wales General	840	894
Royal Gwent	1,553	1,579
St. Woolos	702	722
Nevill Hall	934	946
Ysbyty Gwynedd	911	914
Princess of Wales-Bridgend General	1,051	1,035
East Glamorgan General	930	974
Prince Charles	704	726
Withybush	842	860
University Hospital of Wales-Dental Hospital	2,102	2,156
Cardiff Royal Infirmary	967	952
Llandough	749	825
Singleton	794	822
Morriston	1,648	1,716
Neath General	723	763

[1] Includes supervisory ancillary and maintenance staff, nursing and midwifery staff (excluding learners), administrative and clerical staff and professional and technical staff.
Note: Not all staff will work wholly at the hospitals with which they are included and staff in other units may work part of their time at the hospitals listed.

Public Opinion Polls

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the public opinion surveys carried out by his Department since his answer of 20 December, *Official Report*, columns *264-65*.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 11 July 1991]:* The information, which includes surveys carried out by the Department's non-departmental public bodies, is as follows:

Patient satisfaction survey of East Glamorgan Hospital Out-patient Department.
On-going satisfaction surveys of the All Wales Treatment Centres.
Creative development testing—drug misuse 1991.
United Kingdom Tourism Survey. Joint Wales Tourism Board/Scottish Tourist Board/Northern Ireland Tourist Board/Commercial subscribers. Continuous survey.
Demand monitoring survey. Wales Tourist Board. Continuous survey.
Survey of attendance at visitor attractions. Wales Tourist Board. Continuous survey.
Use of leaflets by general public (HPAW).
Evaluation of "Quit and Win" Campaign (HPAQ).
Evaluation of Mid Wales Development Grant Scheme (DBRW).
Agricultural and Business Training Needs Survey (DBRW).
Rural Lifestyle in Wales (DBRW/WDA/Welsh Office).

Notes: HPAW—Health Promotion Authority for Wales.
DBRW—Development Board for Rural Wales.
WDA—Welsh Development Agency.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Nursery Provision

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Lord President of the Council what progress has been made regarding establishment of a nursery for the children of hon. Members' staff.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 17 July 1991]:* Following decisions taken by the Services Committee on 13 February and by the House of Commons Commission, the Serjeant-at-Arms and the Parliamentary Works Secretariat have been asked to see if suitable accommodation can be found for a child care facility. Further consideration of this issue and any subsequent action will depend upon the advice received.

ENVIRONMENT

Planning Policy Guidance

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what planning policy guidance notes are currently being drafted; how many such guidance notes it is intended to issue; and on what subjects he intends to issue planning policy guidance;

(2) what consultation there has been with organisations representing the interests of disabled people on the drafting of planning policy guidance notes;

(3) if he will ensure that the Access Committee for England, the Joint Committee on Mobility for Disabled People and the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation and other such organisations are consulted before the contents of planning policy guidance notes are finalised;

(4) if he will consult the Access Committee for England, the Joint Committee on Mobility for Disabled People and the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation and other such organisations before finally determining the contents of planning policy guidance note No. 1 (PPG1).

Mr. Yeo: Most of the existing planning policy guidance notes were issued in 1988 and 1989. Since then there have been significant policy developments including changes in planning legislation. The following PPGs are being reviewed in the light of these changes.

PPG1: General policy and principles
PPG3: Land for housing
PPG4: Industrial and commercial development and small firms
PPG5: Simplified Planning Zones
PPG7: Rural enterprise and development
PPG8: Telecommunications
PPG12: Local plans
PPG15: Regional Planning Guidance, Structure Plans and the content of Development Plans

We have also said that we would consult on the question of defining new objectives for the green belts, on which advice is contained in PPG2.

New planning policy guidance is being prepared on sport and recreation; nature conservation; planning, pollution control and waste management; tourism; listed buildings and conservation areas; advertisement control; enforcement; renewable sources of energy; travelling showpeople; noise; and coastal policy.

The Disabled Living Foundation and the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation are consulted during the preparation of all PPG notes. The Access Committee for England and the Joint Committee on Mobility for Disabled People will be consulted on future guidance notes, including the revised PPG1. It is open to any organisation representing the interests of disabled people to make their views about planning policy matters known at any time.

Energy-efficient Lighting

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to encourage local councils to follow the lead of the Houses of Parliament in introducing energy-efficient lighting to cut costs and save energy; and whether he will assist them with such schemes.

Mr. Baldry: Earlier this year I hosted a series of seminars, organised jointly by the Department of the Environment and the Energy Efficiency Office, to encourage local authorities to take up the opportunities for energy efficiency improvements, including the use of low energy lighting, in order to cut their costs and help to limit United Kingdom carbon dioxide emissions. Under the revised capital finance arrangements authorities can recycle revenue savings from such investment back into their capital programmes. We are discussing with the local authority associations ways of overcoming any barriers to the take-up of such cost-saving investment.

We have made resources available for energy efficiency investment in local authority housing under the "Green House Demonstration Programme". In April we announced supplementary credit approvals for 70 schemes. A number of these include the installation of energy-efficient lighting. A further £50 million will be available under this programme next year.

Community Charge

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the 25 local authorities with the largest additional charge on the community charge bills, indicating the sums involved; and if he will make a statement on the action he intends to take.

Mr. Key: The list is based on the estimates of "other adjustments" provided to the Department by the majority of local authorities. The figures may differ slightly from the amounts actually shown on community charge bills. They take account of, among other things, the standard charge income an authority expects to receive, interest charges on the collection fund, an authority's estimate of uncollected community charges and population changes.

Authority	£
Lambeth	158
Islington	137
Southwark	84
Hackney	83
Hammersmith and Fulham	73
Liverpool	70
Brent	70
Oxford	68
Newham	65
Tower Hamlets	63
Haringey	62
Sandwell	61
Greenwich	59
Reading	59
Camden	58
Kirklees	52
Plymouth	52
Bristol	51
Southampton	51
Lewisham	51
Waltham Forest	50
Preston	49
Manchester	49
Leicester	49
Cambridge	46
Wirral	46

We fully understand the concern expressed by law-abiding charge payers about the inclusion of amounts for non-collection. There can be no excuse for non-payment and there will be no amnesty for non-payers. It is, however, essential that authorities make proper provision for non-collection, as they did for non-collection

of the rates. I must stress that all charge payers are under a legal duty to pay the whole community charge including this element.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report*, population figures for each standard region in England and Wales for the years 1981-82 to 1991-92, on the same basis as was used to calculate per capita standard spending assessments in his written answer of 29 April, *Official Report*, column *10*.

Mr. Portillo *[pursuant to his answer, 10 July 1991, Official Report, column 380]:* The information requested is shown in the table. There is a lag of nearly two years before the mid-year population estimate is available for inclusion in standard spending assessments. The year shown at the head of columns refers to the year of the calculated standard spending assessment.

A table showing population figures on the same basis as those used to calculate per capita standard spending assessments

Local authority	*OPCS mid-year estimates*										
	1981-82 Resident population	*1982-83 Resident population*	*1983-84 Resident population*	*1984-85 Resident population*	*1985-86 Resident population*	*1986-87 Resident population*	*1987-88 Resident population*	*1988-89 Resident population*	*1989-90 Resident population*	*1990-91 Resident population*	*1991-92 Resident population*
Regional summary											
Northern region	3,130,300	3,128,300	3,117,600	3,107,400	3,100,100	3,093,100	3,085,700	3,080,242	3,076,779	3,071,318	3,073,112
North West	6,498,400	6,447,300	6,459,500	6,431,000	6,410,100	6,395,500	6,386,300	6,374,334	6,370,079	6,364,162	6,379,723
Yorkshire and Humberside	4,921,000	4,922,700	4,918,400	4,909,900	4,908,500	4,904,300	4,902,600	4,899,285	4,900,232	4,913,298	4,940,355
East Midlands	3,818,300	3,838,300	3,852,700	3,851,700	3,859,800	3,874,300	3,896,900	3,919,918	3,942,254	3,970,599	3,999,063
West Midlands	5,179,200	5,185,000	5,186,200	5,179,900	5,176,300	5,176,000	5,183,000	5,181,243	5,197,687	5,207,000	5,215,960
East Anglia	1,864,100	1,881,800	1,894,700	1,911,400	1,925,200	1,939,600	1,964,700	1,991,600	2,013,680	2,034,639	2,044,577
South West	4,334,900	4,361,100	4,381,273	4,397,599	4,424,061	4,461,279	4,500,780	4,543,254	4,588,374	4,634,235	4,652,426
South East	10,064,300	10,142,100	10,204,700	10,239,400	10,294,500	10,356,400	10,424,300	10,489,393	10,547,132	10,605,020	10,627,779
Greater London	6,887,600	6,850,600	6,805,703	6,766,432	6,754,433	6,756,038	6,767,421	6,775,190	6,770,435	6,736,007	6,756,400
TOTAL ENGLAND	46,698,100	46,787,200	46,820,776	46,794,731	46,852,994	46,956,517	47,111,701	47,254,459	47,406,652	47,536,278	47,689,395

Water Supply

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of the United Kingdom water supply originates in Wales.

Mr. Baldry: Such information as is available is published in the "Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics" (No. 13, 1990), the "Environmental Digest for Wales" (No. 5, 1990) and in the prospectus "The Water Share Offers" (November 1989), copies of which are available in the Library.

Uniform Business Rate

Mr. Bellotti: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the Institute of Directors about the uniform business rate in response to his consultation document on "A New Tax for Local Government"; what was the response; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: We are currently studying representations received in response to the recent consultation paper including that from the Institute of Directors. We will report on the outcome shortly.

Local Government Finance

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are *(a)* the revenue support grant, *(b)* the community charge income and *(c)* uniform business rate income for 1990-91 in Tower Hamlets.

Mr. Key: In 1990-91 Tower Hamlets received £133·4 million in revenue support grant and £33 million in receipts from the non-domestic rate pool. The authority has reported that community charge receipts in respect of 1990-91 will be £31 million. In addition, the authority received £19 million from the safety net adjustment and £9·1 million in inner London education grant.

City Action Teams

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what finance Her Majesty's Government are making available to action team inner city economic and environmental initiatives.

Mr. Key: The eight city action teams co-ordinate the Government's programmes for the inner cities within their areas. We have provided £8·1 million this year for their special budgets, to promote employment, training, enterprise and environmental initiatives.

EC Environmental Proposals

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to estimate the future cost to British business of each of the European Commission's environmental proposals currently under consideration.

Mr. Baldry: The costs to British business of implementing EC legislation are always a major factor in our consideration of new proposals by the European Commission. They are covered in the explanatory memoranda which this Department submits to Parliament on each new Commission proposal.

Imported Birds

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the results of his visits to the veterinary investigation centre at Reading to consider welfare problems of imported birds.

Mr. Baldry: I visited the centre on 10 June. The visit was useful and informative, and will assist us in considering how best to deal with the problem of high mortalities in imported wild birds. The conservation implications of such mortalities will be one of the issues covered in the study of the wildlife trade by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, which I announced in response to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) on 9 May 1991, *Official Report*, columns. *550-51*. Primary responsibility for the welfare of wild birds in transit and quarantine rests with my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

PCBs

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many companies have been permitted to derogate from EC directives with relation to the discharge of polychlorinated biphenyls; what consideration was given to their likely environmental impact when granting such derogations; and what time limit he has set for the companies to comply with the directives.

Mr. Baldry: No derogations from the requirements of EC directives in relation to the discharge of polychlorinated biphenyls have been authorised.

Home Repossessions

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the number of homes vacant following repossession by mortgage lenders; and what steps he intends to take to ensure that they are brought back into use.

Mr. Yeo: Figures are not available in the form requested.

The latest figures from the Council of Mortgage Lenders show that during 1990 only one in 200 borrowers faced repossession. Mortgage lenders have said that they will take steps to repossess only when all other options have been exhausted.

The Government share the hon. Member's concern that such property is brought into use promptly and we have encouraged lenders to consider a range of measures to bring this about.

Council Tax

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many of the responses he received to his consultation paper "A New Tax for Local Government" *(a)* supported and *(b)* opposed his proposals for council tax banding; and if he will publish a list showing which organisations were in each category;

(2) if he will publish a list of the organisations which submitted a response to his consultation document "A New Tax for Local Government";

(3) how many of the responses he received to his consultation document "A New Tax for Local Government" supported the immediate abolition of the 20 per cent. minimum poll tax contribution rule; and if he will publish a list of the organisations and individuals who supported that view.

Mr. Portillo: We are currently studying representations received in response to the recent consultation paper. We will report on the outcome shortly.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a list of the organisations which called for the return of the setting of the business rate to local authority control in responding to his consultation document, "A New Tax for Local Government".

Mr. Portillo: We will place a list of those who have responded in the Library in due course.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the results of his consultation exercise on his council tax proposals before the House adjourns for the summer recess.

Mr. Portillo: We are currently studying representations received in response to the recent consultation paper. We will report on the outcome shortly.

Mortgage Rescue Schemes

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which local authorities and housing associations are operating mortgage rescue schemes; how many of them involve shared ownership; how many households these schemes have assisted; and what specific financial resources his Department has made available for these schemes.

Mr. Yeo: Figures are not available in the form requested.

Help with interest payments is available through income support to some mortgage borrowers, and all borrowers will have been helped by the 4 per cent. reduction in base rates over the past 10 months. In addition, there are several ways in which mortgage lenders can help borrowers who approach them early.

Local authorities may assist housing associations to buy the homes of borrowers in difficulty for them to occupy on shared ownership terms.

"Institutions and Sustainable Development"

Mr. Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will obtain for his departmental library a copy of the recent report, "Institutions and Sustainable Development", by John Gordon and Caroline Frazer of the Global Environmental Research Centre at Imperial college, London.

Mr. Heseltine: My Department is providing funding through UNEP-UK for a series of non-governmental meetings and seminars in preparation for the 1992 UN conference on environment and development. This report is a contribution to discussion of institutional change. When it is printed it will, in the normal way, be available in the departmental library.

Empty Properties

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what subsidy will be made available to housing associations to manage privately owned empty

homes; what the average annual cost per home managed will be; and how many privately owned empty homes he estimates will be brought into use by this means in the current financial year.

Mr. Yeo: We are studying bids from a number of housing associations for grants to set up pilot projects. Grants will support general operating costs and will not be related to individual units of accommodation. Targets will be agreed with the successful bidders.

Selby Bypass

Mr. Alison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has received the report from the inspector appointed to carry out the public inquiry into the proposed Selby bypass; and when he expects to be able to make a statement.

Sir George Young: The inspector's report has not yet been received. It will be jointly considered by the Secretaries of State for Transport and for the Environment, and a statement will follow some time later in the form of a decision on whether to proceed with the proposed Selby bypass.

Waste Disposal

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make further proposals for the implementation of the duty of care under section 34 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Mr. Trippier: My Department, jointly with the Scottish Office and the Welsh Office, has today issued for public consultation a draft circular, a consultation paper and draft regulations under section 34 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990—the duty of care.

No longer will anyone be able to wash their hands of waste disposal problems. They will be able to hand waste only to responsible persons and they will have to keep the records to prove it. The duty will not only help to drive out illegal disposal and fly-tipping but will deter those whose carelessness supplies the source material for the criminals.

I announced on 25 June the Government's timetable for the implementation of the waste provisions of the 1990 Act. Under that timetable it is intended that the duty of care will be fully in force by April 1992. The papers issued today complete the necessary public consultation on the implementation of the duty.

The draft circular offers advice, mainly directed to local authorities, on the operation of the duty of care. This complements the advice for producers and holders of waste in the code of practice. Drafts of the code of practice were the subject of separate consultation in England and Wales and in Scotland in 1990.

The draft regulations issued today provide for a mandatory system of signed transfer notes, for records to be kept of all transfers of controlled waste and for the records to be available to waste regulation authorities. This will create an audit trail of waste movements. It will greatly help authorities to trace criminal waste disposal.

The duty of care, combined with the registration of waste carriers, is a radical step to improve the disposal of waste in this country. Everyone involved with waste will share a legal responsibility for ensuring it is safely and legally dealt with.

Direct Labour Organisations

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the guidelines issued to local authorities regarding their direct labour organisations tendering for local authority work for a different local council.

Mr. Key: There are no such guidelines. However, while the interpretation of the law is a matter for the courts, Ministers have made it clear that they agree with the counsel's opinion obtained by the Audit Commission, to the effect that neither the Local Authorities (Goods and Services) Act 1970 nor the Local Government Act 1988 provides a general warrant for DSOs to undertake work for other authorities on a free-for-all basis.

Fish Farms

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Government will publish their consultation paper on planning controls over fish farms.

Mr. Yeo: We have today published a consultation paper on permitted development rights for freshwater fish farming in England and Wales. The paper seeks views on proposals intended to align planning controls over fish farming as closely as possible with those over other forms of agriculture, building on measures in the Planning and Compensation Bill.

On 11 June my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning announced that full development control would be extended to all agriculture holdings of less than 5 hectares, and to parcels of land of less than 1 hectare on larger holdings [*Official Report*, columns *482-85*.]. We propose similar provisions for fish farms.

The Planning and Compensation Bill will bring floating fish tanks (cages) in inland waters fully within planning control. Outside the national parks, we propose that these structures should be subject to the prior notification scheme which was announced on 11 June for other agricultural buildings. We have already announced that in the national parks they will be subject to full planning control, along with fish farm excavations and engineering operations.

The Bill also provides for the Secretary of State to make regulations requiring environmental assessment of any class of development. We propose to use this new provision to require EA for trout farming which is likely to have significant environmental effects. Salmon farming is already subject to EA where it is likely to have such effects.

Water Infrastructure Charges

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on problems relating to water infrastructure charges for developers since the meeting in July 1990 between the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier), and representatives of the House Builders Federation, the hon. Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton) and the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton; and when the Director General of Water Services will complete his inquiry into this issue.

Mr. Baldry: Following the meeting to which my hon. Friend refers, the Minister for the Environment and

Countryside wrote to him in January. As explained in that letter, the operation and level of infrastructure charges are matters for the Director General of Water Services, who is reviewing the position of infrastructure charges in relation to charges generally, in the context of responses to his consultation paper "Paying for Water—A Time for Decisions". I understand that the director general is considering responses to his consultation paper at the moment.

Urban Transport Schemes

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list projects under development or consideration by the Commission for New Towns and urban development corporations which involve subsidies to transport schemes; and what are the values of such subsidies.

Mr. Key: Listed are schemes in progress or proposed which provide revenue assistance for public transport:

New Towns

CNT—no schemes notified.

Milton Keynes DC—£110,000 subsidy to Bucks county council to support the local bus network in 1991-92.

Urban Development Corporations

Black Country DC—£75,000 grant approved for Centro to run three specially adapted vehicles for people with mobility problems. This has been approved for 1991-92 but may be extended.

London Docklands DC—subsidy for D1 bus route, amounting to £50,000 for the period April to September 1991.

Trafford Park DC—£36,000 subsidy as 50 per cent. contribution from August 1989 to August 1991 for a minibus service to enhance off-peak public transport for shift workers. The remaining 50 per cent. subsidy has been met by the Greater Manchester passenger transport executive.

Trees

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the health of trees in *(a)* urban areas and *(b)* countryside areas.

Mr. Baldry: In 1989 the Forestry Commission, with funding from the Department, carried out a survey of 3,600 urban trees in 30 towns and cities throughout England. A total of 80 per cent. of the trees were judged to be in good condition, visually improving the urban landscape.

Evidence that the atmosphere in British towns and cities is now more conducive to healthy tree growth is the much greater range of tree species successfully cultivated in urban areas.

A detailed survey carried out by the Forestry Commission shows that there has been no overall deterioration in the health of trees in the countryside. During the period 1989-90 the main tree species in Britain either improved or remained the same.

Current scientific evidence suggests that the status of tree health in Britain is mainly influenced by the climate, insect pests and diseases, rather than pollution. Trees have been affected by the storms in 1987 and 1990, the recent mild winters and late frosts, dry summers, and pest numbers which have increased. We are also aware of the considerable damage that has been caused to both urban and countryside trees by the use of salt for keeping roads free from ice during the winter months of 1990-91.

Research on the health of trees is continuing on a number of fronts; for example, new light will be shed on the state of urban trees by the Department's forthcoming research project "Trees in Towns", and the United Kingdom Terrestrial Effects Review Group report on "Air Pollution and Trees in the United Kingdom".

Inner City Programme

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will specify the full range of grants currently available under his inner city programme with a brief technical description of each.

Mr. Portillo *[pursuant to his answer, 24 June 1991, Official Report, column 392]:* Very important support is provided for the inner cities through the main programmes of the Home Office and the Departments of Trade and Industry, Employment, Education and Science, Transport, Health and Social Security and through support to local authorities and the Housing Corporation by this Department including the estate action programme.

My Department promotes inner city regeneration through a variety of programmes and initiatives, including the following grant measures.

City challenge is a new initiative under which local authorities are invited to draw up comprehensive plans in partnership with the private sector, voluntary organisations and local people, to bid for resources for the regeneration of key parts of their areas within a five-year period. Fifteen authorities have been invited to compete for a share in over £350 million from Department of the Environment programmes during the five years 1992-93 to 1996-97.

Urban Development Corporations

Grant aid is provided for the 10 urban development corporations in England. Some £470 million will be available in 1991-92 to purchase and reclaim land, provide infrastructure, encourage development and improve the environment.

Urban Programme

Fifty-seven urban programme authorities in England receive 75 per cent. grant towards a wide range of projects with an emphasis on economic and environmental improvements as the key to self-sustaining regeneration in targeted inner city areas. In 1991-92, £268 million is available to support almost 9,000 projects.

City Grant

City grant is provided to support private sector capital projects which benefit run down urban areas and which cannot proceed without grant. Over £56 million has been committed to the city grant programme for 1991-92 and will be available for industrial, commercial, housing and leisure projects.

Land Grant

Derelict land grant is available throughout England to local authorities, other public bodies, voluntary organisations, private firms and individuals to promote the reclamation of land which has been so damaged by industrial or other development that it is incapable of beneficial use without treatment. The derelict land grant programme for 1991-92 totals £88 million of which about

£81·5 million is expected to be spent on local authority reclamation schemes. About 40 per cent. of the programme will be devoted to schemes in the inner cities.

City Action Teams

There are eight city action teams operating in Birmingham, Cleveland, Leeds/Bradford, Liverpool, London, Tyne and Wear, Nottingham/Leicester/Derby and Manchester/Salford. The CATs are an important mechanism for co-ordinating and targeting Government programmes and harnessing the support of business and industry. Each CAT has a small budget, a total of £8·1 million in 1991-92, with which to prime action targeted on inner city problems of unemployment, environmental improvement and the need to promote enterprise.

EMPLOYMENT

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list, as per the requirement set out in the TEC operating agreement, the number of youth training starts and the number of youth training trainees in training at the end of the four-weekly period as set out in the schedule of management information *(a)* for the most recent period for which information is available and *(b)* for each TEC.

Mr. Jackson: The information requested is given in the table:

Youth training
Entrants and in training by TEC—all figures provisional estimates

TEC	*Entrants 1 to 26 April 1991*	*In training 26 April 1991*
East Midlands and Eastern		
Bedfordshire	250	2,100
Central and South Cambridgeshire	20	900
North Derbyshire	80	1,900
South Derbyshire	110	3,200
Leicestershire	430	5,800
Lincolnshire	250	3,900
Norfolk and Waveney	*	*
Northamptonshire	80	2,600
Greater Nottingham	180	4,100
North Nottinghamshire	180	2,700
Greater Peterborough	90	1,900
Suffolk	40	2,300
Northern		
County Durham	330	5,100
Northumberland	130	2,300
Teesside	270	4,800
Tyneside	410	6,400
Wearside	290	2,800
Yorkshire and Humberside		
Barnsley and Doncaster	*	*
Bradford and District	50	2,900
Calderdale and Kirklees	210	3,400
Humberside	400	6,900
Leeds	250	3,400
Rotherham	130	1,600
Sheffield	*	*
Wakefield	260	1,900
North Yorkshire	90	2,600
North West		
Bolton/Bury	310	2,700
South and East Cheshire	*	*
Cumbria	80	2,900
ELTEC (East Lancashire)	130	3,600
LAWTEC (Lancashire Area West)	270	5,500
Manchester	*	*
Oldham	70	2,100
Rochdale	150	1,500
St. Helens (Qualitec)	70	1,900
Stockport/High Peak	60	1,700
Wigan	90	2,100
CEWTEC (Chester, Ellesmere Port and Wirral)	180	3,400
West Midlands		
Birmingham	*	*
CENTEC (Central England)	*	*
Coventry/Warwickshire	*	*
Dudley	130	1,900
HAWTEC (Hereford/ Worcestershire)	50	2,000
Sandwell	130	1,700
Shropshire	170	3,100
Staffordshire	500	10,200
Walsall	50	1,400
Wolverhampton	70	1,900
Wales		
Mid Glamorgan	400	3,400
South Glamorgan	160	1,700
Gwent	300	3,500
Powys	20	600
North East Wales	20	1,900
North West Wales	90	2,700
West Wales	1,000	5,100
South West		
Avon	170	4,900
Devon/Cornwall	140	7,900
Dorset	70	2,700
Gloucestershire	180	2,600
Somerset	70	2,900
Wiltshire	90	2,700
South East		
Essex	120	4,800
Hampshire	1,300	6,556
Heart of England	140	1,800
Hertfordshire	60	2,600
Isle of Wight	20	700
Kent	170	5,500
Milton Keynes and North Bucks	90	1,300
Surrey	40	1,700
Sussex	600	4,500
Thames Valley Enterprise	360	3,800
London		
AZTEC (Kingston/Merton/ Wandsworth)	70	1,300
London East	340	3,800
SOLOTEC (South London)	130	2,700

Note: This information is compiled from management information returns from the TECs. An asterisk indicates that complete information is not available.

Career Services

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the number of vacancies for employment currently held by each local authority career service on the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. Jackson: The total number of vacancies held at careers offices in the United Kingdom in June 1991 was 11,500. A geographical breakdown of this figure is shown

in the Employment Department's press notice "Labour Market Statistics" released on 18 July. A copy is held in the Library.

Youth Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list for each of the local authority or careers office areas in England and Wales which form part of the management information obtained by the careers office network of his Department *(a)* the number of young people who left school in summer 1990 and who have not been offered or received a youth training—YT—place, *(b)* the number expected to leave school in summer 1991 who would likely be eligible for YT and *(c)* the number of young people who are eligible for YT but who are awaiting a place.

Mr. Jackson: Information in the form requested is not available.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest figure for participants in youth training.

Mr. Jackson: At 26 April 1991, the latest date for which information is available, it is provisionally estimated that there were about 260,000 young people in youth training in England and Wales.

Minimum Wage

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals the EC Commission has for the introduction of a statutory minimum wage in each member state; and whether such proposals would be submitted on the basis of majority voting.

Mr. Forth: The European Commission has made no such proposals.

Labour Statistics

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give for each of the standard regions, Scotland and Wales, the numbers of *(a)* 18 to 19-year-old unemployed including males, females and total for April 1991, *(b)* the percentage rate by age and *(c)* the age group as a percentage of the total number of unemployed within the regions, *(d)* 20 to 24-year-old unemployed, including males, females and total for April 1991, and the percentage rate by age and *(e)* the age group as a percentage of the total number of unemployed within the region.

Mr. Jackson: Information, relating to numbers of unemployed claimants by age and standard region, can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the House of Commons Library. Unemployment rates by age are only available at national level.

Enterprise Allowance

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, further to the reply of 28 June, *Official Report*, column 577, if he will set out the exact rates of enterprise allowance paid to unemployed people in receipt of unemployment benefit or income support fixed by each TEC from 1 April.

Mr. Forth: TECs may pay regular amounts of between £20 and £90 weekly for between 26 and 66 weeks. The rates paid vary between TECs and between individual entrants to the scheme. It is therefore not possible to provide information in the form required, except at disproportionate cost.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of applicants for unemployment benefit were disqualified for the maximum 26 weeks under section 20 of the Social Security Act 1975 in each of the last five years *(a)* in Wales as a whole and *(b)* in each county or district in Wales.

Mr. Jackson: Questions on operational matters in the Employment Service executive agency are the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the agency's chief executive, to whom I have referred this question for reply.

HEALTH

Women NHS Employees

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what policies are being implemented to increase the number of women employed by the national health service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Earlier this year I launched the "Women in the NHS" initiative to improve recruitment and retention of women staff within the national health service. A seminar was held on 25 June which considered a report from the Office of Public Management, commissioned by the NHS management executive, identifying the relevant issues. This concluded with an agenda for local action which will be followed up at three conferences in the autumn. Each regional chairman has nominated a non-executive member to take forward this work.

A retainer scheme has been introduced to allow staff to interrupt their careers for up to five years for domestic or other reasons, and includes refresher schemes, temporary employment and training courses. Health authorities are also encouraged to provide child care facilities which may include workplace nurseries, child care vouchers and holiday playschemes, as required locally.

In January, a report of a joint working party on women doctors and their careers was published. This made a number of practical suggestions to promote equal opportunities for women doctors in the NHS. In response, the Department is reconvening a working party on part-time training to look at the current arrangements for senior house officers and senior registrars. One and a half million pounds has been provided to fund part-time training posts and to set up a new scheme, WIST—Women in Surgical Training—to improve the representation of women in the higher grades of the surgical specialties. We have also issued a code of good practice to promote equality of opportunity in the recruitment and selection of doctors and dentists.

The recent agreement on junior doctors' hours has for the first time set an upper limit to the number of hours that can be worked—maximum hours per week and continuous spells of duty—and should reduce the difficulties of combining family responsibilities with a medical career.

The Department has funded several open learning "return to work" packages. "Return to nursing" was launched last summer and "return to health visiting" was launched in May. A "return to midwifery" package is planned for December. These have been supplemented by a "come back to caring" information pack.

The English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting which is centrally funded, is undertaking a review of training needs and materials for post registration education and training so that these can best meet the needs of the work force, for example, by providing part-time training for part-time staff.

The "women in pharmacy" work commissioned by the Department in 1989 has led to the production of two return to work videos, one aimed at employers and one at employees. Both highlight the potential advantages of attracting women returners and provide practical suggestions for managing career breaks. The videos are accompanied by an information pack designed by the National Association of Women Pharmacists and funded centrally.

The NHS is the single biggest employer of women in Europe and probably in the world. I am determined that we should be in the vanguard of employment practices for women. Much remains to be done to achieve that, but I am encouraged by the progress now being made.

Midwifery

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the change, in absolute and percentage terms, in midwifery staff in the United Kingdom since 1979.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Between September 1979 and 1990 the total number of midwifery staff, including student midwives, employed in the NHS in England increased by 3,620 wholetime equivalents—an increase of 18 per cent.

Information relating to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland is a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales, for Scotland and for Northern Ireland.

World Health Organisation

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list for *(a)* 1988-89, *(b)* 1989-90 and *(c)* 1990-91 the funds received by the World Health Organisation from the United Kingdom and other donor countries.

Mr. Dorrell: The World Health Organisation is funded through its regular budget—to which member states pay on the basis of an assessed contribution, and by means of voluntary contributions from donor countries.

Contributions to the regular budget were as follows:

	1988[1]	*1989*[1]	*1990*[1]
United Kingdom	14,116,260	13,436,670	14,813,795
Others	246,538,713	207,837,698	234,632,457
Total	260,654,973	221,274,368	249,446,252

[1] The World Health Organisation's financial accounting period is the calendar year and the United Kingdom contribution is paid in April of the year in question. All amounts are expressed in US dollars.

No similar comparison can be made for voluntary contributions due to the different United Kingdom and World Health Organisation accounting periods and the fact that recorded amounts are expressed in different currencies: Figures are however available as follows:

Voluntary contributions received by the World Health Organisation

1988[1]	*1989*[1]	*1990*[1]
211,834,369	219,734,813	249,446,252

[1] All amounts are expressed in US dollars.

Voluntary contributions paid by the United Kingdom

1988-89[1]	*1989-90*[1]	*1990-91*[1]
9,780,000	9,633,000	9,960,000

[1] All amounts are expressed in pounds sterling.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his policy where the consultants involved in a trust application by a national health service hospital are opposed to that application.

Mr. Dorrell: One of the key criteria that are used when assessing a trust application is the extent to which senior professional staff, especially consultants, are involved in the management of the unit. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will consider all comments received when assessing an application.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his timetable for all national health service hospitals adopting trust status.

Mr. Dorrell: We expect NHS trust status to become the management model of choice for all hospitals and other provider units in the national health service. We have now received 107 applications from units wishing to become operational as NHS trusts in April 1992. The decision to apply for NHS trust status is one for the units themselves and we have no set timetable for all units to become NHS trusts.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance his Department has given on the consultation to be conducted in applications for trust status.

Mr. Dorrell: Guidance on consultation for applicants for national health service trust status is contained in the HMSO publication "NHS trusts: A Working Guide", copies of which are available in the Library.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy not to announce his decisions on second-wave NHS trust applications before 14 October.

Mr. Dorrell: We have yet to decide the timing of this announcement.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what expressions of interest in national health service trust status he has so far received from hospitals and other health service units in the Eastern region; and if he will publish a list of these in the *Official Report*.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The following units in East Anglia region have submitted applications to become NHS trusts from April 1992: Allington (East Suffolk Community Unit), Hinchingbrooke hospital and King's Lynn and Wisbech hospitals. We have not yet invited formal expressions of interest in the third wave.

Mental Patients

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the statutory provisions relating to the right of mentally disadvantaged patients to participate in assessment procedures or to receive written statements of such assessment.

Mr. Dorrell: Mentally disordered patients have no statutory right under the Mental Health Act 1983 to participate in assessment procedures or to receive written statements of such assessments. It is considered good practice to involve patients in such procedures to the extent that their physical or mental health permits. Guidance is given in health circular HC(90)23 and local authority social services letter 90/11 and paragraph 2.6 of the code of practice issued under section 118 of the Mental Health Act 1983, copies of which are available in the Library.

If written assessments are recorded on computer, the Data Protection Act 1984 allows the patient the right of access except when it would be likely to cause him serious physical or mental harm—the Data Protection (Subject Access Modification) (Health) Order 1987. The same right will be extended to manual records from 1 November 1991 under the terms of the Access to Health Records Act 1990, except where it would be likely to cause him serious physical or mental harm.

Patients (Travel Costs)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will ease the procedures for claiming travel payments for patients who are required to travel a significant distance beyond their own district of residence to receive a necessary national health service treatment, irrespective of their personal resources; and if he has any plans to revise the present arrangements as part of the health service reforms.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Assistance with travelling expenses to treatment centres is given under the hospital travel costs scheme, which we have no plans to extend.

Erythropoietin

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines exist to permit the prescription by general practitioners of previously hospital prescribed drugs; and, in particular, what national or local guidelines have been issued about EPO.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Government's policy is that responsibility for a patient's prescribing rests with the clinician who has clinical responsibility. It is for the local clinicians concerned to decide on where responsibility for a particular patient should lie, with the best interests of the patient in mind.

No departmental guidance exists specifically on the prescribing of Erythropoietin.

Prescription Charges

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give consideration to extending the category of medical exemptions for prescription charges to include those people who require long-term medication following a heart transplant.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The limited list of medical conditions which confer exemption from prescription charges was drawn up after consultation with the British Medical Association in 1968.

There are already wide-ranging exemption arrangements, underpinned by the separate scheme for exemption on the grounds of low income, which ensure that no one need be deterred from obtaining their necessary medication on financial grounds. Nearly 80 per cent. of prescription items are currently dispensed free of charge.

Mental Illness Hospitals

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information is held centrally, and what information is requested from health authorities, about the implementation of the closure programme of mental illness hospitals and the monitoring of the consequences for former patients.

Mr. Dorrell: The care programme approach came into effect on 1 April. The needs of each patient, both for continuing health care and social care and for accommodation, are assessed before discharge and appropriate arrangements made.

Regional health authorities will monitor implementation of the care programme approach consulting the regional offices of the Department's social services inspectorate as necessary. In addition, the Department has commissioned research into the operation of the care programme approach.

The closure of hospitals is a matter for health authorities, which must take account of the views of the public, and must be agreed locally by the appropriate community health council or, if not agreed, referred to my hon. Friend the Secretary of State for a decision.

NHS Reforms

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will introduce provisions as part of the health service reforms to preclude all possible conflicts of interest among district health authority officers between the service providing function and the service purchasing function.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Yes. Draft guidance on standards of business conduct for national health service staff, including suggested measures to be taken by national health service employers to safeguard national health service interests at all times, has been prepared for consultation with national health service management and staff representatives and will be issued to the national health service in due course.

Pharmaceutical Imports

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of pharmaceutical imports by value are subject to regulation by the Medicine Controls Agency; what is the number of import licences issued by the medicine control agencies; if he will publish a list of those holding such licences; and in each case what is the number of inspection visits that have been made by the agency to the warehousing and stores of those importers.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information is not available in the form requested. The Medicines Control Agency issues product licences for medicinal products in

accordance with the Medicines Act and European directives. Such a licence must be obtained before a medicinal product may be marketed in the United Kingdom. No separate licence to import is needed, nor is the value of the product a factor in licensing decisions.

Currently there are over 18,000 product licences in existence of which over 5,000 list a foreign manufacturer. In addition the MCA issues manufacturers licences and wholesale dealers licences of which there are currently 780 and 1,200 respectively. Wholesale dealers trading in medicinal products which originate from outside the EC are subject to site inspection every two years; those who trade from within the EC every five years.

Family Practitioners

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the latest family practitioner committee payments per 10,000 registered population for each family practitioner area in London.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The table shows payments made by family health services authorities in London in 1989-90, per 10,000 registered population, in respect of general medical, dental and opthalmic services and the pharmaceutical service. Figures include superannuation contributions and are net of patient charges.

FHS Payments per 10,000 registered population 1989-90

FHSA	*£'000*
Barking and Havering	814
Barnet	757
Brent and Harrow	780
Bromley	810
Camden and Islington	812
City and East London	857
Croydon	818
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	746
Enfield and Haringey	716
Greenwich and Bexley	829
Hillingdon	811
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	821
Kingston and Richmond	827
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	760
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	786
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	855

Prescription Charges

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will make it mandatory for the price of the ingredients of a prescription to be shown on the receipt given to the patient.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The additional time and expense in requiring pharmacists, dispensing doctors and appliance contractors to calculate the ingredient cost and to issue receipts to patients for more than 380 million prescription items dispensed each year would not make the best use of the resources available to the NHS.

Health Benefits Low Income Scheme

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, if he has any proposals to revise the AG1 procedure in order to assist claimants, particularly elderly claimants.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 6 June at columns *300-01*.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received on the AG1 procedure since April 1988.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Since April 1988, when form AG1 and associated claims procedures first came into use, a number of representations have been received, mainly about the length of the form and its complexity. In addition my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has recently received a report from the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux about the national health service low income scheme and form AG1.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, how many AG1 claim forms were incorrectly or insufficiently completed and had to be returned to claimants for completion during the last year for which statistics are available.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Between 1 April 1990 and 31 March 1991, 361,521 claim forms were returned to claimants either because they were incorrectly completed or because further information was required. This represents approximately 35 per cent. of the total claim forms received during the period.

There is currently a review of the administration of the NHS low income scheme. Simplification of form AG1 is a principal aim of that review.

Asthma

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research he is supporting into the causes and pattern of incidence of asthma and related conditions.

Mr. Dorrell: The main agency through which the Government support biomedical and clinical research in the United Kingdom is the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant-in-aid from the Department of Education and Science. In 1989-90, the latest year for which figures are available, the MRC spent £911,000 on asthma-related research.

The Department is also supporting a randomised controlled trial concerned with improvement in general practice services to patients with asthma.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if his Department will carry out an evaluation of energy by contract hire as a way of achieving the 15 per cent. fuel saving in the national health service as prescribed by the Government;

(2) what assessment he has made of the potential saving in energy costs in hospitals achievable through energy by contract hire systems.

Mr. Dorrell: The use of contract energy management schemes could make a contribution to energy conservation in certain circumstances, but the way in which individual health authorities and NHS trusts achieve the target of a 15 per cent. saving in energy consumption over the next five years is, essentially, a matter for local management to decide. We have made it clear that comprehensive investment appraisals of energy conservation measures should be carried out and the possible use of contract energy management will be one of the options to be evaluated.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action his Department is taking to achieve the objective of a 15 per cent. fuel saving in the national health service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Regional health authorities have been given the objective of achieving the Government-wide energy saving target of 15 per cent. over the next five years. To assist them in achieving their objective, comprehensive guidance on energy efficiency measures can be found in ENCODE published by NHS Estates, a copy of which is available in the Library. Following the publication by the Audit Commission of its occasional paper on saving energy in the national health service, officials from NHS Estates have been participating with the Energy Efficiency Office and Audit Commission in a series of promotional seminars. In addition, a strategic guide for general managers on energy efficiency will be published shortly.

Salmonella

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the latest figures for reported cases of salmonella poisoning as a whole and for those associated with enteritidis PT4 strain for the first quarter of 1991.

Mr. Dorrell: The total number of human isolations of salmonella reported by the Public Health Laboratories Service division of enteric pathogens in England and Wales for the periods in question are contained in the April and July 1991 issues of the PHLS/SVS "Update on Salmonella Infection", copies of which are in the Library.

Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research

Mr. Mates: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether any decision has been made on the future management of the Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research.

Mr. Dorrell: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has been carefully considering a proposal from Porton International to acquire the Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research. The recent conflict in the Gulf raised a number of questions about certain defence-related capabilities which are unique to CAMR. Although we see no reason in principle why much of CAMR's work should not be transferred to the private sector, some of its work, including the public health and defence-related work, needs to remain under public sector control. We have therefore decided that the sale of CAMR would not at present be appropriate. We shall be giving further consideration to the arrangements needed for CAMR to fulfil its public health and defence-related roles, and to the options for its future management and financing. This decision does not affect the continuing business arrangements between CAMR and Porton International. A further announcement will be made as soon as possible.

Census

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the 1991 census preliminary report for England and Wales will be published.

Mr. Dorrell: The preliminary report for England and Wales containing counts of the population recorded as present in each local authority area has been laid before Parliament by the Registrar General and is published today. The corresponding report for Scotland is also published today.

The report includes a description of the main findings from the first counts and an explanation of the limitations of the figures, which can give only a broad picture of the patterns of population change since the 1981 census.

These preliminary figures show that the fastest-growing regions were East Anglia, the south-west, and the east midlands. Fewer people were counted in Greater London and all six metropolitan counties in 1991 than in 1981; with the most significant decreases occurring in metropolitan districts, including the principal cities. The fastest-growing local authority districts were generally those in remote rural areas, those which include new towns, and those in resort and retirement areas.

A comprehensive and detailed analysis of population change will be possible once the first computer-processed figures of the resident population are available. These will start to become available towards the end of this year and be completed by the middle of 1992.

The census monitor giving counts of people sleeping rough referred to in my answer of 9 July at column *337* is also published today.

Copies of these reports have been placed in the Library.

Abortions

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Leyton of 15 July, if he will meet the district general manager of Waltham Forest health authority, the hon. Member for Leyton and relevant NHS, community health council and other organisations providing abortion services to discuss Government policy on the provision of second abortions and those health authorities refusing them; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The level of gynaecological provision is, like that of other NHS services, a matter to be determined taking account of local circumstances and priorities. Such decisions are best taken locally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. S. Wayne, the chairman of Waltham Forest district health authority, for further details about the health authority's policy.

Petroleum Coke

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what tests have been made regarding the dangers of excessive combustion gases and the high sulphur content of imported petroleum coke for domestic heating.

Mr. Dorrell: Tests carried out in 1973 by Warren Spring laboratory on behalf of the Department of Environment showed that petroleum coke can have a higher sulphur content than coal and that because of its high burning tendency, if used incorrectly, it could damage the metal parts of appliances. The fuel showed some tendency to split.

It is not recommended for use in closed fires and fireguards are advised for open-grate fires as a safeguard to consumers.

Burning of any fossil fuel gives off sulphur dioxide. In most parts of the United Kingdom sulphur dioxide levels have fallen during the past decade and in general do not now reach levels likely to produce significant health effects.

Alzheimer's Disease

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) why it was decided to restrict care services for sufferers of Alzheimer's disease to those aged over 64 years;

(2) if he has any plans to introduce residential care services apart from elderly people's homes or acute psychiatric establishments for young people suffering from dementia;

(3) if he has any plans to introduce specialist day care facilities to sufferers from Alzheimer's disease below the age of 64 years;

(4) what plans he has to extend provision for care services for sufferers of Alzheimer's disease to all who have the disease.

Mr. Dorrell: Government policy in respect of people suffering from any form of dementia, including Alzheimer's disease, is that a comprehensive range of services should be available locally. The objective is to enable sufferers to live in their own homes, with appropriate support for both them and their carers, for as long as is feasible, or in appropriate residential care.

It is for individual health and local authorities to determine the health and social needs of mentally ill people in their areas, including those suffering from dementia and, within existing resources, to provide services to meet those needs, including the needs of younger mentally ill people with Alzheimer's disease.

National Health Service Hospitals (Thefts)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what steps are being taken by his Department to reduce the annual cost of thefts of property from national health service hospitals;

(2) what information he has about the total annual cost of thefts of property from national health service premises;

(3) what steps are taken by his Department to monitor the thefts of property from national health service hospitals.

Mr. Dorrell: The summarised accounts of health authorities in England for 1989-90 record a total of £3,413,698 in the category of losses of equipment and property due to theft, fraud or arson, neglect of duty and gross carelessness.

The Department requires health authorities to report the number and value of losses in an annual statement; these statements are audited along with the annual accounts by statutory auditors. Authorities need to seek departmental write-off approval for those cases which involve sums above delegated limits; where theft is suspected the police are required to be notified.

The National Health Service Security Manual which was sent to all health authorities in 1984 was commended by the Department as a good practical guide on matters relating to security of equipment, stock and premises. The National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts is currently updating the manual and the Department has contributed towards the pre-publication costs. My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State gave the opening address at a security conference on 7 May, organised by NAHAT, to heighten health authorities' awareness of security issues.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* his policies and *(b)* his Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; and if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring.

Mr. Dorrell: The Government continue to place a high priority on helping small businesses, through improvements to the business climate, through deregulation and other measures and through specific programmes of support and assistance. It continues to be the policy of the Department and the national health service to provide equal opportunity to all potential suppliers of whatever size, to trade on a value-for-money basis. This policy underpins all national health service and departmental contracts with suppliers. To help small businesses, a guide on how to do business with the national health service was revised and re-published in January 1991—"Business Links: A Suppliers Guide"—a copy of which is available in the Library. It advertises our link line telephone service that is available to all suppliers wishing further help in selling to the national health service. In addition, the national health service procurement directorate and national health service supplies departments continue to respond to large numbers of requests from businesses that wish to enter the national health service market. The national health service deals with several thousand suppliers through over 3,000 delivery points. It is not practicable to monitor centrally the precise extent to which the national health service draws on small businesses, but it is estimated that they continue to represent some 80 per cent. of suppliers. The Department offers similar encouragement to small businesses, but is unable at present to give an indication of the levels of business with them. It is, however, proposed to collect such information from the 1992-93 year onwards using new computer systems.

St. Mark's Hospital, City Road

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the future of the St. Mark's hospital, City road, London.

Mr. Dorrell: I understand that the matter is currently under discussion between the regional health authority and City and Hackney health authority.

Selby War Memorial Hospital

Mr. Alison: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the projects for improvements, upgrading or expansion, and their costs, carried out at Selby War Memorial hospital since 1979.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not held centrally. My right hon. Friend may wish to contact Mr. John Pratt, the chairman of York district health authority, for details.

Transplant Operations

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the total number of transplant operations that have taken place in the United

Kingdom since 1961; and if he will list the numbers who have benefited from cornea, heart, kidney, liver, lung and pancreas transplants.

Mr. Dorrell: The table gives the numbers and types of transplants performed in NHS hospitals in the United Kingdom for the years for which records are held, according to information supplied by the United Kingdom Transplant Support Service Authority.

Year	*Cadaveric kidneys*	*Heart*	*Heart/ lung*	*Liver*	*Lung*	*Pancreas*	*Cornea*[1]
1972	438	—	—	—	—	—	N/K
1973	470	—	—	—	—	—	N/K
1974	503	—	—	—	—	—	N/K
1975	616	—	—	—	—	—	N/K
1976	604	—	—	—	—	—	N/K
1977	691	—	—	—	—	—	N/K
1978	849	—	—	—	—	—	N/K
1979	842	3	—	—	—	—	N/K
1980	988	25	—	—	—	—	N/K
1981	905	24	—	—	—	—	N/K
1982	1,033	36	—	—	—	—	N/K
1983	1,144	53	1	20	—	—	N/K
1984	1,443	116	10	51	—	—	N/K
1985	1,336	137	37	88	—	10	529
1986	1,493	176	51	127	3	6	770
1987	1,485	243	72	172	4	8	961
1988	1,575	274	101	241	16	8	1,270
1989	1,732	295	94	295	39	—	1,758
1990	1,730	329	95	359	52	5	2,135

All figures prior to 1978 were collected manually and should be viewed with caution.
[1] Not all cornea transplants are recorded centrally and the actual figures are known to be higher.
Source: The United Kingdom Transplant Support Service Authority formerly the United Kingdom Transplant Service.

Langton House Unit

Mrs. Rosie Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will establish an independent inquiry, to which previous residents can give evidence, into the treatment of young people at Langton House adolescent and young people's unit.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are no plans to set up such an inquiry.

Tobacco Products

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will make it his policy that any regulations on the labelling of tobacco products on sale in the United Kingdom apply fully to all imported items as well as to items produced within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dorrell: The effect of Council directive 89/622/EEC concerning the labelling of tobacco products will be to introduce partial harmonisation of the regulations governing tobacco products in the EC. This permits such products to be imported from other EC member states provided that they have complied with the directive and that the health warnings and the statement of tar and nicotine yields appear in English. Tobacco products imported from outside the Community will be required to comply with the United Kingdom labelling regulations applicable to products manufactured in the United Kingdom.

District Health Authority Income

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list for each district health authority for each of the past three years *(a)* how much money has been raised by fund raising and *(b)* the percentage this represents of the total local district health authority budget.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 2 July 1991]:* Health authorities are empowered to raise money directly by appeals, collections etc., under section 5 of the Health Services Act 1980; such fund raising is undertaken through authorities' trust funds, which have charitable status. Figures for fund raising from the accounts of those district health authority trust funds in England taking advantage of this facility are shown in the table. Funds raised through the activities of third parties such as leagues of friends are not separately identifiable and are often accounted for separately.

While representing a useful incidental source of income the sums raised are supplementary to the cash advances made by the Department and represent a very small proportion of the total annual revenue expenditure incurred by the authorities concerned. Consequently the percentage figures, the highest being 1·3 per cent., but the majority below 0·5 per cent. have not been shown in the table.

District Health Authorities—Income from Fund Raising under Section 5 of the Health Services Act 1980

	1987-88 £(cash)	*1988-89 £(cash)*	*1989-90 £(cash)*
Hartlepool	0	0	72,758
North Tees	107,532	188,578	57,012
West Cumbria	81	0	0
South West Durham	130	0	0
Northumberland	0	20,213	118,743
Harrogate	1,376	601	423,992
Bradford	0	1,478	29,855

	1987-88 £(cash)	1988-89 £(cash)	1989-90 £(cash)
Dewsbury	0	1,417	1,078
Leeds Western	1,251	5,833	2,911
Nottingham	169,326	0	0
Doncaster	5,935	71,715	67,209
Sheffield	61,596	7,751	2,579
Peterborough	0	0	3,954
West Suffolk	199,626	381,444	240,461
West Norfolk and Wisbech	0	0	2,250
South West Hertfordshire	232,107	381,431	239,839
Harrow	3,189	1,740	0
Hillingdon	24,667	16,692	21,816
Ealing	5,757	2,474	3,602
West Essex	209	0	1,261
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	7,189	10,742	1,501
Islington	0	26,334	34,878
City and Hackney	251,456	1,001,629	679,731
Newham	0	56,251	27,689
Waltham Forest	7,825	9,059	16,856
Eastbourne	16,411	0	0
Canterbury and Thanet	487,914	245,118	112,061
Bexley	6,478	2,900	31,911
Greenwich	517	2,262	665
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	0	74,518	36,182
South West Surrey	5,121	6,442	5,285
Mid Surrey	0	0	5,934
East Surrey	3,712	2,978	70,833
Chichester	0	204,328	419,543
Worthing	6,273	6,094	6,152
Croydon	48,984	254,744	246,685
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	0	4,093	2,997
East Dorset	347,954	573,868	1,113,997
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	575,769	427,276	193,300
Winchester	12,958	6,469	2,538
Basingstoke	1,095	0	1,377
Swindon	486,016	23,136	49,586
Bath	10,415	13,487	7,176
Milton Keynes	30,143	22,694	11,122
Kettering	0	0	8,337
Northampton	13,440	13,279	17,758
Oxfordshire	6,740	0	0
Southmead	0	2,862	2,877
North Devon	14,769	214,499	274,568
Shropshire	0	0	396
Mid Staffs	0	0	17,724
Rugby	0	62	527
North Warwickshire	0	844	1,680
East Birmingham	0	18,698	57,334
South Birmingham	22,602	47,873	46,763
West Birmingham	73,946	5,712	1,776
Dudley	1,456	5,009	10,000
Sandwell	0	568	33,862
Solihull	8,900	32,630	88,457
Walsall	14,294	47,987	36,013
Crewe	492	0	0
Halton	0	0	866
Liverpool	0	0	69,123
Lancaster	27,244	0	0
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	6,624	0	0
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	557,584	189,390	6,111
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	0	0	8,692
North Manchester	433	0	0
Central Manchester	0	9,129	1,827
South Manchester	0	0	1,250
Salford	0	18,992	16,822
Tameside and Glossop	0	3,286	75,405
Trafford	1,270	30,723	0

Notes:

1. The figures are shown without deduction of any expenses incurred. All trust fund income from subscriptions and donations; legacies, dividends; and other sources is excluded.
2. Sums (totalling £503,334 in 1989-90) raised by Special Health Authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals and by Special Trustees for certain London and provincial teaching hospitals, which are therefore not identifiable with district health authorities, are excluded.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Hounds

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will issue guidelines to those organisations using hounds for hunting purposes on the risk to animal health from taenia hydatigena spread by infected hounds; and if he will require such organisations to worm their hounds effectively and to cook casualty meat and offal prior to being fed to such hounds.

Mr. Maclean: I have no plans to do so.

Salmon

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list in the *Official Report* the catch statistics for salmon and grilse both by commercial methods and by rod-and-line for each year from 1966 to the latest date for which figures are available; if he will show separate figures for England, Wales and Scotland; and if he will detail for each such year the catch by the drift nets operating in the North sea from Northumberland and Yorkshire.

Mr. Curry: The information requested is set out in the table.

Declared catches of salmon and grilse by rods and commercial methods, 1966-90.

	Commercial catch						Rod catch		
Year	*England*[1]	*Wales*[1]	*Scotland*	*England (exel. N.E. drift and T/J nets)*	*N'thumbria and Yorkshire (drift and T/J nets)*	*N'thumbria (drift nets only*[2]*)*	*Yorkshire (drift nets only)*	*England*[1]	*Wales*[1]	*Scotland*
1966	42,229	14,501	366,139	26,595	15,634	—	1,129	17,816	17,444	71,864
1967	54,844	13,259	526,894	28,485	26,359	—	2,331	13,056	16,552	77,796
1968	44,755	6,836	381,466	20,005	24,750	—	1,497	7,960	8,613	52,616
1969	73,956	8,118	510,189	24,132	49,824	—	2,854	8,066	8,112	52,069
1970	122,045	8,280	346,207	27,054	94,991	—	3,494	8,876	10,155	62,829
1971	83,423	9,295	374,236	23,070	60,353	—	4,838	8,192	11,561	49,525
1972	73,552	10,126	409,842	21,871	51,681	—	2,906	10,108	14,749	59,646
1973	84,760	9,145	464,704	21,918	62,842	—	3,698	9,600	11,311	66,306
1974	71,247	9,168	417,853	18,491	52,756	—	4,966	10,430	14,330	59,920
1975	77,968	11,507	362,090	24,517	53,451	—	7,297	10,162	14,254	68,252
1976	34,759	7,970	254,400	19,058	15,701	—	3,239	5,623	5,171	48,674
1977	71,259	6,600	268,684	18,371	52,888	—	12,827	8,629	10,371	64,567
1978	68,088	7,562	290,028	16,458	51,630	—	4,448	7,638	9,835	77,396
1979	56,726	4,827	238,580	13,262	43,464	—	4,305	7,578	6,503	81,165
1980	62,193	7,275	223,525	16,413	45,780	—	3,667	11,905	9,672	70,504
1981	90,877	9,037	262,166	21,764	69,113	—	10,077	11,425	10,742	63,293
1982	62,739	4,472	271,549	12,572	50,167	—	6,537	7,220	6,287	64,754
1983	97,334	4,834	289,508	20,057	77,277	—	12,245	7,430	7,381	66,070
1984	79,274	3,947	261,619	19,979	59,295	—	7,810	7,219	3,802	58,673
1985	72,465	3,465	196,570	15,109	57,356	—	9,291	10,725	8,876	76,090
1986	85,416	5,031	276,074	21,991	63,425	—	8,059	11,849	8,498	75,185
1987	59,193	4,535	197,653	23,050	36,143	—	2,562	11,509	8,202	71,126
1988	72,307	5,010	164,772	21,458	50,849	42,066	5,399	16,857	15,989	96,488
1989	63,882	5,058	190,820	22,429	41,453	31,328	4,908	9,274	5,454	88,007
1990[3]	67,469	4,312	97,372	15,939	51,530	40,496	7,723	9,471	4,636	71,646

[1] Data for 1966-1982 for England and Wales will be included in an authoritative compilation to be published shortly; however, pending publication these data should be regarded as provisional.
[2] Drift net catch data for the Northumbria region were not reported separately before 1988.
[3] Data not yet confirmed.

Veterinary Investigation Centres

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the numbers of *(a)* scientific and *(b)* non-scientific staff employed at each veterinary investigation centre according to different grades.

Mr. Gummer: The numbers of *(a)* scientific and *(b)* non-scientific staff employed at each veterinary investigation centre according to the different grades in post on 1 June 1991 are:

(a) Scientific staff

VI Centre	*PSO*	*SSO*	*HSO*	*SO*	*ASO*
Aberystwyth	—	—	2	4	1
Bangor	—	—	1	2+[1]1	2
Bristol (Langford)	—	—	1	4	6
Cambridge	—	1	1	3	7
Carmarthen	—	1	—	5	3
Lincoln	—	—	1	1	5+[1]1
Newcastle	—	1	1	1	7
Norwich	—	—	1	2	8
Penrith	—	1	—	2	7
Preston (Barton Hall)	—	1	—	3	8
Reading	—	—	1	2	6+[1]1
Shrewsbury	—	—	2	2	8

VI Centre	PSO	SSO	HSO	SO	ASO
Starcross	—	—	1	3	5
Sutton Bonington	—	1	2	2	7
Thirsk	—	—	1	3	7
Truro	—	—	1	1	3
Winchester	—	—	1	2	3+[1]2
Worcester	—	1	1	3	9
Wye	—	—	1	2	2
QC Unit located at Lincoln VIC	1	—	1	—	3

The Grades are:
PSO—Principal Scientific Officer.
SSO—Senior Scientific Officer.
HSO—Higher Scientific Officer.
SO—Scientific Officer.
ASO—Assistant Scientific Officer.
[1] Part-time.

(b) Non-Scientific staff

VI Centre	LA	EW	AO	AA	Typist
Aberystwyth	1+[1]2	—	[1]1	1	[1]1
Bangor	1	—	—	2	1
Bristol (Langford)	2	1	1	1+[1]1	1+[1]1
Cambridge	2	1	1	1+[1]3	1+[1]1
Carmarthen	2	1	1	1	1
Lincoln	2	1	1	1	1
Newcastle	2	1	1	2	1
Norwich	2	1	1	2	1+[1]1
Penrith	1	1	1	2+[1]1	1
Preston (Barton Hall)	3	1	1	1+[1]1	1
Reading	1	1	1	2	1
Shrewsbury	2	1	1	2	1
Starcross	2	1	1	1+[1]1	1
Sutton Bonington	2	1	1	2	1+[1]1
Thirsk	1+[1]1	2	1	2	1
Truro	2	1	1	—	1
Winchester	2	1	1	1	—
Worcester	4	1	1	3	—
Wye	1	1	—	1	1

The Grades are:
LA—Laboratory attendant.
EW—Experimental worker.
AO—Administrative officer.
AA—Administrative assistant.
[1] Part-time.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of *(a)* cattle, *(b)* pigs, *(c)* poultry and *(d)* sheep in the catchment area of each veterinary investigation centre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: As I indicated in my reply to the hon. Member on 4 July 1991 at column *184*, the catchment areas of veterinary investigation centres are complex. The best estimates of the numbers of *(a)* cattle, *(b)* pigs, *(c)* poultry and *(d)* sheep in the catchment area of each veterinary investigation centre in England and Wales based on the June 1989 agricultural census information are:

Veterinary investigation centre	Numbers of cattle	Numbers of sheep	Numbers of pigs	Numbers of poultry (fowls)
Bristol	868,000	1,211,000	503,000	7,480,000
Cambridge	277,000	772,000	725,000	9,946,000
Lincoln	199,000	451,000	879,000	7,326,000
Newcastle	356,000	2,339,000	101,000	1,844,000
Norwich	146,000	199,000	838,000	8,695,000
Penrith	542,000	2,504,000	67,000	2,204,000
Preston	643,000	1,327,000	435,000	7,425,000
Reading	407,000	831,000	450,000	4,815,000
Shrewsbury	648,000	1,884,000	261,000	5,803,000
Starcross	667,000	2,005,000	192,000	3,337,000
Sutton Bonington	448,000	1,010,000	271,000	5,120,000
Thirsk	558,000	2,072,000	991,000	6,963,000
Truro	401,000	687,000	75,000	844,000
Winchester	284,000	491,000	200,000	6,427,000
Worcester	513,000	2,096,000	244,000	8,289,000
Wye	163,000	1,009,000	103,000	3,392,000
Aberystwyth	270,000	3,882,000	17,000	1,028,000

Veterinary investigation centre	Numbers of cattle	Numbers of sheep	Numbers of pigs	Numbers of poultry (fowls)
Bangor	345,000	3,335,000	37,000	3,178,000
Carmarthen	543,000	2,829,000	45,000	2,011,000

Cumbrian Farmers

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the total amounts of grants and subsidies paid to Cumbrian farmers in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Curry: The information requested is contained in the table.

The schemes listed are:

AIS	Agriculture improvement scheme
FDGS	Farm diversification grant scheme
F & CGS	Farm and conservation grant scheme (EC and national)
ESA	Environmentally sensitive areas
FW	Farm woodland scheme
CSCS	Chernobyl sheep compensation scheme
SAP	Sheep annual premium
SCPS	Suckler cow premium scheme
HLCA	Hill livestock compensation allowance
S-AS	Set-aside scheme

(£'000s) Schemes	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91[1]	1991-92
AIS[1]	—	—	—	—	—	142	1,253	1,625	2,221	1,688	n/a
FDGS[1]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	29	88	n/a
F & CGS[1]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	189	1,530	n/a
ESA[1]	—	—	—	—	—	—	32	49	59	64	n/a
FW[2]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	8	8	0
CSCS	—	—	—	—	—	242	175	130	140	147	27
SAP[3]	1,026	2,097	5,365	3,760	6,218	4,510	5,661	6,240	7,359	10,668	n/a
SCPS[4]	557	539	523	1,029	1,009	1,361	1,361	1,399	2,126	n/a	n/a
HLCA[1]	5,373	5,561	5,609	5,614	5,773	6,529	6,702	6,820	7,080	7,654	8,444
SAS	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	63	92	n/a	n/a
TOTALS	6,957	8,197	11,497	10,403	12,999	12,785	15,184	16,328	19,303	21,847	8,472

Notes:

[1]Calendar Years.

[2]Scheme Years: November 1989 to March 1990
April 1990 to March 1991
April 1991 to June 1991.

[3]Scheme Years: Spread over three years: Apply December Year 1, Payment April Year 2 onwards, April Year 3 close.

[4]Scheme Years: 1981 = June 1981 to May 1982
1982 = July 1982 to July 1983
1983 = August 1983 to July 1984
1984 = August 1984 to July 1985
1985 = August 1985 to June 1986
1986 = July 1986 to June 1987
1987 = July 1987 to June 1988
1988 = July 1988 to June 1989
1989 = July 1989 to June 1990.

[5]Up to w/e 28 June 1991—Scheme not available for whole period.

Regional Offices

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the numbers of staff in different grades employed at each of his regional and divisional offices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested for my Department's regional (RO) and divisional (DO) office organisation in England is as follows:

	Number
Northern region	
Leeds RO	210
Beverley DO	93
Carlisle DO	105
Newcastle DO	110
Northallerton DO	80
Eastern region	
Cambridge RO	359
Chelmsford DO	90
Huntingdon DO	90
Lincoln DO	96
Norwich DO	112
Midlands and Western region	
Wolverhampton RO	339
Crewe DO	109
Nottingham DO	131
Preston DO	95
Worcester DO	142
South Eastern	
Reading RO	218
Guildford DO	103
Maidstone DO	88
Oxford DO	100
South Western	
Bristol RO	210
Exeter DO	184
Gloucester DO	119
Taunton DO	125
Truro DO	119

The numbers recorded include veterinary staff and headquarters staff stationed at regional and divisional offices but who do not form part of the regional organisation.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to publish the full report of the ministerial review of his Ministry's regional organisation; when he expects to take a final decision about the closure and reorganisation of regional and divisional offices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I am considering the future structure of the Ministry's regional organisation and will be making an announcement shortly.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* his policies and *(b)* his Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; and if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring.

Mr. Curry: The Government continue to place a high priority on helping small businesses through improvements to the business climate, through deregulation and other measures, and through specific programmes of support and assistance.

The Department has continued to contribute significantly to this process. We have maintained pressure for a more market-orientated common agricultural policy, both in the 1991 price-fixing agreement and in the discussions on reform of the CAP which commenced in February and have recently resumed. A reformed CAP, along lines acceptable to the United Kingdom, together with worldwide reforms to systems of agricultural support being negotiated in the current GATT round, would provide further encouragement for competitive and efficient agricultural industry. Change on these lines would be in the long-term interests of both larger and smaller farms.

We have also continued to offer farmers the opportunity to diversify their enterprises and income-generating activities through our various schemes including the farm woodlands scheme, set-aside, the farm diversification grant scheme and the environmentally sensitive areas scheme. We are reviewing the first round of environmentally sensitive areas and are consulting on our proposals for change.

All the schemes operated by the Department are closely monitored. Reports on particular schemes are published from time to time.

Salmonella

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of salmonella submissions under *(a)* Processed Animal Protein Orders, *(b)* Layer Breeders and Hatcheries Orders and *(c)* Zoonoses Orders for each veterinary investigation centre for each year since 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: It is not possible to supply the specific information requested. The information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Imported Birds

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what analysis he has made of the results of mortality studies, and his review of the legal powers available to Her Majesty's Government, in relation to import arrangements for wild caught birds.

Mr. Maclean: With the assistance of the RSPCA, we have made a preliminary analysis of the statistics for the two years for which data are available. The results show some correlation between mortality of individual species, which suggests that in principle the data can be used to assist in deciding whether a species is particularly vulnerable to captivity.

Discussions with the Department of the Environment are continuing on further restrictions and the powers which may best be used to implement them.

Irradiated Food

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) whether compound ingredients of food which do not have to be listed under clause 16 of the Food Labelling Regulations 1984 have to be listed and labelled if they have been irradiated; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether food which has been irradiated and is a compound ingredient needs to be labelled as irradiated as outlined in clause 16(3) and (4) of the Food Labelling Regulations 1984.

Mr. Gummer: Regulations introduced on 1 January this year, which take into account EC labelling rules, require the labelling of irradiated food and listed food ingredients for pre-packed sales. Additional requirements are included for non-pre-packed sales and food sold by caterers.

Exemptions in regulation 16 of the Food Labelling Regulations 1984, as amended, which apply EC rules, provide that if a particular ingredient does not need to appear on the label, the fact that it may have been irradiated need not appear either. This exemption has obtained in other member states where irradiated food has for some time been permitted. We are currently seeking to persuade other member states that this exemption under the EC directive should be withdrawn for irradiated ingredients.

SCOTLAND

Schools Expenditure

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the level of capital expenditure on schools in *(a)* each regional authority in Scotland and *(b)* Scotland in total, in each year since 1978-79 in constant prices.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave him on 5 July, c. *235-36*.

Appointees

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the names of his appointees to the *(a)* Countryside Commission for Scotland, *(b)* Crofters Commission, *(c)* Rent Assessment Panel for Scotland, *(d)* Red Deer Commission, *(e)* Scottish Dental Practice Board, *(f)* Scottish Transport

Group, *(g)* Advisory Committee on Distinction Awards, *(h)* Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, *(i)* Horticultural Development Council, *(j)* Meat and Livestock Commission, *(k)* National Radiological Protection Board, *(l)* Sea Fish Industry Authority and *(m)* Director-General of Electricity Supply.

Mr. Lang: The following tables show the names of those appointed as at 1 July 1991. Table 1 lists appointments made solely by me. Table 2 lists those appointments made jointly with other Ministers.

Appointments made by the Secretary of State for Scotland as at 1 July 1991

Countryside Commission for Scotland
J. Roger Carr, CBE *(Chairman)*
John Arnott
Quintin Brown
Bruce Cowe, MBE
Ronald D. Cramond, CBE
Prof. Charles H. Gimingham
Mrs. Susan Harvey
Cllr. Alastair W. Henry
Eric Langmuir, MBE
Innes Miller
Dr. William E. S. Mutch
Prof. John C. Smyth, OBE
W. Mark Turnbull
Dr. Adam Watson

Crofters Commission
Hugh A. M. Maclean *(Chairman)*
Alasdair Cameron
Brian T. Hunter
Donald M. Macdonald
Peter Morrison
D. A. Morrison
William Ritchie

Rent Assessment Panel for Scotland
George F. Robertson *(President)*
Mrs. M. L. J. Walker *(Vice-President)*

Local Chairmen
A. D. Anderson
J. F. Barron
J. M. Barton
M. J. Burns
Mrs. L. J. M. Campbell
Miss A. Chisholm
J. D. Crerar
A. C. W. A. Eccles
S. T. M. Ellery
W. S. Forrest
J. R. Gardiner
Miss S. T. Givens
D. Graham
J. M. D. Graham
The Hon. Simon E. G. Guest
Miss C. S. Henderson
Professor J. A. M. Inglis, CBE
E. G. Kennedy
Professor P. N. Love, CBE
Miss D. McGhie
A. D. Mackay
R. L. Mackinnon
B. McMullan
J. G. Malcolm-Smith
J. M. Mayger
Miss M. Millar
N. J. A. Robertson
J. G. L. Robinson
E. O. St. John
H. D. Sheldon
O. H. Speirs
R. S. Swinton
G. W. Tait
W. F. Walker
B. C. T. Wood

Local Valuers
J. M. Bennett
G. H. Campbell
K. I. Crichton
R. Crozier
F. M. Halliday
J. S. Harrison
R. J. Heaney
Mrs. U. L. Heaney
T. Henaughen
W. Howie
M. Kay
W. M. Kerr
W. O. Lawrie
A. C. Love
M. Lygate
D. H. McCalum
W. M. McCash
R. R. McConnell

Table 2
Appointments made jointly with other Ministers as at 1 July 1991

Advisory Committee on distinction awards
Sir Gordon Robson, CBE *(Chairman)*
Archibald Rennie, CB
Dr. V. R. Bennett
Dr. J. L. T. Birley
Prof. D. C. Carter
Dr. J. O. M. C. Graig
Dr. Vera Dallos
Sir Herbert Duthie
T. A. English
Sir Anthony Grabham
Prof. W. W. Holland
Prof. F. Lachmann
Prof. P. Lachmann
Prof. M. H. Lessof
Prof. June Lloyd
J. A. P. Marston
D. M. F. Moran
D. K. Nichol
Prof. K. D. Peters
Prof. M. Rosen
D. Seel
S. C. Simmons
Dr. D. R. Sweetnam
Prof. Margaret Turner-Warwick
Prof. L. G. Whitby

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board
Lord Carlise of Bucklow *(Chairman)*
John F. A. Archer, QC
David Barker, QC
Sir Derek Bradbeer, OBE
Daniel Brennan, QC
David C. Calcut, QC
Hugh Carlisle, QC
Barry W. Chedlow, QC
John Cherry, QC
Miss B. Cooper, QC
Miss Diana Cotton, QC
John Crowley, QC
Thomas Dawson, QC
Kevin Drummond, QC
C. Fawcett, QC
William Gage, QC
Edward Gee
Barry Green
Graeme Hamilton, QC TD
Sir Arthur Hoole
His Hon. Judge James Kingham
James Law, QC
Michael E. Lewer, AC
Crawford Lindsay, QC
Donald Mackay, QC
His Hon. Judge Lewis McCreery
Lord Macaulay of Bragar, QC
Sir John Palmer, QC JP
I. Michael S. Park, CBE

Timothy Preston, QC
Miss S. A. Ritche, QC
D. B. Robertson, QC
Conrad Seagroatt, QC
L. Stuart Shields, QC
Mrs. Janet Smith, QC
Robert Smith, QC
Evan Stone, AC
D. Martin Thomas, OBE QC
David P. O. Thomas, QC
Peter Weitzman, QC
His Hon. Judge David West-Russell
Charles Whitby, QC
John L. Williams

Horticultural Development Council
Frank Thomlinson, CBE *(Chairman)*
Don Goodwin, MBE
Ron Murdy
A. McCutchion
Mrs. Patricia Lunn
Tony Gould
John Derek Taylor
Peter Henry Shepherd
Andrew Logan
Michael George Holmes
P. Emmett
Geoffrey Coles
Ken James
Paul Middlebrook
John Evans
Tom Wood
T. Peter M. Thomson
J. Sephton
A. P. Shirley
H. B. Lowe

Meat and Livestock Commission
Geoffrey R. John *(Chairman)*
Rolf Werner Mattes
George C. Adams
John Baker, MBE
Donald T. Y. Curry
A. R. Manson, CBE
Peter Redshaw
Meurick R. E. Rees, CBE, JP, FRAGS
Mrs. Evelyn Rose, MBE
Allan Roxburgh
James F. Royan, OBE
Colin G. Smith
Jeff G. Steer

National Radiological Protection Board
Professor T. R. E. Southwood *(Chairman)*
Professor Ann Barrett
Professor J. H. Edwards
Professor H. J. Evans
Professor E. M. Grant
Professor P. Haggett
Professor T. R. Lee
Professor R. M. May
Mrs. S. Morrison
Dr. R. Owen
Professor J. Peto
Professor G. M. Roberts
Martin Trowbridge

Sea Fish Industry Authority
Lord Mackay of Ardbrecknish *(Chairman)*
Eric Davey
John Adams
John Craddock
Prof. Mike Haines
William Hay, CBE
Frank Ledwidge
Duncan MacInnes
Ian McFadden
Miss Elizabeth Stevenson
David Stevenson
David Vickers
Colin Warwick

Director General of Electricity Supply
Prof. Stephen Littlechild

Training Grant Scheme

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the expenditure envisaged for the training grant scheme in Grampian.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I regret that I am unclear as to the identity of the scheme about which the hon. Member is seeking information. If he will write to me giving more details I will endeavour to be of assistance.

Industrial Injuries

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information is held on, or estimate made of, the number of successful claims and the total and average amounts of compensation awarded by courts or settled out of court in respect of industrial injuries during each of the last 10 years, based on the date of the injury, both in cash terms and adjusted to take account of inflation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally.

Interim Development Orders

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* all existing quarry sites in Scotland which will be subject to the new provisions relating to interim development orders in the Planning and Compensation Bill *[Lords]*.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally. The Scottish Office Environment Department is carrying out a survey of planning authorities to establish the number of extant IDO permissions and the nature of the conditions attached to them.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the most detailed study to be carried out by the Scottish Office to improve the information currently available on interim development orders in Scotland; and when he expects to be able to publish the results.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Office Environment Department wrote to planning authorities and other interested parties on 28 June seeking information on the number of IDO permissions extant, on the proportion currently providing the basis for mineral extraction and on the conditions, if any, attached to the permissions. Responses have been requested by 14 October and I expect to publish the results by the end of the year.

Mineral Extraction

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has to allow for compensation for the owners of mineral extraction rights in circumstances where planning permission is refused on environmental grounds.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is a fundamental principle of the planning system that compensation is not

payable for a refusal of planning permission. This would only encourage speculative applications. The right of appeal is available to all applicants for planning permission if they feel their application has been unjustifiably refused.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will consider calling in all proposals to reopen and work mineral extraction rights to allow local public inquiries where there are substantial objections to the proposals.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The circumstances in which my right hon. Friend will consider calling in planning applications notified to him are set out in circular 29/1988 and the Town and Country Planning (Notification of Applications) (Scotland) Direction 1988. He has no plans to amend the circular or the direction.

Hospital Waste

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, further to his reply of 15 July, *Official Report*, column *472*, how hospital waste not burnt at the required temperature by incinerators is disposed of.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The clinical waste element of hospital waste is rendered safe by the process of incineration. The residual ash from that process, which has also been rendered safe by the process, is disposed of at landfill sites. Where it is practical and cost effective the household waste element of hospital waste is also incinerated. The remainder of the household waste element of hospital waste is disposed of at landfill sites.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* his policies and *(b)* his Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; and if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The Government continue to place a high priority on helping small businesses, through improvements to the business climate, through deregulation and other measures and through specific programmes of support and assistance.

The importance to the Scottish economy of a vigorous and energetic small firms sector cannot be overstated, and small businesses continue to benefit from the comprehensive schemes of support that the Government have introduced. Policy responsibility lies within the Scottish Office Industry Department although, until 31 March 1991, the services were delivered mainly through the Scottish Development Agency and the Highlands and Islands Development Board; they are now delivered through their successor bodies. In addition to providing services specific to Scotland, these bodies also had responsibility for the delivery and monitoring in Scotland of United Kingdom services on behalf of other Departments, including the Department of Employment and the Department of Trade and Industry. The success of these policies is demonstrated by statistics for VAT registration. In 1980, 9,800 additional companies registered for VAT. In 1989 the comparable figure was 16,800, an increase of 71 per cent. At the end of 1989 the total number of VAT-registered businesses in Scotland was 113,200, an increase of 19,800 or 21 per cent. on the comparable figure for 1979.

There follows a description of the services available to small firms in Scotland during the periods 1989-90 and 1990-91, and some of their achievements. For the period 1989-90 the Scottish Office Industry Department made 167 offers of regional selective assistance to the value of over £17 million to small companies—those employing fewer than 200 worldwide. This contributed to the creation of 3,080 planned new jobs and the safeguarding of 340 existing jobs. In 1990-91, 131 offers of regional selective assistance were made to the value of over £20 million to small companies and which contributed to the creation of 3,290 planned new jobs and the safeguarding of 560 existing jobs. Under both the investment and innovation elements of the regional enterprise grants scheme, 432 offers to the value of £4 million were made in Scotland in 1989-90 to companies employing under 25 people, contributing to the creation of 1,640 planned new jobs and the safeguarding of 1,660 existing jobs. In 1990-91, offers of regional enterprise grant to the value of £4·6 million were made, contributing to the creation of 1,650 planned new jobs and the safeguarding of 1,550 existing jobs. Residual offers to small companies under the regional development grants scheme, the last applications for which were accepted on 31 March 1988. totalled £100,000 with the potential for 50 associated jobs. During the periods in question, the better business service scheme was administered by the SDA and the HIDB. The scheme allows small companies to have access to subsidised professional business advice and in 1989-90 some 8,090 offers of assistance were made with an associated value of £3·7 million. In 1990-91 6,900 offers of assistance were made with an associated value of £3·3 million.

Scottish Development Agency support for small businesses included the provision of financial assistance and a wide range of advisory services, including the small firms service in Scotland and the administration of DTI's consultancy initiatives, under the enterprise initiative. In addition, the SFS offered an integrated and complementary range of business services including the Government business shop, the Euroinfocentre, a franchise desk and a Companies house satellite office. Under the consultancy initiatives, some 1,158 consultancy projects were undertaken during 1989-90 and in 1990-91 the figure was 1,200. In 1989-90 the SFS handled 17,286 inquiries, the figure for 1990-91 being 16,805. Figures for investment in small firms are not yet available for this period, but across all sectors in Scotland in 1990-91 the SDA invested £7 million and safeguarded 4,985 jobs.

As well as delivering a small firms counselling service in its area, the Highlands and Islands Development Board was responsible for a wide range of activities in support of businesses, most of which were small, to help them overcome the difficulties in operating in this rural part of the United Kingdom. The measures taken include financial support to business, provision of factories and assistance with business advice and training. In the period 1989-90 the board approved 983 offers of financial assistance worth £19·4 million on projects involving proposed private sector investment of £51·1 million and the planned creation or safeguarding of 2,700 jobs. For the period 1990-91 the board approved 1,071 offers of financial assistance worth £21·6 million on projects

involving proposed private sector investment of £54·9 million and the planned creation or safeguarding of 2,800 jobs. In the period 1989-90 the HIDB completed 7,208 sq m of factory floor space. In this period, some 3,200 jobs were housed in HIDB factories. In the period 1990-91 the HIDB completed 7,061 sq m of factory floor space. At the end of the period a total of some 3,300 jobs were housed in HIDB factories.

The network of local enterprise trusts in Scotland was formed in 1981 and there are now some 44 of them. They are private sector-led, but represent a partnership between the public and private sectors in the provision of business advice, counselling and training both to new and existing businesses. The total funding cost of the enterprise trusts during the year 1990-91 was £9·5 million. The percentage of SDA input to this total was 19 per cent., an increase of 2 per cent. from the previous year. This levered a further 19 per cent. from the local authorities and 28 per cent. from the private sector, in cash and kind, representing a total of £4·4 million. During the year the trusts estimate they have provided about 45,000 counselling sessions, some 13,000 of these to pre-start clients. Some 8,000 jobs were created or saved in new and existing businesses assisted by enterprise trusts and 3,255 new businesses were started by enterprise trust clients.

The establishment on 1 April 1991 of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise represented a new approach to enterprise creation and development in Scotland, and is central to the Government's plans to give further impetus to the Scottish economy. The initiative is unique in two important respects; firstly, Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise have taken over responsibility for the design and implementation of Training Agency programmes in Scotland and are responsible for integrating these with the economic development activities previously discharged by the Scottish Development Agency and Highlands and Islands Development Board. Secondly, SE and HIE have contracted out a range of functions to a network of private sector-led and run local enterprise companies. Through this network business people and others prominent in the wider community will develop and shape training arrangements and business development programmes to match Scottish needs and to meet local circumstances in a manner that has not been possible before. It is appropriate that local people who are in the best position to judge should have responsibility for deciding the balance of provision most suited to the circumstances of the area concerned. Local enterprise companies work within a policy framework set by Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise and, while they are required to fulfil their contractual obligations to these bodies, they are given all possible freedom to act on their own initiative with a minimum of constraint. It is encouraging that a complete network of 22 local enterprise companies has been established in Scotland so quickly, and the Government's view of a decentralised and business-led approach to enterprise creation is clearly a widely shared one.

The deregulation initiative, a Government programme to reduce the bureaucratic burden which impinges upon all businesses, but perhaps disproportionately so in the case of smaller companies, is supported strongly by the Scottish Office. Future action on the initiative will concentrate strongly on improving the relationship between the business community and local authorities, and on encouraging business people to take the lead in identifying, and in bringing to the attention of Government examples of regulation or legislation which they perceive as an unnecessary burden on business. Unique within the United Kingdom, the Government business shop in Glasgow continues to provide a single advice point on the range of Government regulation affecting business. Business people are able, in one location, to speak to advisers from Inland Revenue, Customs and Excise, DSS and the Health and Safety Executive. The Scottish Office Industry Department is co-operating with the Employment Service in encouraging small businesses to develop trading links with the newly privatised industries. Additionally, plans are in hand to organise a Scottish seminar on how small companies may do business with the large public utilities.

Rosyth

Mr. Douglas: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what additional resources he anticipates will be given to local authorities and local enterprise companies to counteract the impact on their local economies of the decline in employment arising from the job losses involved by recently announced and anticipated reductions in employment at Rosyth naval base and dockyard.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Local authorities will be submitting financial plans to the Scottish Office in the autumn. These plans will contain the local authorities' proposals for capital expenditure in 1992-93 and subsequent years and it will be up to the authorities concerned to include in these any projects they consider necessary to help tackle employment reductions at Rosyth.

For the current year the local enterprise company for the Rosyth area, Fife Enterprise, has a budget in excess of £22 million. The company has a number of projects and initiatives either planned or already under way to assist training and employment in the area. This includes an audit of the physical and staff resources available at Rosyth. The company has indicated its intention of discussing options with interested parties to identify appropriate action to tackle job reductions at Rosyth; and I am encouraged by the positive response it has already made to the announcement.

The question of additional funding for the local enterprise company is primarily one for Scottish Enterprise in the light of the enterprise company's planned activities, the overall resources available in each financial year and all the circumstances bearing on competing demands for resources. It must also be borne in mind that the reduction in the civilian work force at Rosyth is not due to be completed until March 1995 and will involve some relocations and natural wastage, although there will inevitably be some redundancies.

Court Proceedings (Television)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many applications for the use of live television facilities in cases involving child abuse or sexual abuse have been granted or refused, since the commencement of the provisions of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1990; what were the reasons given for refusals; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: These provisions will be brought into effect shortly to allow pilot schemes at Edinburgh and Glasgow to proceed.

Farms

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many farms are in use in Renfrewshire; if he will list them; and how many people they employ.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Scottish counties ceased to be used for agricultural statistics purposes after 1975 following local government reform. For the June 1990 census returns there were 269 main farm holdings in Refrew district of Strathclyde region with 316 full-time or part-time working farmers and spouses, and employing 169 full-time workers and 158 part-time and casual workers. This information is collected for statistical purposes under the Agriculture Act 1947 which restricts disclosure of information on individual holdings. It is thus not permissible to list the individual holdings in Renfrew district.

Residential Homes

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish those residential homes provided by Scottish Homes with a hostel deficit grant for homes catering for people with learning difficulties.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 15 July 1991]:* Ark and Key housing associations are in receipt of hostel deficit grant from Scottish Homes in respect of the residential accommodation they provide for people with learning difficulties at the following locations:

Central
- Stenhousemuir
- Stirling
- Alloa
- Grangemouth

Dumfries and Galloway
- Annan
- Dumfries
- Stranraer

Fife
- Dunfermline
- Glenrothes

Grampian
- Fraserburgh
- Inverurie
- Peterhead

Highland
- Fort William

Lothian
- Livingston
- Dalkeith
- Musselburgh
- East Linton
- Penicuik
- Edinburgh (four homes)

Strathclyde
- Bellshill
- Dunoon
- Gourock
- Cumbernauld
- Helensburgh
- Milngavie
- Glasgow (five homes)

Tayside
- Arbroath
- Forfar
- Perth

Capital Allocations

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in cash terms, and at 1991-92 prices, what has been the capital allocation to each regional and district council in Scotland for each of their service responsibilities in every year since 1979.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 17 July 1991]:* This information is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Rail Bridges

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total number of rail bridges in Scotland; what monitoring of their structural condition is carried out; by whom and how frequently; and what is the total annual cost involved.

Mr. Freeman: I have been asked to reply. The information is as follows:

There are 9,194 rail bridges owned by British Rail in Scotland; 5,587 are operational and 3,607 are non-operational. They are subject to a visual examination every year and a detailed examination at intervals not exceeding six years by appointed examiners engaged by British Rail at an annual cost of £0·4 million. There are a further 3,400 non-operational bridges which have been sold and are no longer the responsibility of British Rail.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Students' Benefits

13. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to increase social security benefits for students.

Mr. Newton: Financial support for full-time students is properly the responsibility of the education system. There are no plans to extend the categories of students who are entitled to housing benefit and income support, but for those eligible, the allowances and premiums are uprated on the same basis as for other claimants.

Income Support

15. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the total number of people claiming income support in the United Kingdom at the most recent date for which final figures are available, 12 months and two years before.

Miss Widdecombe: In Great Britain in 1988 4,352,000 claimants were receiving income support, in 1989 there were 4,161,000 and in 1990, the latest year for which figures are available, there were 4,180,000. Figures for Northern Ireland are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Source: Annual Statistical Enquiries May 1988, 1989 and 1990.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many young people aged 16 and 17 years are receiving income support for the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. Jack: An estimated 21,000 16 and 17-year-olds were claiming income support in May 1990, the most recent date for which figures are available.

Source: Income Support Statistics, Annual Enquiry May 1990.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will bring forward proposals to make income support available in full from the time of claim.

Miss Widdecombe: For those over pension age, full entitlement is paid from the payday which coincides with or next follows the date of claim. For those under pension age, entitlement accrues from the date of claim and is paid on the first following payday. These arrangements are in line with the way wages, other benefits and pensions are paid and there are therefore no proposals for change.

Disabled People (Benefits)

16. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he is taking to improve the take-up by people with disabilities of the benefits to which they are entitled.

Mr. Scott: The increase in take-up of benefits by disabled people and their carers over the last 12 years demonstrates our continuing commitment to ensuring that people receive what they are entitled to. For example, there are now three times as many people in receipt of attendance allowance as there were in 1979, and take-up of mobility allowance has increased sevenfold over the same period.

We intend to build on this strong position in publicising the introduction of disability living allowance and disability working allowance next year. We shall involve disabled people and their organisations fully in the preparatory work for the publicity campaigns to ensure effective take-up of these benefits.

Pensioners

17. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total value of the average pensioner's savings, investments and home; and what was the comparable figure in 1979.

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total value of the average pensioner's savings, investments and home *(a)* currently and *(b)* in 1978-79.

Miss Widdecombe: My hon. Friend will be pleased to hear that the average value of pensioners' savings and investments doubled in real terms between 1979 and 1988. The average value of property owned by pensioners increased by over 65 per cent. during the same period.

Family Credit

18. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the current average award for family credit.

Mr. Jack: The average of the awards current at the end of June was well over £31.

21. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security over what range of net income are families eligible for family credit.

Mr. Jack: The level of income at which eligibility for family credit runs out depends on the number of children in the family and their ages, but even the smallest family, with one child under 11, could get family credit if their net income is less than £130 a week—about £155 gross. For families with more, or older, children, the levels are much higher; for example, a family with four children, aged three, eight, eleven and 16 could be eligible with net income of £195, about £254 gross. Child benefit order books, and the notifications sent where payment is made directly into an account, contain a personalised message about family credit setting out the level for that particular family.

There is no minimum qualifying level of income for family credit, although the parent, or at least one of them in a two-parent family, has to be working for 24 hours a week or more.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the annualised value of the average family credit award expressed as an increase in gross annual earnings.

Mr. Jack: The average amount of the family credit awards current at the end of June 1991 was £31·41. For a person paying national insurance contributions and tax at the standard rate this would equate to an increase in gross earnings of nearly £2,475 a year.

Retirement Age

19. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received about the equalisation of the state pension retirement age.

Miss Widdecombe: Since 1 January this year we have received a large number of representations from organisations concerned with the interests of pensioners, from employers, from various representatives of the pensions industry as well as a number of letters from hon. Members and members of the public.

National Insurance Contributions

20. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what recent representations he has received about the level of national insurance contributions.

Mr. Jack: We have received representations from employers' organisations expressing opposition to proposals put forward by the European Commission which would result in national insurance contributions being levied on earnings below the current lower earnings limit.

We have also received a small number of representations on behalf of self-employed people about the recent annual increase in their national insurance contributions.

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much and what percentage of national health service expenditure is financed by national insurance contributions; and by how much the category A old-age pension could be increased if the national health service were wholly financed out of other taxes.

Miss Widdecombe: In 1990-91 £4·3 billion of NI contributions income went towards the cost of the NHS; about 15 per cent. of gross NHS expenditure. The level of retirement pension is set by law each year according to the movement in prices and is not determined by the balance in the NI fund. It would not therefore be affected by any change in the funding arrangements for the NHS.

Occupational Pension Schemes

22. **Sir Robert McCrindle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received on occupational pension schemes since his statement of 26 June.

Miss Widdecombe: Since 26 June we have received a number of representations from, among others, the Confederation of British Industry and the National Association of Pension Funds. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has met the TUC and departmental officials are holding a series of discussions with pensioners' interests. We have also received a number of questions from hon. Members on this matter.

Disability Working Allowance

23. **Mr. Butterfill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many representations he has received about the introduction of the disability working allowance.

Mr. Scott: When we published our proposals for the introduction of the two new benefits, disability living allowance and disability working allowance, in "The Way Ahead—Benefits for Disabled People" (Cmd 917), we said that we would welcome comments and suggestions from disabled people and the organisations that represent them. We have met representatives of those organisations to hear their views and are grateful to them and to the many individuals who have taken the trouble to write in with comments on our proposals for both new benefits.

Child Benefit

24. **Mrs. Roe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the typical size of family receiving child benefit; and what that family will receive per week from October.

Mr. John Browne: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the typical size of a family receiving child benefit; and what they will receive per week from October 1991.

Mr. Jack: Over 40 per cent. of families in receipt of child benefit have only one child and from October will be receiving £9·25 per week—an increase of £2, or over 27 per cent., this year. This gives a family an additional annual income of £480.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what were the total numbers of young people whose parents were receiving extended child benefit in each of the months from January to May for each of the years 1990 and 1991.

Mr. Jack: Child benefit normally stops after a child reaches 16 and leaves full-time education. It can however be extended for a limited period for 16 and 17-year-olds while they are looking for work or on a youth training place.

The child benefit computer counts, on a weekly basis, the number of awards current for children covered by extended child benefit. The following figures represent the weekly average in each month:

	Number
1990	
January	1,033
February	1,659
March	1,874
May	2,620
1991	
January	1,184
February	1,826
March	2,208
April	3,257
May	4,302

For the majority of 16 to 17-year-old school leavers, extended child benefit is not applicable because they start work or find a youth training place before the extension period begins. This is demonstrated by the following figures which show the total numbers of 16 and 17-year-old school leavers for the periods covered by the question:

	Number
Christmas 1989	8,418
Christmas 1990	8,073
Easter 1990	52,156
Easter 1991	45,036

Note: No figure is shown for April 1990 because the extension period for Christmas leavers finished on 1 April and the period for Easter leavers did not start until 30 April.

Maternity Payment

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what research his Department is currently undertaking on the adequacy of the £100 maternity payment for low-income expectant mothers.

Mr. Scott: None.

Written Answers

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many parliamentary questions for written answer have been answered by his Department so far in the current Session, and in the comparable period for the last Session; and if he will publish a table of how many answers *(a)* do not give the information requested because of (i) disproportionate cost or (ii) other reasons, *(b)* give an undertaking to write to the hon. Member who asked the question and *(c)* were referred for answer to the chief executive of a next steps agency.

Miss Widdecombe: From the start of this Session to 17 July we answered 1,762 questions for written answer. By 17 July in the previous Session we had answered approximately 1,930. The information requested about answers is in the table.

	Session to 17 July	
	1990-91	*1989-90*
Disproportionate cost	52	36
Other reasons[1]	77	141
Undertaking to write	5	3
Referred to agency chief executive	72	0

[1]Most of these advise that "the information is not available". Referrals to information in the Library or previous answers are not included.

Spending

Sir Geoffrey Johnson-Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how social security spending is forecast to change over the next three years.

Miss Widdecombe: Total social security spending is forecast to rise from £59 billion in 1990-91 to £75 billion in 1993-94. This represents a real-terms increase of 9·8 per cent. over the period.

Disability

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what will be the mechanism whereby direct payments continue to be made to severely disabled people to make their own personal assistance arrangements under his proposals for the future of the independent living fund.

Mr. Scott: I refer the right hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) on 16 July at columns *133-34*.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to review the residency rules for severe disablement allowance so as to make them no more stringent than those for attendance allowance or the new disability living allowance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I refer the right hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on Tuesday 16 July at column *134*.

Mortgagors

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many and what percentages of supplementary benefit/income support recipients were mortgagors in *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1985 and *(c)* the latest year for which figures are available.

Miss Widdecombe: The following numbers and percentages of supplementary benefit/income support recipients had an amount for mortgage interest added in their benefit assessment for the years in question:

	1980	*[1]1986*	*1990*
Number	134,000	356,000	310,000
Percentage of all income support recipients	4	7	7

Source: Annual Statistical Enquiry. Figures are rounded to the nearest thousand and whole per cent.

[1] No Annual Statistical Enquiry was produced in 1985.

Benefit Rates

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish the 1991-92 benefit rates, in the form used in the *Official Report*, 25 October 1989, columns *845-54*.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is in the schedule.

Schedule of main proposed Social Security benefit rates from April 1991

Weekly rates unless otherwise shown	*Old rates 1990*	*New rates 1991*
Attendance allowance		
higher rate	37·55	41·65
lower rate	25·05	27·80
Child benefit		
only, elder or eldest for whom child benefit is payable	7·25	8·25
each subsequent child	7·25	7·25
Child's special allowance (see note on Child Dependency Increase)	9·65	10·70
Community charge benefit		
Personal allowances		
single		
18 to 24	28·80	31·15
25 or over	36·70	39·65
lone parent—18 or over	36·70	39·65
couple—one or both over 18	57·60	62·25
dependent children		
under 11	12·35	13·35
11 to 15	18·25	19·75
16 to 17	21·90	23·65
18	28·80	31·15
Premiums		
family	7·35	7·95
lone parent	9·70	10·05
pensioner		
single	11·80	13·75
couple	17·95	20·90
pensioner (enhanced)		
single	14·40	15·55
couple	21·60	23·35
pensioner (higher)		
single	17·05	18·45
couple	24·25	26·20
disability		
single	15·40	16·65
couple	22·10	23·90
severe disability		
single	28·20	31·25
couple (one qualifies)	28·20	31·25
couple (both qualify)	56·40	62·50
disabled child	15·40	16·65
carer	10·00	10·80
Allowance for personal expenses for claimants in hospital		
higher rate	11·75	13·00
lower rate	[1]9·40	10·40
Capital		
upper limit	[1]16,000·00	16,000·00
amount disregarded	3,000·00	3,000·00
child's limit	3,000·00	3,000·00
Tariff income		
£1 for every complete £250 or part thereof between amount of capital disregarded and capital upper limit		
Earnings disregards		
where disability premium awarded	15·00	15·00
various specified employments	15·00	15·00
lone parent—in receipt of IS	15·00	15·00
lone parent—not in receipt of IS	25·00	25·00

Weekly rates unless otherwise shown	*Old rates 1990*	*New rates 1991*
where the claimant has a partner	10·00	10·00
single claimant	5·00	5·00
Other income disregards		
war disablement pension and war widows pension	10·00	10·00
voluntary and charitable payments	[1]10·00	10·00
student loan	[1]10·00	10·00
student's covenanted income	5·00	5·00
income from boarders:		
disregard the fixed amount (£20) plus 50 per cent. of the balance of the charge	[1]20·00	20·00
Expenses for subtenants		
furnished or unfurnished	4·00	4·00
where heating is included, additional	7·35	8·05
Dependency increases		
Adult Dependency increases		
For spouse or person looking after children, with:—		
retirement pension on own insurance invalidity pension, unemployability supplement and, if beneficiary over pension age, unemployment benefit	28·20	31·25
non-contributory retirement pension, invalid care allowance and severe disablement allowance	16·85	18·70
sickness benefit if beneficiary over pension age	27·00	29·95
unemployment benefit	23·05	25·55
maternity allowance/sickness benefit	22·10	24·50
Child Dependency increases		
For each child with:—		
retirement pension, widows benefit, invalidity benefit, invalid care allowance, severe disablement allowance, higher rate industrial death benefit, unemployability supplement and sickness/ unemployment benefit if beneficiary over pension age	9·65	10·70
Note: It is intended to make regulations so that, for child dependency increases, child's special allowance and guardian's allowance, the rate for the child will be abated by any increase in child benefit for that child.		
Earnings rules		
Invalid care allowance	20·00	30·00
Unemployment benefit (daily rate)	2·00	2·00
Therapeutic earnings limit	35·00	39·00
Industrial injuries unemployability supplement permitted earnings level (annual amount)	1,820·00	2,028·00
War pensioners' unemployability supplement permitted earnings level (annual amount)	1,820·00	2,028·00
Adult dependency increases with sickness benefit where claimant is		
(a) under pension age	22·10	24·50
(b) over pension age	27·00	29·95
maternity allowance	22·10	24·50
unemployment benefit where claimant is		
(a) under pension age	23·05	25·55
(b) over pension age	28·20	31·25
retirement pension, invalidity pension, severe disablement allowance, unemployability supplement where dependant		
(a) is living with claimant	37·35	41·40
(b) still qualifies for the tapered earnings rule	45·09	45·09
retirement pension, invalidity pension and unemployability supplement where dependant not living with claimant	28·20	31·25
severe disablement allowance where dependant not living with claimant	16·85	18·70
invalid care allowance	16·85	18·70
Child dependency increases level at which CDIs payable with long-term benefits are affected by earnings of claimant's spouse or partner		
for first child	100·00	110·00
for each subsequent child	13·00	14·00
Family credit		
Adult credit	36·35	38·30
Child credit		
under 11	8·25	9·70
11 to 15	14·15	16·10
16 to 17	17·80	20·05
18	25·10	27·95
Applicable amount (ie taper threshold)	57·60	62·25
Capital		
upper limit	[1]8,000·00	8,000·00
amount disregarded	3,000·00	3,000·00
child's limit	3,000·00	3,000·00
Tariff income		
£1 for every complete £250 or part thereof between amount of capital disregarded and capital upper limit		
Disregards		
war disablement pension and war widow's pension	10·00	10·00
voluntary and charitable payments	[1]10·00	10·00
student loan	[1]10·00	10·00
student's covenanted income	5·00	5·00
income from boarders:		
disregard the fixed amount (£20) plus 50 per cent. of the balance of the charge	[1]20·00	20·00
Expenses for subtenants		
furnished or unfurnished	4·00	4·00
where heating is included, additional	7·35	8·05
Guardian's allowance—each child (see note on Child Dependency Increase)	9·65	10·70
Hospital downrating		
20 per cent. rate	9·40	10·40
40 per cent. rate	18·80	20·80
Housing benefit		
Personal allowances		
single		
16 to 24	28·80	31·15
25 or over	36·70	39·65
lone parent		
under 18	28·80	31·15
18 or over	36·70	39·65

Weekly rates unless otherwise shown	Old rates 1990	New rates 1991
couple		
both under 18	43·80	47·30
one or both over 18	57·60	62·25
dependent children		
under 11	12·35	13·35
11 to 15	18·25	19·75
16 to 17	21·90	23·65
18	28·80	31·15
Premiums		
family	7·35	7·95
lone parent	9·70	10·05
pensioner		
single	11·80	13·75
couple	17·95	20·90
pensioner (enhanced)		
single	14·40	15·55
couple	21·60	23·35
pensioner (higher)		
single	17·05	18·45
couple	24·25	26·20
disability		
single	15·40	16·65
couple	22·10	23·90
severe disability		
single	28·20	31·25
couple (one qualifies)	28·20	31·25
couple (both qualify)	56·40	62·50
disabled child	15·40	16·65
carer	10·00	10·80
Allowance for personal expenses for claimants in hospital		
higher rate	11·75	13·00
lower rate	[1]9·40	10·40
Non-dependant deductions		
rent rebates and allowances aged 18 or over and in remunerative work	10·85	13·50
others, aged 18 or over, or on Income Support and over 25	4·55	5·70
low earnings threshold	56·05	62·15
Service charges for fuel		
heating	7·35	8·05
hot water	0·90	1·00
lighting	0·60	0·65
cooking	0·90	1·00
all fuel	9·75	10·70
Amount ineligible for meals		
three or more meals a day		
single claimant	13·15	14·20
each person in family aged 16 or over	13·15	14·20
each child under 16	6·60	7·15
less than three meals a day		
single claimant	8·75	9·45
each person in family aged 16 or over	8·75	9·45
each child under 16	4·35	4·70
breakfast only—claimant and each member of family	1·60	1·75
Capital		
upper limit	[1]16,000·00	16,000·00
amount disregarded	3,000·00	3,000·00
child's limit	3,000·00	3,000·00
Tariff income		
£1 for every complete £250 or part thereof between amount of capital disregarded and capital upper limit		
Earnings disregards		
where disability premium awarded	15·00	15·00
various specified employments	15·00	15·00
lone parent—in receipt of IS	15·00	15·00
lone parent—not in receipt of IS	25·00	25·00
where the claimant has a partner	10·00	10·00
single claimant	5·00	5·00
Other income disregards		
war disablement pension and war widows pension	10·00	10·00
voluntary and charitable payments	[1]10·00	10·00
student loan	[1]10·00	10·00
student's covenanted income	5·00	5·00
income from boarders:		
disregard the fixed amount (£20) plus 50 per cent. of the balance of the charge	[1]20·00	20·00
Expenses for subtenants		
furnished or unfurnished	4·00	4·00
where heating is included, additional	7·35	8·05
Income Support		
Personal allowances		
single		
under 18—usual rate	21·90	23·65
under 18—higher rate payable in specific circumstances	28·80	31·15
18 to 24	28·80	31·15
25 or over	36·70	39·65
lone parent		
under 18—usual rate	21·90	23·65
under 18—higher rate payable in specific circumstances	28·80	31·15
18 or over	36·70	39·65
couple		
both under 18	43·80	47·30
one or both over 18	57·60	62·25
dependent children		
under 11	12·35	13·35
11 to 15	18·25	19·75
16 to 17	21·90	23·65
18	28·80	31·15
Premiums		
family	7·35	7·95
lone parent	4·10	4·45
pensioner		
single	11·80	13·75
couple	17·95	20·90
pensioner (enhanced)		
single	14·40	15·55
couple	21·60	23·35
pensioner (higher)		
single	17·05	18·45
couple	24·25	26·20
disability		
single	15·40	16·65
couple	22·10	23·90
severe disability		
single	28·20	31·25
couple (one qualifies)	28·20	31·25
couple (both qualify)	56·40	62·50
disabled child	15·40	16·65
carer	10·00	10·80

Weekly rates unless otherwise shown	Old rates 1990	New rates 1991
Maximum amounts for accommodation and meals in residential care homes		
old age	[1]155·00	160·00
very dependent elderly	[1]170·00	185·00
mental disorder (not handicap)	[1]155·00	170·00
drug/alcohol dependence	[1]155·00	170·00
mental handicap	[1]180·00	195·00
physical disablement		
(a) (under pension age)	[1]215·00	230·00
(b) (over pension age)	[1]155·00	160·00
others	[1]155·00	160·00
maximum Greater London increase	23·00	23·00
nursing homes		
mental disorder (not handicap)	[1]210·00	255·00
drug/alcohol dependence	[1]210·00	255·00
mental handicap	[1]225·00	260·00
terminal illness	[1]260·00	275·00
physical disablement		
(a) (under pension age)	[1]255·00	290·00
(b) (over pension age)	[1]210·00	255·00
others (including elderly)	[1]210·00	255·00
maximum Greater London increase	23·00	33·00
Amounts for meals where these cannot be purchased within the accommodation (daily rate)		
breakfast	1·10	1·10
midday meal	1·55	1·55
evening meal	1·55	1·55
Allowances for personal expenses for claimants in		
private and voluntary residential care and nursing homes personal expenses	10·55	11·40
dependent children		
(a) Under 11	4·30	4·65
(b) 11 to 15	6·35	6·85
(c) 16 to 17	7·35	7·95
(d) age 18	10·55	11·40
hospital		
higher rate	11·75	13·00
lower rate	[1]9·40	10·40
local authority (Pt III) accommodation	9·40	10·40
the Polish home Ilford Park:		
maximum amount for accommodation and meals	[1]155·00	160·00
personal expenses for claimant	13·95	15·10
personal expenses for partner	13·95	15·10
personal expenses for dependent children		
(a) Under 11	4·30	4·65
(b) 11 to 15	6·35	6·85
(c) 16 to 17	7·35	7·95
(d) age 18	12·55	13·55
Housing costs		
deduction for non-dependants		
aged 18 or over and in remunerative work	10·85	13·50
others, aged 18 or over, or on Income Support and over 25	4·55	5·70
low earnings threshold	56·05	62·15
Deduction for direct payments		
fuel debt 5 per cent. rate	1·85	2·00
fuel debt 10 per cent. rate	3·70	4·00
arrears of housing costs	1·85	2·00
arrears of water rates	1·85	2·00
Deductions for arrears of Community Charge		
single debtor	1·85	2·00
couple debtors both with IS	2·90	3·15
Reduction in benefit for strikers	19·50	21·00
Capital		
upper limit	[1]8,000·00	8,000·00
amount disregarded	3,000·00	3,000·00
child's limit	3,000·00	3,000·00
Tariff income		
£1 for every complete £250 or part thereof between amount of capital disregarded and capital upper limit		
Disregards		
standard earnings	5·00	5·00
higher earnings	15·00	15·00
war disablement pension and war widows pension	10·00	10·00
voluntary and charitable payments	[1]10·00	10·00
student loan	[1]10·00	10·00
student's convenanted income	5·00	5·00
income from boarders:		
disregard the fixed amount (£20) plus 50 per cent. of the balance of the charge	[1]20·00	20·00
Expenses for subtenants		
furnished or unfurnished	4·00	4·00
where heating is included, additional	7·35	8·05
Industrial death benefit		
Widow's pension		
higher rate	46·90	52·00
lower rate	14·07	15·60
Industrial disablement pension		
18 and over, or under 18 with dependants		
100 per cent.	76·60	84·90
90 per cent.	68·94	76·41
80 per cent.	61·28	67·92
70 per cent.	53·62	59·43
60 per cent.	45·96	50·94
50 per cent.	38·30	42·45
40 per cent.	30·64	33·96
30 per cent.	22·98	25·47
20 per cent.	15·32	16·98
Under 18		
100 per cent.	46·90	52·00
90 per cent.	42·21	46·80
80 per cent.	37·52	41·60
70 per cent.	32·83	36·40
60 per cent.	28·14	31·20
50 per cent.	23·45	26·00
40 per cent.	18·76	20·80
30 per cent.	14·07	15·60
20 per cent.	9·38	10·40
Maximum life gratuity (lump sum)	5,090·00	5,640·00
Unemployability Supplement	46·90	52·00
plus where appropriate an increase for early incapacity		
higher rate	10·00	11·10
middle rate	6·20	6·90
lower rate	3·10	3·45
Maximum reduced earnings allowance	30·64	33·96
Maximum retirement allowance	7·66	8·49
Constant attendance allowance		
exceptional rate	61·40	68·00
intermediate rate	46·05	51·00

Weekly rates unless otherwise shown	*Old rates 1990*	*New rates 1991*
normal maximum rate	30·70	34·00
part-time rate	15·35	17·00
Exceptionally severe disablement allowance	30·70	34·00
Invalid care allowance	28·20	31·25
Invalidity benefit		
Invalidity pension	46·90	52·00
Invalidity allowance		
higher rate	10·00	11·10
middle rate	6·20	6·90
lower rate	3·10	3·45
Maternity allowance	35·70	40·60
Mobility allowance	26·25	29·10
One-parent benefit	5·60	5·60
Pneumoconiosis, byssinosis, workmen's compensation (supplementation) and other schemes		
Total disablement allowance and major incapacity allowance (maximum)	76·60	84·90
Partial disablement allowance	28·20	31·25
Unemployment supplement	46·90	52·00
plus where appropriate increases for early incapacity		
higher rate	10·00	11·10
middle rate	6·20	6·90
lower rate	3·10	3·45
Constant attendance allowance		
exceptional rate	61·40	68·00
intermediate rate	46·05	51·00
normal maximum rate	30·70	34·00
part-time rate	15·35	17·00
Exceptionally severe disablement allowance	30·70	34·00
Lesser incapacity allowance		
maximum rate of allowance	28·20	31·25
based on loss of earnings over	37·55	41·65
Retirement pension		
Category A or B	46·90	52·00
Category B (lower)—husband's insurance	28·20	31·25
Category C or D—non-contributory	28·20	31·25
Category C (lower)—non-contributory	16·85	18·70
Additional pension	(increased by 10·9%)	
Increments to basic and additional pension, contracted out deductions (from pre April 1988 earnings) and graduated retirement benefit	(increased by 10·9%)	
Contrated out deductions and increments to contracted out deductions (from post April 1988 earnings[1])	(3% paid by scheme 7·9% paid by state)	
Graduated retirement benefit (unit)(pence)	6·14	6·81
Addition at age 80	0·25	0·25
Severe disablement allowance		
Basic rate	28·20	31·25
Age-related addition (from December 1990)		
higher rate	[1]10·00	11·10
middle rate	[1]6·20	6·90
lower rate	3·10	3·45
Sickness benefit		
Over pension age	45·00	49·90
Under pension age	35·70	39·60
Social fund		
Maternity payment	100·00	100·00
Capital limit		
aged under 60	[1]500·00	500·00
aged 60 and over	1,000·00	1,000·00
Statutory maternity pay		
Lower rate	39·25	44·50
Statutory sick pay		
Lower rate	39·25	43·50
Standard rate	52·50	52·50
Unemployment benefit		
Over pension age	46·90	52·00
Under pension age	37·35	41·40
Occupational pension abatement	35·00	35·00
War pensions		
Disablement pension (100 per cent. rates)		
private or equivalent	76·60	84·90
officer (£ per annum)	3,994·00	4,427·00
Age allowances		
40 per cent.-50 per cent.	5·40	6·00
over 50 per cent. but not over 70 per cent.	8·35	9·25
over 70 per cent. but not over 90 per cent.	11·95	13·25
over 90 per cent.	16·70	18·50
Disablement gratuity		
(base figures for calculation purposes only)		
specified minor injury	5,090·00	5,640·00
unspecified minor injury	2,799·50	3,102·00
Unemployability allowance		
personal	49·80	55·25
adult dependency increase	28·20	31·25
(a) increase for first child (adjusted for ChB increase)	[1]9·65	9·70
(b) increase for subsequent children	[1]9·65	10·70
Invalidity allowance		
higher rate	10·00	11·10
middle rate	6·20	6·90
lower rate	3·10	3·45
Constant attendance allowance		
exceptional rate	61·40	68·00
intermediate rate	46·05	51·00
normal maximum rate	30·70	34·00
part-time rate	15·35	17·00
Comforts allowance		
higher rate	13·20	14·60
lower rate	6·60	7·30
Mobility supplement	29·15	32·35
Allowance for lowered standard of occupation (maximum)	30·64	33·96
Exceptionally severe disablement allowance	30·70	34·00

Weekly rates unless otherwise shown	*Old rates 1990*	*New rates 1991*
Severe disablement occupational allowance	15·35	17·00
Clothing allowance (£ per annum)		
higher rate	104·00	115·00
lower rate	66·00	73·00
Education allowance (£ per annum) (maximum)	120·00	120·00
War widow's pension (private)		
widow	60·95	67·60
childless widow under 40	14·07	15·60
age allowance		
(a) age 65 to 69	7·00	7·75
(b) age 70 to 79	13·50	14·95
(c) age 80 and over	20·00	22·20
children's allowance		
(a) increase for first child (adjusted for ChB increase)	[1]13·40	13·65
(b) increase for subsequent children	[1]13·40	14·65
Orphan's pension		
(a) increase for first child (adjusted for ChB increase)	[1]14·70	15·10
(b) increase for subsequent children	[1]14·70	16·10
Unmarried dependant living as spouse (maximum)	58·90	65·55
Rent allowance (maximum)	23·20	25·75
Adult orphan's pension (maximum)	46·90	52·00
Widower's pension (maximum)	60·95	67·60
Widow's benefit		
Widow's payment (lump sum)	1,000·00	1,000·00
Widowed mother's allowance	46·90	52·00
Widow's pension		
standard rate	46·90	52·00
age related		
age 54 (49)	43·62	48·36
53 (48)	40·33	44·72
52 (47)	37·05	41·08
51 (46)	33·77	37·44
50 (45)	30·49	33·80
49 (44)	27·20	30·16
48 (43)	23·92	26·52
47 (42)	20·64	22·88
46 (41)	17·35	19·24
45 (40)	14·07	15·60
Note: For deaths occuring before 11 April 1988 refer to age-points shown in brackets.		

[1] These items either inserted for the first time or amended, between April 1990 and April 1991.

Community Charge Benefit

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the saving to his Department in community charge benefit subsidy payments as a result of poll tax capping in *(a)* 1990-91 and *(b)* 1991-92; and if he will set out the saving in respect of each designated authority.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is not available.

Social Fund

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to increase or abolish the £500 capital limit for social fund payments.

Mr. Scott: On 14 June this year I announced our intention to abolish the capital rule for cold weather payments from next winter. We have no plans to alter the present capital limits for other payments from the social fund, which currently stand at £500, or £1,000 for people over 60.

Pensioners (Home Ownership)

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has of the number of pensioners who own their own home and have repaid their mortgage.

Miss Widdecombe: It is estimated that, in 1988, around 3·4 million homes were owned outright by either a single pensioner or a pensioner couple.

Dementia

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to introduce legislation for retrospective reinstatement of rights and benefits for those sufferers of dementia who have lost their jobs, either volutarily or through dismissal, and who have only later been diagnosed.

Miss Widdecombe: No. Legislation already exists to allow an adjudication officer to reconsider retrospectively a decision to reduce or refuse benefits. Section 104 of the Social Security Act 1975 allows a review of a decision by an adjudication officer or social security appeal tribunal at any time if the officer or tribunal is satisfied that the decision was given in ignorance of, or was based on a mistake as to, some material fact.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to increase the scope of welfare benefits available to younger sufferers from dementia.

Mr. Scott: Benefits for people with long-term sickness or disability are awarded, not on the basis of the medical condition from which a person is suffering, but on the effects and needs to which that condition gives rise. People suffering from dementia may receive a wide range of benefits. That range will be further increased in April 1992 when disability living allowance is introduced to provide new help for people with care or mobility needs. People entitled to disability living allowance will be eligible for the disability premium within the income-related benefits.

Spending Priorities

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he is considering any changes to his Department's spending priorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Priorities within the Department's expenditure are kept under review, but we have no specific proposals for change at present.

DEFENCE

Nuclear Submarines

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his feasibility studies into the options for the disposal of decommissioned nuclear-propelled submarines are complete; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The policy for disposal of decommissioned nuclear submarines is still under active consideration. No final decision has yet been taken.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the locations of all nuclear-powered submarines which have either been decommissioned or are awaiting decommissioning.

Mr. Alan Clark: Dreadnought and Churchill are at Rosyth and Warspite and Conqueror at Devonport.

Iraq

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what level of extra pay and allowances over and above normal salaries members of the armed services receive while on duty in refugee camps in Iraq.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The normal rules for service pay and allowances have been applied to members of the armed forces employed on Operation Haven.

Northern Ireland

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the present strength of the British Army is serving in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The latest figures available show the proportion to be about 11 per cent. of the total strength or 12 per cent. of the trained strength.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which sections of his Department had accounts with BCCI.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

Executive Agencies

Mr. Fishburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his Department's response to the next steps initiative.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Ministry of Defence is making a substantial response to next steps. Two executive and six defence support agencies have been established, employing over 34,000 service and civilian staff.

My Department's response to next steps is part of the major programme of defence management reform, which has been described in successive Statements on the Defence Estimates. Next steps places particular emphasis on efficiency, standards of service to customers and value for money. The Ministry of Defence's support organisations provide services to internal and external customers, including operational units. Higher standards of service and performance will enhance the overall effectiveness of our defence capability. Agency disciplines will be important in shaping the smaller, more flexible and higher-quality support structure that will be needed in the future. The agency programme will be an important part of my Department's contribution to the citizens charter initiative.

My Department will undergo substantial restructuring as a result of "Options for Change" and the PROSPECT study of the headquarters. We therefore intend to proceed on the basis of a two-year next steps programme. This will give us more scope to take account of continuing work on "Options for Change" and PROSPECT, while maintaining the necessary momentum on next steps.

We shall aim to make early progress on reviews of agency status for tri-service helicopter repair, the Ministry of Defence police, the defence operational analysis establishment, central computer bureau services, the defence animal centre, defence statistics, common services, the Queen Victoria school, Dunblane and the Duke of York's royal military school, Dover. We would aim to complete as many as possible of these reviews and, if the outcome is positive, establish agencies by the end of this financial year. We shall continue our review of RAF training, taking into account current studies of the structure and organisation of the RAF support area, aiming to complete it as soon as we can. We shall also begin reviews of naval training, Army logistics, test and evaluation, human factors research and some communications services, aiming to complete these by the end of the second year. Other organisations may be added to the list as the future shape of the support area becomes clearer. Equally, there is no presumption from inclusion in the list that the organisation concerned will become an agency. This is a review process which involves, inter alia, consideration of alternative options, including privatisation and contracting out.

Mr. Colin Wallace

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what steps have so far been taken to identify and discipline those responsible for attempting to pervert the process of the Civil Service Appeals Board in the case of Mr. Colin Wallace;

(2) if he will invite the Metropolitan police to investigate the attempt to pervert the process of the Civil Service Appeals Board in the case of Mr. Colin Wallace;

(3) if he will invite Mr. David Calcutt to conduct a further, open-ended review of the case of Mr. Colin Wallace with a remit to identify all those responsible for the conspiracy to pervert the due process of the Civil Service Appeals Board.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have no reason to believe that the officials who communicated with the Civil Service Appeals Board did so other than in good faith. No further inquiries are considered necessary.

Nuclear Test Ban

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the 1991-92 allocation of £2,441 million targeted for research and development under section 2.3, page 10, of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates, 1991, Volume 2" (Cm. 1559-II), is intended for research into the verification of a nuclear test ban.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Government expenditure on unclassified work in relation to verification amounts to less than one tenth of 1 per cent. of the total R and D budget. The Government also undertake some classified work in related areas, details of which cannot be revealed on grounds of national security.

Strategic Nuclear Force

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the £1,445 million allocated for 1991-92 to the strategic nuclear force, section 2.3, page 10, of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates, 1991, Volume 2" (Cm. 1559-II), is attributable, respectively, to *(a)* nuclear warhead testing in the United States of America, *(b)* nuclear warhead design and development, *(c)* radiological protection at atomic weapons establishments, *(d)* nuclear waste storage and disposal at atomic weapons establishments and *(e)* safety assurance testing for transportation of warheads.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information requested at *(a)*, *(b)* and *(e)* is classified. The information at *(c)* and *(d)* is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Environmental Protection

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence under which sub-heading in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1991" (Cm 1559-II) environmental protection and research activities of his Department's activities are subsumed; and if he will publish an estimate of the total annual allocation of defence expenditure to environmental matters accounted for in the estimates.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: This Department's expenditure on environmental measures cannot be separately identified.

European Defence Initiative

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the Government's current annual financial commitment to the European long-term initiative for defence; and how much he estimates it is likely to be for each of the next five years.

Mr. Alan Clark: Our current commitment of £1 million is for collaborative research over the next four years; it is envisaged that work will not begin until 1992. Funding for Euclid over the next five years will be determined in the light of agreements reached for further collaborative projects.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he will next meet his European counterparts to discuss the European long-term initiative for defence.

Mr. Alan Clark: No meetings are currently planned specifically to discuss the European long-term initiative for defence, Euclid. However, the subject may be raised at the next meeting of Defence Ministers from the participating nations in spring next year.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* his policies and *(b)* his Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; and if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring.

Mr. Alan Clark: Further to the reply I gave to the hon. Member on 24 July last year, Vol. 177, column *121*, I can inform him of the following: our new suppliers service has given marketing advice to about 2,400 companies over the last 12 months; our fortnightly *Contracts Bulletin* now includes details of sub-contract opportunities and allows sub-contractors to purchase advertising space; and during 1990-91, 38 defence research contracts, with a total value of £1·18 million were placed under our small firms research initiative.

Details of payments to small firms during 1990-91 are not yet available, but during 1989-90, about 6,200 small companies secured headquarters contracts, with a total value of approximately £1 billion. Just over half this went to businesses with fewer than 50 employees. Over the same period, MOD establishments awarded over 200,000 local purchase orders to small firms, at a total value of £100 million.

Navy Bases

Mr. Douglas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the estimated annual costs of operating each of the Royal Navy bases and the anticipated savings or additional costs arising from the decisions made to rationalise the Royal Navy's support infrastructure.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The cash allocation for each of the naval bases for the current financial year is:

	£ million
Portsmouth	148·1
Devonport	122·9
Faslane	74·8
Rosyth	64·8
Portland	14·8

The savings expected from the naval support rationalisation measures announced by my right hon. Friend on 16 July 1991, *Official Report*, columns 148-49, amount to approximately £275 million over 10 years.

Mr. Douglas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the numbers and types of vessels which will be based at each of the Royal Navy bases in the light of the decisions made to rationalise the Royal Navy's support infrastructure.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Vessels are currently base-ported as shown in the following table. On 16 July my right hon. Friend announced our plans to transfer from Rosyth the four Type 42 destroyers and the Northern Ireland squadron—four vessels—to Portsmouth and Faslane respectively. Overall vessel numbers will change as the Royal Navy moves towards the smaller fleet set out in the 1991 Statement on the Defence Estimates.

Portsmouth
6 Diesel/electric submarines (SSKs)
8 Destroyers
7 Frigates
3 Carriers
7 Minor war vessels

5 Others

Devonport
9 Nuclear-powered submarines (SSNs)
29 Frigates
6 Others

Faslane
4 Ballistic missile submarines
5 SSN
2 SSK

Rosyth
4 Destroyers
27 Minor war vessels

Mr. Douglas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the numbers of naval and civilian personnel which he anticipates will be employed at each of the Royal Navy bases in the light of decisions made to rationalise the Royal Navy's support infrastructure.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The numbers of naval and civilian personnel currently at the naval bases are shown in the table. Proposals for the reduction in tasks at Rosyth naval base would entail 1,100 naval personnel transferring to Portsmouth and 100 to Faslane. Nine hundred civilian jobs would also be affected although it is too soon to say how many of these might be transferred to other naval bases. Some redeployment of civilian staff is envisaged in the light of the other restructuring proposals announced on 16 July by my right hon. Friend, but specific numbers have yet to be finalised. As my right hon. Friend made clear in his statement, the MOD will now proceed to rationalise support activities in each of the naval base areas.

Naval base	*Civilians*	*Naval Personnel*[1]
Portsmouth	5,800	8,500
Devonport	3,850	9,300
Faslane	2,000	3,500
Rosyth	2,100	4,200
Portland	700	500

[1] Includes those in shore jobs, on board ships base ported at the Base or crews of ships being refitted there.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 23 July 1991

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Departmental Reorganisation

Mr. Irvine: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has for reshaping his Ministry's organisation to make it more effective in meeting the requirement of its customers.

Mr. Gummer: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food provides a range of services for our customers. Our regional administrative staff handle grant and subsidy work, licensing and other services for farmers; animal health offices provide veterinary services; and ADAS makes available advice and expertise to farmers and growers.

I have been considering how best to improve the delivery of our services, particularly in the light of the decision to establish ADAS as an executive agency from 1 April 1992. As a result, we are establishing three service centre networks, each one dedicated to delivering the best possible quality of service.

1. *MAFF service centres*

There will be nine regional service centres, which will handle the Ministry's grant and subsidy work, licensing and various other services which are provided to farmers and growers. These centres will be located as follows:

Service centre location	*Areas Covered*
Bristol	Avon, Dorset, Somerset, Wiltshire
Cambridge	Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, Suffolk
Carlisle	Cumbria, Lancashire, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear
Crewe	Cheshire, Merseyside, Greater Manchester, Shropshire, Staffordshire
Nottingham	Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire
Northallerton	Cleveland, Durham, Humberside, Yorkshire (North, South and West)
Reading	Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Kent, Greater London, Oxfordshire, Surrey, West Sussex
Worcester	Hereford and Worcester, Gloucestershire, Warwickshire, West Midlands

The 9th regional service centre will cover Cornwall and Devon. I have asked for further study of where this centre should be located. Meanwhile, the administrative staff will continue to be in Exeter and Truro, as at present.

It is proposed to put in place this new structure of regional service centres as from April of next year. The reorganisation of the offices will take rather longer than this, but will be put in effect as quickly as possible. Initially, all the centres will occupy existing offices, although in the case of Cambridge the possibility of a move to a location outside the city is being considered.

In order to make sure that the needs of the regions covered by each of these new centres are properly reflected, I am intending to appoint nine regional panels of outside advisers, drawn from procedures, retailers and consumers. They will continue the work done by the five larger panels we have at present, and the wider consumer representation will complement the work of the consumer panel which I set up in 1989, and my meetings with consumer groups.

2. *Animal Health*

I have concluded that the continuation of efficient and effective services by the state veterinary service will be best achieved by retaining the present structure of 29 animal health offices and five regional centres. They will continue in their present locations.

3. *Agricultural Development and Advisory Service*

The Agricultural Development and Advisory Service plans to restructure the management of its main consultancy operations into 13 new business centres in England located at Bury St. Edmunds, Guildford, Huntingdon, Leeds, Lincoln, Maidstone, Newcastle, Oxford, Preston, Starcross (Devon), Taunton, Wolverhampton and Worcester. Proposals for office locations in Wales are being considered by ADAS and the Welsh Office. ADAS plans to retain its existing analytical and microbiology laboratories together with the network of experimental farms. ADAS also envisages that some consultancy staff will continue to be located in satellite offices. The precise number and location of these satellite offices is still under consideration, but most of the existing ADAS-locations will still be operating when ADAS becomes an executive agency in April 1992. Initially, at least, the new business centres will be located in existing Ministry offices, but in all cases ADAS will be reviewing its office accommodation. Any changes will be publicised by ADAS.

I am confident that this new tripartite organisation will enable the regional service centres, the animal health offices and ADAS to provide the high level of cost effective and efficient service which the Ministry's customers have a right to expect from us.

Veterinary Investigation Centres

Mr. Harris: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what arrangements he is making to maintain veterinary investigation service facilities for private veterinary surgeons and farmers in Cornwall.

Mr. Gummer: One of the considerations which led to the decision to close the Truro centre was the low level of local demand by private veterinary surgeons for chargeable services. I have now concluded, however, that a VI service unit should be retained at Truro in order to continue to provide statutory and chargeable post-mortem facilities and statutory and chargeable advisory visits. It will be staffed by a veterinary investigation officer and supporting staff. The position will be reviewed in two years' time in the light of the demand, in the meantime, for the services.

Farm Woodland Scheme

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the future of the farm woodland scheme.

Mr. Gummer: The farm woodland scheme was introduced in October 1988 for a three-year trial period. That period will shortly expire and the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and I are undertaking a comprehensive review of the scheme.

As a contribution to the review we commissioned three farm surveys from Robertson Gould Consultants on the silvicultural and the environmental aspects of the scheme in Great Britain, and from Wye college and the Scottish agricultural college, Aberdeen on the socio-economic aspects in England and Scotland respectively. These have now been published by the three organisations and copies are available from them. In addition we have received a number of submissions from organisations with a particular interest in the scheme. To give us time to analyse this information and to complete the review we have decided to continue to accept applications under the existing rules of the farm woodland scheme until 31 March 1992. An announcement about the outcome of the review will be made in the autumn.

Finally, section 2(3) of the Farm Land and Rural Development Act 1988 requires that Ministers review the grants under the farm woodland scheme in Great Britain by 30 September 1991 and lay a report before Parliament. The Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and I have reviewed the annual payments provided under the scheme and have decided that they should remain unchanged. A report giving the background to our decision has been placed in the Library of the House.

Agricultural Prices

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will describe the net effects on supply estimates of the European Community decision on agricultural prices for 1991-92.

Mr. Gummer: The net voted provision for class III vote 1 intervention board—executive agency (CAP market support) is £72·270 million. Gross provision is £1,895 million. It is estimated that changes to market conditions which had arisen after the supply estimate was published would have increased the net provision required to some £110 million and that the price settlement has reduced this requirement to nearly £81 million. Supplementary estimates will be presented as necessary to reflect changes in vote provision required, reflecting also any further changes in market conditions.

The effect of the price settlement arises mainly from reduced attractiveness of intervention for beef and dairy products, lowered rates of aid for oilseeds crushing and on protein plants and increased receipts because of the higher cereals co-responsibility levy. The devaluation of the green pound has increased sterling costs of CAP market support but has removed the MCAS on trade both within the community and with non-member states at current market exchange rates.

Fish Products

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish a table showing the volume and value of imports and exports of fish-fingers in 1970, 1979, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990 and the current year to date.

Mr. Maclean: The value and volume of trade in deep-frozen raw fish fillets, coated with batter or breadcrumbs, are set out as follows. Comparable information is not available for 1970.

Period	Volume (thousand tonnes)		Value (£ million)	
	Imports	Exports	Imports	Exports
1979	1·7	4·4	2·8	7·0
1987	2·4	3·2	6·4	7·6
1988	3·5	4·8	10·4	10·8
1989	3·9	5·0	11·0	9·9
1990	3·7	5·0	11·9	11·7
[1]1991	1·8	2·3	5·9	4·9

[1] January to May 1991.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish a table showing the volume and value of imports and exports of fish products other than fish fingers in 1970, 1979, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990 and the current year to date.

Mr. Maclean: The value and volume of trade in fish products other than deep-frozen raw fish fillets, covered with batter or breadcrumbs, are set out in the table. Comparable information is not available for 1970.

Period	Volume (thousand tonnes)		Value (£ million)	
	Imports	Exports	Imports	Exports
1979	208·1	171·5	262·1	102·6
1987	299·2	118·5	647·4	251·6
1988	316·8	119·1	656·4	231·7
1989	361·8	131·3	741·2	256·3
1990	378·8	138·0	807·1	292·6
[1]1991	155·7	172·3	325·9	124·3

[1] January to May

Chemical Spraying

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will state, for each European Community member country, what requirements, if any, exist at the point of sale for the display of information on the chemical spraying of fruit and vegetables.

Mr. Maclean: Labelling of four preservatives when used on citrus and one when used on bananas is required by some member states. An indication of other post-harvest treatments is required in France and is required in Greece for produce imported from outside the Community. No other requirements are known. However, the Council has asked the Commission to conduct a "close study" of "all aspects and practical consequences" of both pre and post-harvest pesticide labelling.

Marine Mammals

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the work on marine mammals which is carried out at the Truro veterinary investigation centre; and how many and what type have been seen at that veterinary investigation centre in each of the last five years.

Mr. Gummer: Post mortem examinations of marine mammals are carried out on behalf of research workers at the Institute of Zoology, Zoological Society of London as part of a project funded by the Department of the Environment. The number and type of submissions examined at the Truro veterinary investigation centre in each of the last five years are:

	Post mortem examinations of carcasses			*Examination of carcass viscera only (carcasses not examined)*		
	Whale	*Dolphin/ Porpoise*	*Seal*	*Whale*	*Dolphin/ porpoise*	*Seal*
1986	0	1	1	0	0	1
1987	0	0	0	0	0	0
1988	0	0	2	0	3	0
1989	1	2	5	1	2	1
1990	1	10	6	0	0	1
1991	0	5	5	0	0	0

Interest Charges

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the amount paid on interest charges by farmers for current farming purposes and buildings and works for *(a)* bank advances, *(b)* Agricultural Mortgage Corporation loans, *(c)* instalment credit, *(d)* leased assets, *(e)* other credit and *(f)* interest on deposits for 1990; what forecasts he has for 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The latest estimates of the level of interest payments in 1990 were published in table 6.8 of Agriculture in the United Kingdom: 1990. Forecasts for the 1991 year will be contained in the next edition to be published early in 1992. I am sure that farmers generally will welcome the recent reductions in interest rates, which have been made possible by the success of the Government's anti-inflation policy.

Table 6.7 Costs and earnings of hired labour

£ million (unless otherwise specified) — *Calendar years*

	Average of 1979-81	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990 (forecast)*
Hired labour costs						
Wages and salaries[1]	906	1,271	1,271	1,330	1,375	1,479
Insurance payments	112	104	99	106	117	129
Other payments[2]	2	7	7	7	8	7
Total	1,021	1,383	1,378	1,443	1,500	1,616
Hours and earnings of regular whole-time male workers, 20 years and over						
Hours per week[3]	46·1	46·7	46·5	46·6	46·6	46·8
Earnings per week (£)[4]	84·7	140·8	148·0	155·4	167·4	187·4
Index of earnings in real terms (deflated by the RPI, 1985 = 100)	91·1	101·5	102·4	102·6	102·6	104·7

[1]Includes perquisites.
[2]Includes redundancy payments, workers' pension scheme and youth training scheme.
[3]All hours worked and statutory holidays.
[4]Includes pay for statutory holidays, employers' contribution to employees' community charge and payments in kind for houses, board and lodging and milk which are valued at rates laid down by the agricultural wages boards.

Table 6.8 Interest

£ million (unless otherwise specified) — *Calendar years*

	Average of 1979-81	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990 (forecast)*
Interest rates						
Average bank base lending rate in the United Kingdom (percentage)	14·4	10·9	9·7	10·1	13·9	14·8
Average rate of interest on bank advances to agriculture (percentage)	16·8	13·3	12·1	12·5	16·2	17·1
Interest charges (for current farming purposes and buildings and works) on:						
bank advances	423	656	595	636	881	991
AMC loans	5	6	7	7	9	11
instalment credit	20	30	29	34	48	59
leased assets	14	58	42	50	65	68
other credit[1]	3	3	4	4	5	6
less interest on deposits[2]	47	54	40	34	52	54
Total	417	700	637	696	955	1,080

[1]This includes interest paid on loans from the Agricultural Credit Corporation, from the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland and from private sources.
[2]Interest earned on money held on short term deposit.

Drift Nets

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans exist for a team of his scientists to join Cornish fishermen to observe large-scale drift-netting in operation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: A MAFF observer is currently accompanying the present fishing trip. Further plans will be made in the light of findings on this trip. The nets being used are about one-eighth of the large-scale 50 kilometre nets in the Pacific which prompted United Nations resolution against drift nets.

State Veterinary Service

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will set out the costs of running the state veterinary service, excluding compensation paid

as a result of animals contracting various diseases, for each year since 1979; what are his estimates of expenditure for each year until 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested for each year since 1979 is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. The baseline figures for expenditure for each year until 1993-94, is as follows:

	£ million
1991-92	27·8
1992-93	30·0
1993-94	32·9

Alcohol Labelling

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made by the European Community to require compulsory nutrient-labelling of wines and other alcoholic beverages, with full disclosures of all chemical additives, colourings and preservatives, as well as of any pesticide used on the fruit.

Mr. Maclean: General compulsory nutrition labelling is not an option at the moment as there is no support from other member states. We therefore believed it right to put our full weight behind the Nutrition Labelling Rules Directive (90/496/EEC) which, with the exception of drinks subject to the labelling requirements of the wine regime, is fully applicable to alcoholic drinks. The Directive provides for the voluntary declaration of nutrients within mandatory formats. Declarations will be compulsory only if a nutrition claim is made. United Kingdom has achieved provision for a review of arrangements five years after implementation and will look at the need for general compulsory labelling in the light of experience gained.

Proposals to amend the EC Food Labelling Directive (79/112/EEC) to require ingredient listing for alcoholic beverages have not yet been received from the European Commission. These are expected late summer 1991.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Land Registry

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Attorney-General what is the average period of time that it takes for the Land Registry to register fully a change in title.

The Attorney-General: The average period of time that it currently takes the Land Registry to register a change in title is six weeks. A much faster service is provided where the application is urgent.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Attorney-General what proposals he has for improving the speed and efficiency of the Land Registry.

The Attorney-General: Following its establishment as an executive agency the Land Registry published performance targets agreed with the Lord Chancellor and covering the three years 1991-1994. Those targets included the following improvements in productivity and speed of services:

	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94
Productivity			
Progressive reduction in unit costs	Target: to achieve or better a 6 per cent. improvement over the three-year period.		
Progressive increase in output per post per year			
Quality of Service			
Speed			
Percentage of pre-completion applications handled in four days	91	91·5	92
Average handling time for post-completion applications (weeks)	7	6	5

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to his answer of 24 June, *Official Report*, column *352*, if he will arrange for a copy of the research on the potential costs and savings to the Crown prosecution service, according to the range of options open to the Lord Chancellor's advisory committee on legal education and training, to be placed in the Library.

The Attorney-General: No.

Assistant Recorders

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Attorney-General how many *(a)* women and *(b)* men were authorised to sit as assistant recorders in the last five years at (i) 12 years or under call, (ii) 13 years call, (iii) 14 years call, (iv) 15 years call, (v) 16 years call, (vi) 17 years call, (vii) 18 years call, (viii) 19 years call and (ix) 20 or more years call, respectively.

The Attorney-General: The information is not available in precisely the form requested. For those who are currently serving as assistant recorders (who include the majority of those authorised to sit in the last five years) the numbers for each length of call, or, in the case of solicitors, length of admission, are as follows:

	Women	*Men*
12 years or less	1	2
13 years	1	5
14 years	1	16
15 years	—	28
16 years	3	42
17 years	5	47
18 years	4	50
19 years	3	46
20 or more years	9	157

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Attorney-General what is the average length of call and average age on appointment of *(a)* women and *(b)* men currently serving as assistant recorders.

The Attorney-General: The information is as follows:

	Average length of call[1] *(years)*	*Average age (years)*
Women	19·0	43·2
Men	19·2	43·4

[1] Or, for a solicitor, length of admission.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Attorney-General what proportion of those called to sit as assistant recorders were women in 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990 respectively.

The Attorney-General: The information is not available in the form requested. However, invitations since 1986 to attend the Judicial Studies Board criminal induction courses, which must be completed before authorisation to sit as an assistant recorder, indicate that the proportions are as follows:

	Women Per cent.	*Men Per cent.*
1986	9	91
1987	5	95
1988	4	96
1989	7	93
1990	7	93
1991[1]	15	85

[1] To date.

Women Lawyers

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Attorney-General how many women solicitors and barristers are statutorily qualified for any circuit appointment.

The Attorney-General: This information is not held by Government in the form requested. Eligibility for appointment depends on the number of years for which a solicitor or barrister has held the appropriate qualification within the meaning of section 71 of the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990. The Law Society and the General Council of the Bar regulate the holding of such qualifications by solicitors and barristers respectively and lists of practitioners are published on a regular basis.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

UN Arms Sales Register

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on an international United Nations arms sales register.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Our initiative for a UN register has received wide support. The European Council on 28-29 June decided that the Twelve should put forward a joint resolution to the next UN General Assembly proposing a register. Leaders at the London economic summit affirmed their commitment to the early adoption of such a register. At their meeting in Paris on 8 and 9 July the five permanent members of the Security Council also endorsed this approach. We are pleased that the recent report of the UN expert study group on transparency has recommended the prompt establishment of a register.

Israel (Nuclear Weapons)

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he intends to take to secure the elimination of nuclear weapons in Israel.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As a depositary state of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT) it is our policy to take every suitable opportunity both to raise the importance of nuclear non-proliferation with all non-parties to the non-proliferation treaty and to lobby them to accede as soon as possible. This would engage them in an undertaking not to manufacture or acquire nuclear weapons.

Mr. Scott Joyce

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will call for a report from Her Majesty's Government's consul on Corfu into the circumstances of the arrest of Mr. Scott Joyce of 28 Cannon Drive, Ash Green, Coventry, on 26 June and his sentencing to 12 months' imprisonment on 27 June, and as to whether legal representation was available to him.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have received a report from our consul at Corfu about the arrest and conviction of Mr. Scott Joyce. The consul was notified on 27 June 1991 of Mr. Joyce's arrest the previous day. Mr. Joyce's trial was held the same day, after he had confirmed to the consul that he did not intend to request a postponement. He was sentenced to 12 months' imprisonment.

The consul, aware that Mr. Joyce did not have funds for a lawyer, asked whether he required assistance to contact anyone for funds. Mr. Joyce declined this offer, and was therefore unrepresented in court.

Criminal Matters

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when Her Majesty's Government intend to ratify the European convention on mutual assistance in criminal matters and the additional protocol to the European convention on mutual assistance in criminal matters.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Government of the United Kingdom intend to ratify the European convention on mutual assistance in criminal matters and the additional protocol to the European convention on mutual assistance in criminal matters in August this year.

TRANSPORT

British Rail Property

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the income from the sale of British Rail property for each year since 1980; what is his estimate of the value of property at present owned by British Rail; and into what broad categories the property can be classified.

Mr. McLoughlin: Income from the sale by the British Rail Property Board—BRPB—of British Rail property for each year since 1980 was as follows:

Year	*Net sales after expenses (£ million)*
1980	33
1981	38
1982	29
1983	67
[1]1984-85	145
1985-86	73
1986-87	101

Year	Net sales after expenses (£ million)
1987-88	176
1988-89	265
1989-90	[2]331
1990-91	[2]122

[1] 15 months.
[2] Includes sales of property acquired in connection with the channel tunnel rail link project.

The book value of the assets owned by British Rail is shown in BR's accounts, published with the board's annual report; the value of the board's interest in non-operational property on 31 March 1991 was £268·5 million. Operational property may also be sold once it becomes surplus to operational requirements.

Jubilee Line

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of the cost of the Jubilee line extension he currently expects to recover from Olympia and York, and other private sources; what is the current estimated cost in current prices of the Jubilee line extension; and whether private sector contributions to the line will be inflation-protected.

Mr. Freeman: The approved cost of the Jubilee line extension is £1,042 million in 1989 prices, equivalent to £1,188 million in today's prices, although the figure is currently under review. The agreed private sector contributions are spread over a longer period than the construction; when costs and contributions are discounted to a common base year, some 17 per cent. of the approved cost is covered by contributions. These are not inflation-protected.

Dartford Bridge

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether disabled people will be permitted to drive invalid vehicles across the new Dartford bridge.

Mr. Chope: The Dartford Tunnel Byelaws 1988, as amended, permit the passage of any vehicle, including an invalid carriage, through the tunnels as long as it is capable of maintaining a minimum speed of 10 mph. I understand that the crossing operator, Dartford River Crossing Ltd, intends to propose the same conditions for the new bridge when it opens later this year.

Channel Tunnel

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he intends to announce a shortlist of the options proposed for the route of the channel tunnel rail link; when he expects to make a decision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The Government are still considering the large volume of material submitted by British Rail in the last 11 weeks. We have also had discussions with the proponents of the options that were studied. The issues were complex and require careful and thorough examination.

Ferries

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether it is a condition of the operating licence for ferries docking in ports in the United Kingdom that the post emergency evacuation and exit signs are in English on all ships.

Mr. McLoughlin: Emergency signs, illustrations and instructions for passengers are required to be in the English language and any other appropriate language, on all shops operating to United Kingdom ports.

Radioactive Material

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the annual number of movements of radioactive material, including medical isotopes, and sources for use in industry.

Mr. McLoughlin: My Department does not collect data of the kind requested.

NATIONAL FINANCE

New Cars

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what revenue was received in 1990-91 from value added tax on sales of new cars; and what is the estimated revenue for 1991-92.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: An estimated £2·6 billion in valued added tax was received in 1990-91 from the sale of new cars. A corresponding figure for 1991-92 is not available.

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the rate of total sales tax as a percentage of the retail price on new cars of two litres or less in the United Kingdom; and what are the comparable figures for Belgium, France, Italy and Spain, respectively.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Rates of total sales tax as a percentage of the retail price on new volume cars of two litres or less in the United Kingdom, Belgium, France, Italy and Spain according to the latest information available, are as follows:

Total sales tax as a percentage of the retail price on new volume cars of two litres or less

Country	Per cent.
United Kingdom	21·4
Belgium	20
France	18
Italy	16
Spain	24·8

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the college of national regulatory authorities from the United Kingdom, Luxembourg, Switzerland and Spain was set up to monitor BCCI; why it was established at that date; when its existence was made known to the public; and how.

Mr. Maples: The College of Supervisors first met in May 1988. The supervisors had for some time wished to

improve their capacity to monitor the BCC group as a whole, and this was facilitated by the appointment towards the end of 1987 of a single auditor to the group (Price Waterhouse). The existence of the college became known to the media during 1989. The function of the College of Supervisors was explained in answer to questions in both Houses in 1990 (House of Commons *Official Report*, 18 January 1990, col. 402, House of Lords *Official Report* 23 April Cols. 407-23), in connection with the convictions in Tampa, Florida.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what legislative changes, or changes in other statutory procedures, he proposes in the light of the closure of the Bank of Credit and Commercial International.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer on 22 July 1991]:]* I refer the hon. Member to the statement that I made on 19 July at cols. 715-29 and the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 22 July at cols. 757-64.

Northern Ireland (Human Rights)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many copies of the 16th report of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights, 1990-91, on Northern Ireland, have been printed by HMSO.

Mr. Maples: One thousand copies.

Midland Bank

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will meet the chairman of Midland bank to discuss ways of improving the flow of information between the main bank and its subsidiaries.

Mr. Maples: I have no plans to do so.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the adequacy of the information given to shareholders about the financial position of Midland International Trade Services within Midland bank; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maples: I have received no representations on this subject.

Share Option Schemes

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the Treasury order will be laid bringing into effect the proposal to increase from £150 to £250 the maximum monthly savings limit on an individual employee's contributions under an approved savings-related share option scheme.

Mr. Maude: The Treasury order will be made as soon as possible after Royal Assent to the Finance Bill and will bring into force the new £250 limit from 1 September 1991.

Authorised Banks

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will revise the procedures for providing guidance to the Bank of England about the production of a list of authorised banks; and if he will make a statement on the categorisation used to identify differences in status of authorised banks.

Mr. Maples *[holding answer 19 July 1991]:* The Bank of England has a statutory duty under section 17(1) of the Banking Act 1987, to publish in its annual Banking Act report a list of the institutions authorised at the end of the financial year. The Act also sets out in detail the criteria which the Bank is to apply in determining who should be authorised. The list published by the Bank does not identify differences in the status of authorised banks, except that UK-incorporated banks are distinguished from those incorporated overseas.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* his policies and *(b)* his Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; and if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring.

Mr. Maples *[holding answer on 22 July 1991]:* The Government's economic policies are designed to maintain an environment in which business and enterprise can develop and prosper. The Treasury therefore places a high priority on helping small businesses, and among the specific measures included in the 1991 Budget were:

allowing 700,000 small employers with average monthly PAYE and national insurance contributions bills below £400 to pay quarterly rather than monthly;

increasing by over a third the VAT registration threshold to an annual turnover of £35,000—as a result up to 150,000 businesses need not be registered for VAT;

raising the turnover threshold for VAT annual accounting from £250,000 to £300,000. Qualifying businesses only have to make one return a year instead of four, with payments being made monthly;

halving to one year the period firms must wait before claiming relief from VAT on debts written off in their accounts;

increasing by a quarter to £250,000 the profits limit below which companies pay corporation tax at the small companies rate of 25 per cent. The limit for marginal relief was also raised by a quarter to £1,250,000;

allowing unincorporated firms to set trading losses against capital gains tax, as companies can do already;

increasing the limit for capital gains tax relief on businesses sold by individuals on retirement, and reducing the qualifying age from 60 to 55 years;

reviewing the VAT serious misdeclaration penalty so as to produce proposals for next year. In the meantime, the penalty rate was reduced from 30 to 20 per cent.

Inland Revenue and customs and excise officials also continuously review forms, explanatory notices and leaflets with the aim of providing guidance which is easily understood.

Despite the recession, the success of Government's policies is demonstrated by the latest statistics on VAT registrations which show that, although down in 1989, there was a net average increase of around 800 new businesses per week during 1990.

Debt

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent agreements have been reached on debt release for the World's poorest countries *(a)* bilaterally and *(b)* through the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the European Community.

Mr. Maples: The Government has already cancelled around £1 billion of old aid loans owed by the poorest countries. A British proposal led to the agreement at the 1988 Toronto economic summit that government creditors would reschedule on concessional terms the other official debt of the poorest countries pursuing economic reforms. Twenty countries have benefited so far.

At last year's Commonwealth Finance Minister's Meeting in Trinidad, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, when he was Chancellor, launched an initiative to increase official debt relief for the poorest countries. The Trinidad Terms, if accepted by all Paris Club creditors, could lead to debt reduction of up to $18 billion. The Government has been pressing to secure improved terms in line with the original United Kingdom proposals. We welcome the positive commitment to debt relief for the poorest, most indebted countries made by the leader of the 'Group of Seven' countries at the conclusion of the recent London economic summit and hope that the Paris Club will be able to reach an agreement on new measures very soon.

Inland Revenue

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the proposed relocation of Inland Revenue work to Nottingham.

Mr. Maude: The Inland Revenue are to hold an architectural competition for a new building in Nottingham. The new building—which will be ready for occupation in 1994—will house 1,800 jobs which are being relocated from the London area.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Terrorism

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table to show, for each year since 1968 to the latest available date, the number of terrorist explosions which took place in Londonderry city and the number of bombs defused; how many in each were on (1) the west bank, (2) on the east bank of the River Foyle and (3) how many were in commercial or retail premises.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information in the precise form requested is not readily available. However, the following table gives details from 1983 to June 1991 broken down in police sub-divisions in the Londonderry area.

Bomb attacks in Londonderry area 1983 to 30 June 1991

	Police sub-divisions	
	Strand road	*Waterside*
All incidents[1]	175	57
Explosions	139	38
Defusings	109	47
Commercial incidents[2]	17	5
Explosions	14	8
Defusings	3	11

[1] One incident may include more than one explosion and/or more than one defusing.
[2] Commercial attacks are included in the "all incidents" figure.

Publications

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total cost of printing and distribution of (1) "Serving the Community—The Northern Ireland Prison Service in the 1990s", (2) "Ring of Gullion Proposal: AONB Guide to Designation", (3) "Working for Patients HSS Trusts: A Working Guide", (4) "Better Service Better Care; What the Changes in Health and Social Services Mean for You", (5) "Registrar General NI: Annual Report 1989", (6) "Legal Annual Report 1989-90", (7) "Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights Report for 1990-1991", (8) "People Policing Progress—The Work of the Police Authority 1988-1991", (9) "Rate Collection Agency Framework Document April 1991" and (10) "Annual Report of the Chief Adjudication Officer for 1989-90 on Adjudication Standards (DHSS)"; and who was awarded the printing contract in each case.

Dr. Mawhinney: The cost of printing, publishing and distributing the following publications are borne by HMSO who aim to recover costs from sales revenue:

1. Serving the Community—
   The Northern Ireland Prison Service in the 1990s.
3. Working for Patients HSS Trusts: A Working Guide.
4. Better Service Better Care: What the Changes in Health and Social Services Mean for You.
5. Registrar General NI: Annual Report 1989.
6. Legal Aid Annual Report 1989-1990 (Title as given not known).
7. Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights Report for 1990-91.
9. Rate Collection Agency Framework Document April 1991.
10. Annual Report of the Chief Adjudication Officer for 1989-90 on Adjudication Standards (DHSS).

Northern Ireland Departments purchase copies for distribution, the total cost of which was £117,265·43.

Additionally, "Better Service Better Care: What the changes in Health and Social Services Mean for You" was distributed throughout the Province at a cost of £24,969.

One publication, "Ring of Gullion Proposal: AONB Guide to Designation", has not yet been published in final form and costs have not yet been included.

The one publication not printed via HMSO, "People Policing Progress—The Work of the Police Authority 1988-1991", was contracted independently by the Department but details are not released to protect commercial confidentiality.

Hearing Therapists

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what additional resources the Government will allocate to health and social services in order that provision can be made for training of hearing therapists.

Mr. Hanley: Funding for in-service training is met from within the resources allocated to health and social services boards each year. Over £1 billion has been allocated to the health and personal social services in Northern Ireland this year which should allow board, s to meet the cost of training hearing therapists.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what account is taken of family ties between senior officials of the public body and managers or directors of the tendering body in considering competitive tendering for work previously done by direct labour organisations.

Dr. Mawhinney: As part of the competitive tendering process, all tenderers are asked to declare family ties between senior officials of the public body and managers or directors of the tendering firm. Similarly, senior officials are expected to declare interests or ties.

Where such a tie is declared, or has been identified, the senior official is not permitted to act in any capacity involving the evaluation of tenders for any competition in which the firm was taking part.

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what inquiries are made as to fiscal probity of the tendering company and its compliance with employment legislation in considering competitive tendering for work previously done by direct labour organisations.

Dr. Mawhinney: As part of the competitive tendering process, audited accounts and references are to be requested and examined for all tenderers.

All tenderers are required to sign undertakings that their organisations comply with all legislation as it pertains in Northern Ireland.

Education

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make it his policy to ensure the provision of resources at the level necessary to maintain a rural education presence in isolated communities.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Government continue to recognise that Northern Ireland requires a relatively high number of small rural schools. Education authorities are required to ensure that their local management of schools arrangements provide adequate resources to all schools which must remain in operation, regardless of their size.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish details of the cash value and age-weighted pupil units allocated by each education and library board in Northern Ireland under the local management of schools scheme to *(a)* pupils attending secondary schools and *(b)* pupils attending grammar schools.

Dr. Mawhinney: The age-weightings of pupils depend on the form attended. There is no distinction between secondary and grammar school pupil weightings. The range of age-weightings in each education and library board is:

	Form 1	*Form 2*	*Form 3*	*Form 4*	*Form 5*	*Form 6*
BELB	1·80	1·75	1·85	1·95	2·00	2·30
NEELB	1·83	1·75	1·83	1·92	2·02	2·50
SEELB	1·90	1·80	1·90	2·00	2·00	2·10
SELB	1·60	1·60	1·60	1·80	1·80	2·50
WELB	1·66	1·66	1·66	1·66	1·66	2·32

The cash value of each age-weighted pupil unit reflects the different approaches in each board area and values are not, therefore, directly comparable. The figures are:

	AWPU £
BELB	813·79
NEELB	788·75
SEELB	730·92
SELB	852·35
WELB	812·25

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the value in cash terms of the monies retained by each education and library board in Northern Ireland to provide advisory services to schools; and what percentage of the funds allocated to each board this cash sum represents.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave on 17 June 1991 at columns *34-35*.

Prisoners (Release on Licence)

Mr. Stanbrook: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the Irish Government are consulted under the Anglo-Irish Agreement on the release on licence from indeterminate sentences of individuals convicted for murder of members of the security forces and the prison service in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney: There is no consultation between the British and Irish Governments, either under the auspices of the Anglo-Irish Inter-governmental Conference or by any other means, about the release on licence of any prisoner serving an indeterminate sentence.

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of civilians, whose murders were occasioned by political or sectarian motives, were released on licence in each of the last 10 years, indicating in each case the length of time actually served in prison.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 16 July 1991]:* The information requested is as follows:

Prisoners released on licence from indeterminate sentences imposed for terrorist murder of civilians

Year	*Number released by years served*											*Total released*
	8	*9*	*10*	*11*	*12*	*13*	*14*	*15*	*16*	*17*	*18*	
1982	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	2
1983	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
1984	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
1985	—	4	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	7
1986	—	1	6	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	10
1987	—	1	—	6	6	3	2	—	—	—	—	18
1988	—	1	3	—	4	7	2	1	—	—	—	18
1989	—	—	—	1	2	5	10	3	5	—	—	26
1990	—	—	—	—	1	5	20	21	—	2	—	49

Year	Number released by years served 8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	Total released
[1]1991	—	—	—	1	—	1	2	5	3	1	1	14
Total	1	9	12	10	14	22	36	31	8	3	1	147

[1] To 17 July.
These figures include prisoners sentenced to detention during the Pleasure of the Secretary of State.

ENERGY

Renewable Energy

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what resources are currently being spent on research for alternative forms of energy.

Mr. Moynihan: Expenditure in support of my Department's substantial research, development and demonstration programme into renewable energy, is expected for 1991-92 to be about £24 million.

Plutonium

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what quantities of plutonium are currently under safeguards at *(a)* each of the operating nuclear power plants and *(b)* at Sellafield; and if he will indicate the proportions of plutonium under nuclear safeguards at Sellafield which originated in (i) United Kingdom nuclear power plants operated by the home nuclear power generators, Nuclear Electric and Scottish Nuclear; (ii) foreign nuclear plants, in fuel shipped to Sellafield for reprocessing and (iii) nuclear reactors operated by British Nuclear Fuels plc and the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, respectively.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I refer the hon. Member to my Department's press release No. 193 of 18 October 1990, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House.

Preservation of Amenities

Mr. Arbuthnot: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what preservation of amenity statements have been produced under schedule 9 to the Electricity Act 1989.

Mr. Wakeham: Schedule 9 statements, which constitute the environmental guidelines the licence holder intends to follow, have been produced by all the regional electricity companies, National Power, PowerGen, Nuclear Electric, and the National Grid Company. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

Electricity Prices

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the change in terms of percentage and pence per kilowatt hour for domestic electricity consumers since 31 March 1988 in each of the 12 regional electricity company licence areas; and if he will give comparable figures for Scotland and each major European Community country for which comparable figures are available.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Questions on tariffs and prices paid with respect to the privatised electricity companies are matters to be addressed to the companies concerned, though the Director General of Electricity Supply has certain responsibilities relating to these.

Comparative data on domestic electricity prices in European Community countries on 1 January each year are compiled and published by Eurostat. These data show that between January 1988 and January 1991 there was no real increase in domestic electricity prices in the places surveyed by Eurostat in the United Kingdom. Eurostat publications are available in the Library of the House.

Gas and Electricity (Imports and Exports)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions with the European Commission he has had and what written communication he has received concerning alleged violations of article 37 of the treaty of Rome regarding statutory exclusive rights to imports and exports of gas and electricity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Her Majesty's Government have received no official communication from the Commission on this matter. However, the Government have noted that on 21 March the Commission announced in a press statement that infraction proceedings would be instituted against a number of member states, including the United Kingdom, under article 37 of the treaty of Rome.

Gas

2. **Mr. Rost:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he is satisfied with progress towards the development of a competitive gas market by independent suppliers.

Mr. Wakeham *[pursuant to his reply, 15 July 1991, cols. 3-4]:* Forty-five per cent. of the new gas contracted during the period 1 June 1990 to 31 May 1991 was for supply to the market by companies other than British Gas. Of this 45 per cent., 66 per cent. was sold for power generation. The remaining 34 per cent., amounting to 15 per cent. of total new gas contracted during the year, was destined for the general industrial and commerical market.

For the two-year monitoring period 1 June 1989 to 31 May 1991 the corresponding figures are: 37 per cent. of new gas contracted was for supply to the market by companies other than British Gas. Eighty per cent. of this was for power generation, and 20 per cent., amounting to 7 per cent. of total gas contracted, was for sale to industrial and commercial customers.

Actual deliveries of new gas to industrial and commercial customers by suppliers other than British Gas were equivalent to just over 1 per cent. of British Gas-contract sales in 1991.

PRIME MINISTER

Research and Development

Mr. Comins: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list all the programmes funded by the second framework programme for research and development by the

European Community, giving in each case the percentage of the total spent on the programme which came to the United Kingdom and the figures for France, Germany and Italy.

The Prime Minister: The European Commission has provided selective statistics for the contracts awarded to individual member states for some of the specific programmes of the second framework programme. But these are incomplete. We have already urged the Commission to provide full data. I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Wena Hotels

Mr. Malins: To ask the Prime Minister whether, during the course of the state visit of President Mubarak of Egypt, he will raise with the president the case of the British company Wena Hotels.

The Prime Minister: The Egyptian Government are fully aware of our concern about the problems faced by Wena Hotels. The forthcoming state visit will provide an opportunity to emphasise it. Meanwhile, as my hon. Friend will be aware, Wena Hotels has commenced proceedings in the High Court.

Ozone Layer

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what research Her Majesty's Government are currently sponsoring on the effects of energetic fragmented sub-atomic particles on oxygen atoms and the global ozone layer.

The Prime Minister: The Natural Environment Research Council and the Science and Engineering Research Council both undertake a wide range of research, funded from the Government's science budget, which is related to stratospheric ozone. This work addresses all aspects of the global ozone layer and its depletion, including the effects of high energy particles.

"This Common Inheritance"

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if he will ensure wide circulation of the report on the state of implementation of policies set out in the environment White Paper, "This Common Inheritance," referred to in his speech at Olympia on 10 July.

The Prime Minister: Yes.

Executive Agencies

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if he will set out those areas for which ministers are referring parliamentary questions for reply to next steps executive agencies.

The Prime Minister: The Government's policy for dealing with parliamentary questions on matters delegated to executive agencies was set out in their response to the Eighth Report of the Treasury and Civil Service Committee (October 1990, Cm 1263) as follows:

"It is for Ministers responsible for particular Agencies to respond in the way they consider most helpful and appropriate to inquiries raised by Members . . . In the case of Parliamentary Questions concerning day-to-day operational matters delegated to the Agency, Ministers will normally arrange for the Chief Executive to write to the Member (and will reply to this effect in *Hansard*)".

All replies to hon. Members from agency chief executives, other than those concerning personal or confidential matters, are available in the Library.

The Government's intention is that replies about the carrying out of Government business are full, prompt and as helpful as possible. The arrangements we have are intended to achieve this and they are kept under review.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 23 July.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Security Vetting

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement about the Government's policy on the implications of homosexuality for security vetting.

The Prime Minister: All candidates for posts involving access to highly classified information are vetted in accordance with the procedures described in the statement of vetting policy announced by my predecessor on 24 July 1990 at columns *159-61*.

Because homosexual acts, even between consenting adults, remain criminal offences in a number of overseas countries, evidence of homosexuality, even if acknowledged, has been treated under this policy as a bar to clearance at PV (TS)—positive vetting (top secret)—or enhanced positive vetting (EPV) level in overseas posts and therefore as a bar to recruitment to certain areas of employment, including the diplomatic service. In the light of changing social attitudes towards homosexuality in this country and abroad, and the correspondingly greater willingness on the part of homosexuals to be open about their sexuality, their lifestyle and their relationships, the Government have reviewed this policy and concluded that in future there should be no posts involving access to highly classified information for which homosexuality represents an automatic bar to security clearance, except in the special case of the armed forces where homosexual acts remain offences under the service disciplinary Acts.

The susceptibility of the subject to blackmail or pressure by a foreign intelligence service will continue to be a factor in the vetting of all candidates for posts involving access to highly classified information. An individual assessment is made in each case, taking account of the evidence which emerges in the course of the vetting process and the level of security clearance required.

WALES

Further Education

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of local education colleges' expenditure in each county is currently covered by *(a)* central Government, *(b)* local education authorities, *(c)* training providers and training and enterprise councils and *(d)* fees paid by students.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is not held centrally.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which bodies or organisations will be finally consulted by the proposed funding council for further education in determining the annual budgets of individual further education in colleges in Mid-Glamorgan.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Further Education Funding Council for Wales has not yet been established. The consultation period on the proposals contained in the White Paper, "Education and Training for the 21st Century", has just ended and comments from interested parties are being taken into consideration in formulating the necessary legislation. Once established, the funding council will be required to allocate funds in a way that secures the efficient management of the colleges: the extent of consultation will be a matter for the council itself to determine. It will work closely with the training and enterprise councils, as stated in the White Paper.

Community Dental Service

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take steps to inform general medical practitioners of the range of services provided by the community dental service.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: This is an issue for family health services authorities and district health authorities to decide in the light of local needs and circumstances.

Local Government Review

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much time he has allowed for consultation with local authorities in Wales on local government reorganisation; and what consideration he has given to whether the time is adequate.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: We have allowed 4½ months from the date of publication of our consultation paper, "The Structure of Local Government in Wales", for the preparation of responses. We consider that this period is entirely adequate.

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will consult other representative bodies in Wales, in addition to local authorities, on local government reorganisation in the same manner that representative bodies were consulted on the Kilbrandon report in 1974.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: We have distributed our consultation paper on "The Structure of Local Government in Wales" to a large number of bodies and persons inside and outside local government, and we will consider all submissions on these matters which are put to us.

Dental Services, Gower

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to improve the provision of dental services available to residents of the Gower peninsula.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Assessment of the needs for, and securing the provision of, dental services at local level is the responsibility of the appropriate family health services authority and district health authority.

Doctors and Dentists

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is average gross income of *(a)* general dental practitioners and *(b)* general medical practitioners in Wales for the latest available year.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The intended average gross income for general dental practitioners for 1991-92 is £74,008. The intended average gross income for general medical practitioners is currently £54,790 per annum and will rise to £55,484 per annum from 1 December 1991.

Waiting Lists

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the current waiting lists for patients to have their first consultation with consultants in each of the main specialties in West Glamorgan and Neath hospitals respectively; and what were the comparable figures in each of the last three years.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Information on the numbers of patients waiting for a first out-patient consultation in five specialties, general surgery (including urology), ear, nose and throat, traumatic and orthopaedic surgery, ophthalmology, and gynaecology, at Neath general hospital and West Glamorgan as a whole is published in the "Welsh Hospital Waiting List Bulletin" series. Neither of the other two hospitals in Neath, Cymla and Tonna, treat patients in these specialties. The bulletins are published twice a year giving figures as at March and September and copies are in the Library of the House.

Unemployment

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to reduce unemployment in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department and other Government agencies operate a wide range of measures aimed at combating unemployment. Last financial year, these secured some 19,500 new jobs in Wales.

The Welsh Office and associated bodies will continue to respond swiftly to any opportunities that arise which have the potential to reduce unemployment. Last month, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment announced a substantial package of additional measures to help unemployed people back into work. This includes expert advice and help in looking for a job, extra training and a new work experience programme—employment action. This new package, together with the other measures already in place, amounts to the most comprehensive set of programmes we have ever had to alleviate unemployment.

Trecwn Naval Base

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he proposes to visit the Trecwn naval base; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Although I have no present plans to visit RNAD Trecwn, I have asked the Welsh Development Agency and the West Wales training and enterprise council to look at action which needs to be taken to alleviate the effects of the proposed closure of the depot in 1996. Special help will also be available in the area from the employment service in Wales.

Cardiff Airport

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to visit Cardiff airport; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has no plans to visit Cardiff-Wales airport.

Welsh Language

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends to announce the outcome of his recent consultation exercise on exemptions for the teaching of Welsh in the national curriculum.

Mr. David Hunt: I have now considered the advice of the Curriculum Council for Wales and the representations made by others to the consultation document which I issued in early May. I now intend to proceed to make Regulations to exempt the 10 secondary schools—three in Clwyd, two in Gwent and five in south Pembrokeshire—as specified in my consultation document from the key stage 4 (pupils aged 14 to 16) to teach Welsh in the national curriculum. Schools where exemptions apply will be encouraged to offer those pupils who so wish, the opportunity to study the language.

Regulations have been made to extend the implementation timetable for a number of schools in Dyfed, Gwent, Powys and south Glamorgan and to exempt from the national curriculum requirements to study Welsh pupils arriving in schools from outside Wales or transferring between schools in Wales late in their school career but with no previous experience of learning the language.

Education Expenditure

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has of the annual capital and current expenditure of each of the further education colleges in Mid Glamorgan.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is not held centrally.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Divorce Law Reform

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to establish counselling and mediation services to enable the Law Commission's recommendations on divorce law reform to be implemented adequately; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Government are presently reviewing all aspects of divorce reform and conciliation as part of its consideration of the Law Commission's report. It would, accordingly, be premature to reach a view on conciliation and mediation services.

Marriage Guidance

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the review of the funding of marriage guidance.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I am considering the findings of the review. The separate question of funding is under consideration as part of the current public expenditure survey.

Relate

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to provide funding to Relate to assist the probation service with domestic supervision cases.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: No.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will undertake an assessment of the burden which would devolve on the public purse were the charity Relate to cease its counselling functions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: No. The detailed research on which to base a firm estimate is not available. Considerable further research and verification would be necessary before the estimate Relate itself has drawn up could be used as a definitive basis for calculation.

Police Training

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures are being taken to ensure that recruits to the Metropolitan police receive training in race relations after their initial training at Hendon initial training school; and how many recruits received such additional training in the financial year 1990-91.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Following their initial training at Hendon training school, probationer constables in the Metropolitan police receive further training on the local area to which they have been posted. The precise content is determined by local training managers but most probationers become involved in discussion groups with representatives from minority groups including the ethnic minorities. A community and race relations handbook is being produced which will be given to every area training unit and to every recruit.

Because of the diverse nature of local training arrangements the number of recruits receiving race relations training on leaving Hendon in the financial year 1990-91 could be ascertained only at disproportionate cost.

Crime Prevention Week

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 28 June, *Official Report*, column *361*, if the Home Office research and planning unit will be undertaking any quantitative research on the effects of Crime Prevention Week.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: No, but our public relations branch commissioned quantitative market research into the effects of the advertising campaign associated with the week. The stated objectives of the week were to raise awareness of crime prevention and to build new partnerships which could have a lasting benefit in tackling crime. The research found continuing high levels of awareness of crime prevention and positive attitudes to it. A survey of police forces showed that they found the week of value in strengthening their relationship with neighbourhood watch, crime prevention panels, the press, local businesses and other sections of the community. These results indicate that the main objectives of the week were achieved.

Probation Hostels

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for the future financing of probation hostels.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: We have no plans at present to alter the current arrangements for the financing of probation hostels.

Prisons (Slopping Out)

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what effect he estimates the abolition of slopping out will have on the programme for the abolition of overcrowding in prisons.

Mrs. Rumbold: The majority of prisoners are already held in establishments which are not overcrowded. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary announced on 25 February, at column 660, that the programme to end slopping out would be accelerated and it was planned that by the end of 1994 all prisoners would have access to sanitation. The ending of this practice is a priority, even though the need to take accommodation out of use temporarily to enable sanitation systems to be installed will delay the ending of overcrowding in those establishments—principally local prisons—which are currently operating at levels of occupancy above certified normal accommodation. Under current projections, the average prison population and average available accommodation is expected to come into balance in 1995.

Mr. Michael Thynne

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will refer the case of Michael Thynne of Her Majesty's prison Bristol to the Parole Board as soon as the revised procedures for reviewing discretionary life prisoners are in operation.

Mrs. Rumbold: Over 200 discretionary life sentence prisoners will be entitled to have their cases considered by the Parole Board when the provisions of part II of the Criminal Justice Bill come into effect. We shall need to consider, in consultation with the board, how they should be dealt with and what priorities should be established. The comments made by the European court of human rights on Mr. Thynne's case will be fully taken into account in that consideration.

Prisoners (Work)

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has for rewarding prisoners who work with remission of time served.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Woolf report suggested that the prison service should consider, as part of its review of prisoners' pay, the option of linking the amount a prisoner earns to earlier release or an earlier date for parole review. The White Paper, to be published later this year, will contain our response to the Woolf inquiry's proposals on prisoners' pay.

Humberside Police

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to split the Humberside police force or to reduce its complement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The implications for the Humberside police will be among the matters to be taken into account in considering the recent recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Commission.

Data Protection

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will estimate the possible time scale of the further stages of the European Commission's draft directive on data protection.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government believe that it will be difficult to reach a common position before early 1992 and adoption before late 1992, and that member states should be allowed the normal two years to implement the measure following the date of adoption of the directive.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he is making to the European Commission on the proposal in the data protection draft directive that any electronic file held or created by a news organisation must be communicated before possible use to each individual name on the file.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government is seeking to ensure that the media and other data users are not unnecessarily hampered by requirements for automatic notification to and consent by data subjects before information about them is used.

Racial Attacks

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what special initiatives he intends to take to enable minority groups to combat the problem of racial attacks.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The progress report on multi-agency work to tackle racial attacks and harassment, due to be published later this year, will contain good practice on how community and voluntary groups can work with the statutory agencies to combat this problem. The report of the Newham pilot project in multi-agency work, funded by the Home Office, will make specific recommendations for the involvement of the community in such initiatives. We will consider further advice to police and community consultative groups in tackling racial attacks. And we are assessing a number of bids for projects under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 to help tenants who suffer racial harassment.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what additional action Her Majesty's Government intends to take to combat the problem of racial attacks.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government are continuing to develop existing initiatives, including the rigorous monitoring of the response of the police service and other agencies to guidance on racial attacks and harassment. In addition, we are co-ordinating and assessing progress made by the statutory agencies. This will lead to the publication later this year of a report on developments since the racial attacks group report of 1989, which will provide practical guidance and information on national and local initiatives, and enable local agencies to make sustained progress in combating racial attacks. The report of the Newham pilot project in multi-agency work funded

by the Home Office will also be published this year, and will provide local initiatives with specific advice and information in taking this work forward.

Police Pensions

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make an estimate of the annual cost to the Exchequer of removing the restriction on police officers who have completed 25 but less than 30 years' service not being allowed to receive their pension until they have reached the age of 50 years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested would require assumptions about the extent to which police officers would be likely to take up this option were it available. It would be a question of giving up the chance to earn a full pension in order to retire early which would depend very much on individual circumstances. There is no reliable basis for such an estimate. Apart from the management implications for the police service, the change in question would be contrary to the Inland Revenue requirements for the tax approval of retirement benefits schemes. Such a change must therefore be considered unlikely.

Traffic Wardens

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the total number of traffic wardens employed in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: As at 30 April 1991, there was a total of 4,891 traffic wardens in England and Wales. Numbers in Scotland and Northern Ireland are a matter for the respective Secretaries of State.

Religious Discrimination

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he has any plans to bring forward proposals to repeal the provision within the Bill of Rights of 1689 barring Roman Catholics from succession to, or possession of, the Crown;

(2) if he will bring forward proposals to establish that section 9 of the Roman Catholic Relief Act 1829 should not apply to ordained priests of the Roman Catholic Church who have celebrated religious services according to the rites of the Church of Rome but have since ceased to practice as Roman Catholic priests;

(3) if he will give consideration to the requirements of public policy which are met by maintaining disabilities regarding advice to the Crown on matters affecting the Church of England under the Roman Catholic Relief Act 1829 and the Jews Relief Act 1858 for Roman Catholics and Jews but not for other members of non-established churches and faiths, agnostics or atheists;

(4) if he has any plans to bring forward proposals to repeal the provision within the Bill of Rights (IX 1689) whereby any person who marries a papist is excluded from succession to the Crown or any regal authority and jurisdiction if in possession of the Crown;

(5) if he has any plans to bring forward proposals to repeal the provisions contained in the Roman Catholic Relief Act 1829 barring Roman Catholic deacons and others in Roman Catholic minor orders from sitting in the House of Commons;

(6) if he will make it his policy to remove all outstanding civil disabilities affecting Roman Catholics and Jews from the statute book;

(7) if he will bring forward proposals to repeal the provisions contained within the Roman Catholic Relief Act 1829 and the Jews Relief Act 1959 which bar from office, civil or military, under the Crown Roman Catholics or Jews advising the Crown on appointments or preferment in the Church of England;

(8) if he will consider what continuing needs are met by maintaining disabilities regarding the ecclesiastical functions of the Lord Chancellor under the Lord Chancellor (Tenure of Office and Discharge of Ecclesiastical Functions) Act 1974 for Roman Catholics and Jews but not for other members of non-established churches and faiths, agnostics or atheists.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have no plans to do so.

Broadcasting

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the international obligations of the United Kingdom which he has *(a)* notified and *(b)* proposes to notify the Independent Television Commission of for the purposes of section 9.9 of the Broadcasting Act 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The obligations relevant to section 9(9) of the Broadcasting Act 1990 are the advertising provisions in the EC Directive of Broadcasting and the Council of Europe convention on transfrontier television. The Independent Television Commission has been made aware of them and they have been reflected in its codes of practice on advertising.

Derbyshire Constabulary

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of *(a)* police officers and *(b)* civilian staff employed by Derbyshire constabulary in (i) 1979 and (ii) the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is set out in the table:

	April 1979	*June 1991*
Police	1,587	1,727
Civilian staff	634	[1]504

[1] Centralisation of the county's common services has reduced the numbers of civilians recorded as employed specifically on police support.

Election Expenses

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will report progress on the review of the system of controls on candidates' expenses at elections, announced on 21 June 1989, *Official Report*, columns *131-33*.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The second and final stage of the review has now been completed. I have placed in the Library a copy of a report by the consultative group which was set up in January of this year to complete the review.

Police Complaints Authority

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether any new appointment has been made to the Police Complaints Authority.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Mr. William McCall, a former general secretary of the Institution of Professionals, Managers and Specialists (formerly the Institution of Professional Civil Servants), has accepted my invitation to serve as a member of the Police Complaints Authority. He will take up his post on 1 August.

Diamorphine

Mr. Barry Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will take steps to preserve the United Kingdom manufacturing base for diamorphine for medical use;

(2) what is his Department's policy on importation of finished diamorphine to the United Kingdom;

(3) if he will seek to prevent non-reciprocal imports of diamorphine from the European Community to Britain.

Mr. Baker: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given in another place to a question from the noble Lord Ennals on 16 July 1991 at column *9*.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Environment Exhibition

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contribution was made by the Overseas Development Administration to the exhibition on environment, wildlife and conservation at Olympia on 6 to 11 July; and how many copies of the administration's annual 1990 report, the report on the environment and the British aid programme were distributed.

Mrs. Chalker: The ODA contributed its seven panel display titled "The Environment, Forestry and British Aid" to *The Sunday Times* environment, wildlife and conservation exhibition. It was manned by ODA information staff; 800 copies of the 1990 ODA annual review and 800 copies of "The Environment and the British Aid Programme" were distributed to members of the public.

Sierra Leone

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from the Rev. Peter Sheasby of Halifax concerning the incursion of Liberian guerrillas into Sierra Leone; and what reply he has sent.

Mrs. Chalker: Rev. Peter Sheasby wrote to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on 5 July, expressing concern about recent events in Sierra Leone. A full official reply was sent to him on 19 July.

Development Projects (Pollution)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of the Overseas Development Administration on taking account of potential costs of pollution from United Kingdom-funded development projects.

Mrs. Chalker: ODA's manual of environment appraisal includes advice on taking account of the potential costs of pollution in project formulation as does the HMSO 1991 publication "Values for the Environment: a guide to economic appraisal" commissioned by the ODA. Copies of both have been placed in the Library. It may be difficult to pinpoint the costs of pollution accurately but ODA continues to promote research to develop methodologies for valuing and monitoring the environment in all our work.

Africa

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on *(a)* the contribution made by the United Kingdom to and *(b)* the outcome of the final review of the UnitedNations programme of action for African economic recovery and development.

Mrs. Chalker: The United Kingdom has played a full part in helping African countries implement the United Nations programme of action for African economic recovery and development (UNPAAERD) through its bilateral aid programmes and its contribution to international initiatives.

In particular we have:

- taken a lead in promoting international consensus and action on debt relief for the poorest countries, many of which are African;
- provided substantial resources through multilateral channels including the World Bank, up 50 per cent. of whose IDA resources are available for Africa, the African Development Bank and the EC's Lomé convention;
- continued substantial bilateral aid programmes to many African countries including £550 million pledged for support of economic reform under the first and second phases of the special programme of assistance to sub-Saharan Africa co-ordinated by the World bank.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Education Choice

13. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about providing more choice in education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It is clear from many letters I receive that there is a great deal of support from parents and others for the principle that parents should have choice in education. Our policies are designed to maximise choice, in particular our polices for grant-maintained schools, city technology colleges, more open enrolment, assisted places in independent schools, and education post-16.

Further Education

14. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met representatives of local education authorities to discuss the future funding and organisation of further education in general and adult education in particular.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend often meets representatives of local education authorities. He

expects to meet the local authority associations later in the year to discuss the funding and organisation of the new sector of post-16 education.

State Schools

15. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the structural condition of state schools.

Mr. Fallon: Responsibility for the condition of school buildings rests with LEAs and governors. Because we recognise the importance of keeping buildings in good repair, we have increased annual capital guidelines for schools by 15 per cent. in the current year, to £472 million. Grant for voluntary aided schools has also gone up, by 21 per cent. to £132 million.

Support for recurrent spending on education, which includes repairs and maintenance, increased this year by 16 per cent. to £17·5 billion.

Special Education Needs

16. **Mrs. Heal:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department intends to monitor the effect of local management of schools on special education needs support in mainstream schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: Yes, Sir. The Department's monitoring of the effects of local management of schools includes the effect on pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools.

Sports Sponsorship

17. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he next intends to meet the Sports Council to discuss sponsorship.

Mr. Atkins: In the absence of the chairman, who is abroad, I met the vice-chairman and other members of the Sports Council earlier today to discuss the council's corporate plan. Sponsorship was among the issues we discussed.

AS Examination

18. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many pupils sat the AS exam in the summer of 1990; and how many are currently studying for the AS exam.

Mr. Eggar: There were some 45,000 entries for AS examinations in 1990, though figures for the number of individual candidates are not available. Information from the AS survey and the school census suggests that up to 50,000 pupils are currently on AS courses.

Instrumental Music Teaching

19. **Mr. O'Hara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take urgent steps to arrest the decline of instrumental music teaching in schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We have no evidence of a general decline in instrumental music teaching in schools.

Student Support

20. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what new proposals he has for support of students during vacations.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The existing student support arrangements include the grant and supplementary allowances, the loan facility, access funds, and benefits still available for students who are disabled or lone parents. The Government have no present plans to add to these flexible arrangements.

Polytechnics

21. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a further statement on the future of polytechnics.

Mr. Alan Howarth: There is nothing to add at this stage to the policy on the future of polytechnics as set out in Cm. 1541.

Assisted Places Scheme

22. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has for amending the assisted places scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: The amendments to the Education (Assisted Places) Regulations 1989 were debated in the House on 17 July (*Official Report*, col. 461-73). This year we have had to make some necessary economies in the uprating of parental income tables, in the level of fee increases which participating schools charge assisted pupils and in the proposed clearing house arrangements for the redistribution of vacant assisted places.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the schools involved in the assisted places scheme, with *(a)* the total number of pupils on rolls and *(b)* the number of assisted pupils, and the percentage which *(b)* bears to *(a)*, for each school, for the latest year available.

Mr. Fallon: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) on 16 July 1991 at col. *160-62*. The percentage of assisted pupils in participating schools ranges from less than 1 per cent. to just under 50 per cent.

A-Levels

23. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy towards the position of A-levels in the curriculum, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: As the White Paper "Education and Training for the 21st century" published in May makes clear, the Government remain committed to maintaining A-levels and the standards they represent.

Grant-maintained Schools

24. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many secondary schools have obtained grant-maintained status to date.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I announced on 15 July the approval of the 100th GM school and since that date I have announced that I have approved or am minded to approve three more schools. Out of that total I have approved ninety-five secondary schools and I am minded to approve two more.

25. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he intends to take any action against local authorities that use public funds to campaign against grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo).

26. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many primary schools have so far applied for grant-maintained status.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill).

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average length of time between a school's application for grant-maintained status and the decision on the application; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Of the 115 proposals approved, approved with modification, or rejected up to 12 July 1991, the average length of time from publication of proposals to decision was just over four months. It remains our intention to reduce the time taken as the number of proposals increases, but it needs to be borne in mind that there is a two month period immediately following publication to permit objections to be submitted.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action he will take against local authorities that discriminate against pupils who attend grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I can assure my hon. Friend that I would act within the limits of my legal powers on any evidence of discrimination that was submitted to me.

South Africa (Sporting Links)

27. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his current policy towards sporting links with South Africa.

Mr. Atkins: We have worked with interested parties in South Africa, the Commonwealth, the European Community and the sports world to further our policy of encouraging contacts on a sport by sport basis with those sports which have a unified and non-racial structure. I myself have recently discussed sporting links with, among others, representatives of the African National Congress, the South African Football Association, the United Cricket Board of South Africa, the International Cricket Council and the Test and County Cricket Board. In addition my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has been in touch with Commonwealth heads of Government, in particular to discuss cricket in South Africa, before the meeting of the International Cricket Council in London on 11 to 13 July. He also hosted a reception for International Cricket Council members.

Sporting bodies have welcomed this policy which is in line with that of our Commonwealth and Community partners. The Government warmly welcome the recent decisions on renewing sporting links with South Africa taken by the International Olympic Committee and the International Cricket Council. We hope that sporting contact will resume for integrated sports as soon as possible.

The Government have also taken practical measures to assist the development of integrated sport in South Africa. To mark our support for the formation of the United Cricket Board of South Africa we announced in April a grant of £25,000 for sports equipment in the townships and rural areas.

English Teaching

28. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on his plans to improve the teaching of English in schools.

Mr. Eggar: The teaching of English will be improved through the introduction of the national curriculum. The attainment targets and programmes of study set out in the statutory orders for English give pupils and teachers clear objectives for reading, writing, speaking and listening, and require a positive and structured approach to the teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling.

GCSE

29. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any proposals to reform the GCSE.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister recently proposed that greater emphasis should be placed on the GCSE as an externally assessed examination with less emphasis being accorded to coursework. My right hon. and learned Friend will be inviting the School Examinations and Assessment Council to advise him on how to carry forward this proposal.

Daresbury Nuclear Structure Facility

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the estimated net annual savings from closing the nuclear structure facility at Daresbury.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I understand that the net annual saving resulted from closure of the nuclear structure facility is estimated by the Science and Engineering Research Council to be £5 million. This figure takes account of the cost of overheads that will now be borne by other programmes at the Daresbury laboratory.

In the short term there will be costs associated with closure including those of decommissioning and dismantling the facility.

School Sports

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information is held on the number and percentage of state secondary schools which have no competitive sports.

Mr. Atkins: The information requested is not available.

Data Protection

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what consideration he is giving to the cost to local education authorities and individual schools of registration fees under the Data Protection Act 1984.

Mr. Fallon: We plan to issue guidance on the financial and other implications of the Data Protection Act to local education authorities and maintained schools in England in the Autumn.

Speech Therapy

Mr. Heal: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a further statement on his Department's initiatives to promote more consistent professional practices with regard to speech therapy by local education authorities.

Mr. Fallon: The Department works closely with the Department of Health to promote consistency in the provision of speech therapy services available to local education authorities. However, the professional practice of speech and language therapists is primarily the responsibility of the College of Speech and Language Therapists.

Teachers' Pay

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to promote decentralised pay bargaining for teachers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The School Teachers' Pay and Conditions (No. 2) Bill provides for the setting up of a review body to make recommendations to the Prime Minister on the pay and conditions of school teachers. The Government will look to the review body to advise on the development of the system of selective payments in respect of performance, recruitment and retention and the acceptance of responsibility. Grant-maintained schools will be able to make their own arrangements for the pay and conditions of their teachers.

City Technology Colleges

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much money for setting up city technology colleges to date has come from *(a)* private businesses and *(b)* public expenditure; and what percentage is represented by each sector.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) on 9 May 1991 (*Official Report*, columns *561-64*.)

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish the amount of donations *(a)* actually received in (1) cash and (2) kind, *(b)* pledged and *(c)* confirmed in respect of each city technology college scheme, and the total cost of each scheme, with aggregate totals.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not hold information centrally in the form requested by the hon. Member.

Hearing-Impaired Children

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of hearing-impaired children is being taught in *(a)* special schools, *(b)* hearing-impaired units and *(c)* mainstream schools alongside hearing children.

Mr. Fallon: This information is not held centrally.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what representations he has received concerning the funding of training for teachers of deaf children; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what consideration he has given to the findings of the survey by the joint monitoring and study group on the training of teachers of the deaf into the numbers and supply of teachers for deaf children;

(3) what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that the number of teachers of deaf children currently being trained is sufficient to replace those retiring or leaving the profession; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: The Department is currently conducting a review of the funding arrangements for the training of teachers of pupils with special educational needs including teachers of deaf children. Local education authorities, professional bodies and the training institutes are being consulted and a number have made representations on the methods of funding. The survey by the joint monitoring and study group is being considered as part of that wider review.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many secondments were available to train teachers of deaf children in the academic years *(a)* 1988-89, *(b)* 1989-90 and *(c)* 1990-91; and how many of these were taken up.

Mr. Fallon: The provision of secondments for training teachers of deaf children is for local education authorities to determine in the light of local circumstances and priorities. The Department makes available funding to support training for teachers through the grants for education support and training scheme (GEST) and in 1992-93 is supporting expenditure of £2·1 million.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what monitoring is carried out to ensure that hearing-impaired children have full access to the national curriculum.

Mr. Fallon: It is for local education authorities, governing bodies and head teachers to implement and ensure full access to the national curriculum, subject to any statutory exceptions which may be in force. Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools monitors the implementation of the national curriculum, including access for pupils with special educational needs, on a national basis and advises the Secretary of State as necessary. The Standards in Education 1989-90 report produced by HM senior chief inspector of schools said that

"there was some particularly good work with hearing impaired pupils".

Student Loans

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to amend the student loan scheme to provide additional assistance to advanced students of music for the acquisition of bows, violins and other musical instruments.

Mr. Alan Howarth: No. Full year student support from grant and loan is 25 per cent. higher than the grant alone last year. There will be a further 6 per cent. increase this autumn.

That support is intended to cover the cost of course equipment. Some non-recurrent purchases—such as musical instruments—may be expensive. Students may need to pay for such items over several years. It is for individual students to decide how best to use the additional resources that we have made available.

Illiteracy

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his estimate of the number of school-leavers in 1991 who are functionally illiterate.

Mr. Eggar: Information is not available in the form and for the year requested, nor is there a standard definition of literacy. However, the proportion of all school leavers who obtained either O level grades A-C or CSE level 1, or latterly GCSE grades A-C, in English has increased progressively in recent years.

The Government have seen to it that, as part of the 1988 Education Act, the attainments of all pupils will be rigorously assessed at the ages of 7, 11, 14 and 16. These assessments will provide, for the first time, information on the performance of all pupils throughout their school careers in English and in other subjects, and will give us a better picture of literacy standards.

Higher Education

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his answer of 22 April, *Official Report*, columns *315-16*, on recurrent and capital spending by the Government on universities and polytechnics and other institutions of higher education, if he will give actual or estimated figures for the years 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The information requested is as follows:

£ million

	1989-90	*1990-91 (estimated)*
Universities funding council		
Current	1,713	1,661
Capital	139	175
Polytechnics and colleges funding council		
Current	1,024	1,020
Capital	90	88
Other higher education		
Current	130	143
Capital	25	26

Notes:

1. The "current" figures for 1990-91 do not take into account the effect of the shift of funding from grant to publicly funded fees.
2. "Other higher education" includes the Open University, Cranfield Institute of Technology, the Royal College of Art, British Academy postgraduate state studentships and other higher education grants.

Higher Education Students

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his answer of 22 April, *Official Report*, columns *314-15* on discretionary awards to higher education students, if he will give actual or estimated figures for the years 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The table shows expenditure, estimated for 1989-90, on discretionary awards made by local education authorities in England and Wales, using their powers under section 1(6) of the Education Act 1962. Data relating to 1990-91 are not yet available.

Academic year	*Cash expenditure £ million*	*At 1978-79 prices £ million*	*[1] Index*
1989-90	11·3	4·9	59

[1] 1978-79 = 100.

Awards made under section 1(6) are made at LEAs' discretion to students attending courses designated for mandatory awards purposes who are personally ineligible for a mandatory award. The cash expenditure includes both fees and maintenance paid as part of the award. The constant price and index figures have been calculated using the retail prices index.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his answer of 29 April, *Official Report*, columns *71-72* and 3 May, column *331*, on total public expenditure per student, if he will give actual or estimated figures for 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The table shows expenditure per student, estimated for 1989-90, by local education authorities in England and Wales in bestowing mandatory awards under the Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations. Data for 1990-91 are not yet available.

Academic year	*Cash expenditure £ million*	*Real index*	*Expenditure per student £*	*[1] Real index*
1989-90				
Total	933·9	87	2,118	63
Fees	316·3	70	717	51
Maintenance	617·6	99	1,401	72

[1] 1978-79 = 100.

The real indices have been calculated using the retail prices index.

Reading Standards

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has to monitor reading standards in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend announced a programme of action on reading standards on 9 January. This emphasised that the national curriculum would act to raise standards by setting clear national targets for reading, and requiring schools to test pupils' progress in relation to those targets at the ages of seven, 11, 14 and 16. The Secretary of State announced that he was asking Her Majesty's inspectorate to continue to monitor reading standards and to provide regular reports, which would be circulated to all schools in England. He also urged all local education authority education committees to take an active and critical interest in reading standards and urged parents to find out about their childrens' reading standards and to participate in helping to improve them.

"Fundamental Science for Fundamental Issues"

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to "Fundamental Science for Fundamental Issues" to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 11 November to Friday 15 November.

Staff-Student Ratios

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his answer of 22 April, *Official Report*, column *310*, on staff-student ratios at universities, polytechnics and other establishments in each year since 1979-80, if he will give actual or estimated figures for the years 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Data are not yet available for 1990-91. Provisional student-staff ratios for 1989-90 are given below for universities, polytechnics and other establishments. Provisional data are given for higher education and further education separately and together for polytechnics and other establishments.

Student-Staff Ratio
England
Academic year 1989-90

	Ratio
Universities (Great Britain)	11·9

	Higher education	*Further education*	*All*
Polytechnics	14·6	11·7	14·5
Other establishments	13·0	11·8	12·0

Notes: Includes those former voluntary and direct grant colleges now funded by the PCFC.
Source: Annual Monitoring Survey for polytechnics and other establishments, University Statistical Record for universities.

Student Maintenance

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish tables showing for each EC and OECD country for which data are available *(a)* the estimated per annum cost to public funds of tuition and student maintenance in respect of courses of United Kingdom first degree standard, *(b)* the average length of courses in each country, *(c)* the wastage rate and *(d)* the cost per qualifier to public funds of tuition and student maintenance for each successful graduate.

Mr. Alan Howarth: the readily available information is given in the following table:

Public expenditure on higher education
Calendar year 1986

Country	*Recurrent public expenditure on higher education per qualifier at 1986 prices*[1] *£ thousands* *Total*	*Excluding student support welfare*	*Student support/ welfare* *Type of support*	*Per student per year at 1986 prices £*	*Typical duration of course (years)* *University*	*Non university*	*1st degree qualifiers per 100 new entrants*[2,3]
Australia	21·6	19·8	Loan and grant	279	5	2·3	61
Belgium	[4]13·0	[4]12·8	Loan and grant	[4]32	4·6	2·3	[3,5]115
Canada	22·2	19·2	Loan only	491	4·5	2·3	n/a
Denmark	29·5	25·9	Loan and grant	591	4·7	3·5	95
France	9·9	9·1	Loan and grant	195	4	2	n/a
Germany (FRG)	16·6	16·2	Loan only	54	6·7	3·4	[3,5]95
Italy	20·6	20·2	Grant only	40	5	2	[6]33
Japan	[7]28·3	[7]28·0	Loan only	[7]49	4	2	91
Netherlands	30·0	25·5	Loan and grant	653	4	4	[5]76
Spain	7·1	n/a	Grant only	n/a	5	3	88
Sweden	14·1	13·6	Loan and grant	110	3	n/a	n/a
United Kingdom	[8]15·6	[8]11·2	Grant only	[8,9]739	[10]3·4	2·3	[5]83
United States of America (a)	[11]21·1	[11]18·2	Loan and grant	[11]386	4	2	86
(b)[12]	[11]24·2	[11]21·5		[11]456			

[1] At purchasing power parity. 1985 data for Japan have been adjusted via consumer price indices to calendar year 1986.
[3] New entrants in the year that precedes the qualifiers data by the average length of first degree courses in each country.

[3] 1985 data for Germany, 1987 data for Belgium and the United Kingdom.
[4] Ministry of Education expenditure only.
[5] Qualifiers data include post-graduates.
[6] New entrant data consists of first year students.
[7] Public sector qualifers and public expenditure on public colleges only. Includes a residual of private funding. Excludes estimated private funding of tuition fees and boarding costs at public colleges.
[8] Excluding expenditure and students on nursing and paramedical courses at Department of Health establishments. Also excludes in service teacher training secondments and costs.
[9] Excludes tuition fees £1,240 per home full-time student.
[10] Four years in Scotland.
[11] Estimated public expenditure on public colleges only. Excludes federal tax contributions.
[12] Excludes 2 year courses some of which may equate with a level below higher education.
n/a—Not available.

Source: DES Working Report: International Comparisons in Higher Education.

Education and Training White Paper

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will *(a)* list and *(b)* place in the Library the responses which he has received to the White Paper. "Education and Training for the 21st Century", Cm. 1536.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my right hon. and learned Friend gave to the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) on 16 July 1991 at column 160.

Braille Examination Papers

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will specify which statutory body is to be responsible for meeting the costs of Braille examination papers when further education is transferred to the proposed further education funding councils.

Mr. Eggar: The transfer of further education to the proposed further education councils will have no bearing on the existing arrangements for meeting the costs of Brailled examination papers.

Education Services, Inner London

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what studies have been undertaken by Her Majesty's inspectorate or others funded by his Department on the transfer of education from the ILEA to inner London boroughs, and on the adequacy of the level of services, and resources, available to education services in inner London.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My Department, supported by Her Majesty's inspectorate, is monitoring closely the performance of the 13 inner London local education authorities.

The 13 new authorities have received generous increases in their standard spending assessments for education—an 18 per cent. increase in 1991-92—and in addition are sharing £70 million of inner London education grant this year.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Supervisory Bodies

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which bodies have applied for recognition as recognised supervisory bodies for the auditing and accounting professions; which of these applicants have offered evidence of how they propose to select their controlling bodies from their membership; and what account he intends to take of the accountability of their controlling body to their membership when offering recognition.

Mr. Redwood: On the applicants for recognition, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, North-West (Mr. Grylls) on 19 December, at columns *184-85*.

Neither a supervisory body's arrangements for the selection of its governing body, nor the accountability of that governing body to the membership are directly relevant to the question whether the body satisfies the requirements for recognition in part II of the Companies Act 1989. What is relevant is the adequacy of the body's rules and of its arrangements for monitoring and enforcing compliance with them.

Regional Assistance

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will state the conclusions of the first, second and third stage reviews of the regional enterprise grant scheme.

Mr. Leigh: The reports on the first two stages in the evaluation of the regional enterprise grants scheme have been published and are available in the House of Commons Library—"Evaluation of Regional Enterprise Grants" by Leslie Hays Consultants Limited and "Evaluation of Regional Enterprise Grants—Second Stage" by Segal Quince Wicksteed Limited. A report on the third stage of the evaluation is currently being compiled.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what tests of soundness are applied to the regional selective assistance scheme; and what steps are taken to ensure equality of application of such tests in the different regions, Scotland and Wales.

Mr. Leigh: The soundness of the regional selective assistance scheme is tested periodically through evaluation studies which, among other things, assess its cost effectiveness in net job creation. Uniform guidelines, agreed with the Treasury, apply to the operation of the scheme in England, Scotland and Wales and the evaluation studies are carried out on the basis of common criteria.

Toxic Shock Syndrome

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will take steps to require manufacturers of tampons to publicise the warnings of toxic shock syndrome on the outside of packets.

Mr. Leigh: I have no plans to require manufacturers to put a warning about toxic shock syndrome on the outside

of the packet. However, manufacturers of tampons have been asked to label the outside of the packet to advise women to read and retain the leaflet on safety included in the packet. The leaflet warns the user about the risk of toxic shock sydrome, describes the symptoms and advises her to consult a doctor if they occur.

Auditors

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will introduce legislation requiring auditors who withdraw from an audit account to publish their reasons for doing so in the annual report.

Mr. Redmond: I see no reason for doing so. Under section 394 of the Companies Act 1985, an auditor who resigns is required to deposit at the company's registered office a statement of any circumstances connected with his ceasing to hold office which he considers should be brought to the attention of members or creditors of the company or, if he considers that there are no such circumstances, a statement that there are none. The statement must be deposited along with the notice of resignation. If the statement is of circumstances which the auditor considers should be brought to the attention of members and creditors of the company, the company—unless the court rules that the auditor is using the statement to secure needless publicity for defamatory matter—must within 14 days of receiving the statement send a copy to every person entitled to receive copies of the accounts.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will introduce legislation prohibiting audit firms from offering cut-price audits or selling other audit services to audit clients who are bankers or financial institutions.

Mr. Redwood: I see no reason for doing so. Under part II of the Companies Act 1989, the recognised supervisory bodies must have adequate rules and practices as to professional integrity and independence. We also propose to make use of the powers in section 390B of the Companies Act 1985 to require disclosure of fees paid to auditing firms and their associates in respect of non-audit work.

Food Processing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what were the amount of grant and number of firms receiving development funds for food processing each year since 1979 to date in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* the northern region.

Mr. Leigh: The table sets out the amount of regional selective assistance accepted by companies since 1980 and the amount of regional development grant paid under the revised scheme since it started in 1985, in Scotland and the Northern region up to and including 1990. Regional selective assistance is not available for 1979 because of the risk of disclosing information that is not in the public domain. Two other schemes—original regional development grants and regional enterprise grants—provided "development funds" over the period. In the case of the original regional development grants scheme, the amount paid is available only at disproportionate costs. As far as regional enterprise grants are concerned, no funds have been made available to the food processing industry in Scotland or in the Northern region since the scheme's inception in 1988.

Regional selective assistance offered to firms in the food processing industries in the Northern region and Scotland 1 January 1980 to 31 December 1990

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*
Northern region											
Number of offers	3	1	3	3	2	1	1	3	3	4	3
Value of offers (£'000)	3,015	450	136	200	510	25	40	270	117	370	735
Scotland											
Number of offers	15	3	16	4	4	6	3	10	1	8	4
Value of offers (£'000)	479	168	575	590	326	975	1,160	1,867	95	4,636	3,215

Note: Based on offers accepted.

Regional development grant under the revised scheme paid to firms in the food processing industries in the Northern region and Scotland 1 January 1985 to 31 December 1990

	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*
Northern region						
Number of firms	6	19	34	44	37	15
Value of payments (£'000)	270	332	502	703	984	618
Scotland						
Number of firms	11	49	65	67	44	18
Value of payments (£'000)	151	1,245	1,033	1,113	1,524	1,676

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action was taken following receipt of letters dated 12 June and 19 June from Mr. Vivian Ambrose of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International's United Kingdom regional inspection department.

Mr. Lilley: Mr. Ambrose wrote to the Secretary of State for Employment on 12 June 1990 and to the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) on 14 June 1990. Both letters were sent to the Secretary of State for Employment and he asked that they be copied to my Department. However, although the Department records all incoming correspondence, there is no record of their reaching this Department.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to the oral answer of the Lord President of the Council, *Official Report*, column 496,

what inquiries have been undertaken in his Department to discover what happened to the letters about BCCI sent to his Department in June 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: Correspondence arriving in Ministers' offices is recorded on a computer system. These computer records have been checked and there is no indication that the Department received a copy of the letter of 14 July 1990 from the Secretary of State for Employment to the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). In addition, inquiries have been made of those parts of the Department to which the correspondence might have been referred, and again no trace has been found.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* his policies and *(b)* his Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; and if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 22 July 1991]:* The Government continue to place a high priority on helping small businesses, through improvements to the business climate, through deregulation and other measures and through specific programmes of support and assistance.

My Department provides a comprehensive package of services for business within the enterprise initiative, many of which are concerned with improving the competitiveness of smaller firms. Consultancy help, for example, offers financial support to small and medium-sized firms for between five and 15 days of consultancy in key management areas. By the end of June 1991, 84,150 applications had been received; 81,605 free business reviews commissioned; and 60,412 projects approved for assistance.

Complimentary to consultancy help is the "Managing Into the 90s" programme, which emphasises the need for an integrated approach to the management of key functions that affect company competitiveness and focuses on the management of quality, design, purchasing and manufacturing. In 1990, over 10,000 people attended events held under the programme.

Regional enterprise grants are aimed at small businesses employing fewer than 25 people in the development areas and South Yorkshire. They are designed to support companies' investment and innovation projects. The scheme was extended to the Plymouth intermediate area in January 1991 under the European Community RENAVAL programme approved for the area. In 1990-91, for English regions, 1,802 applications were received and 1,286 offers made with a total value of £11·3 million.

The small firms merit award for research and technology in an annual competition which provides cash awards to businesses with fewer than 50 employees in order to bring forward innovative technological projects of particular promise. In 1990, a record 1,420 entries resulted in 180 awards being made, the highest ever total.

In February 1991, my Department launched three new initiatives—support for products under research; manufacturing, planning and implementation studies programme; and technical action line—which are designed to encourage smaller firms to innovate and also to foster links between the science base and industry. These measures are worth collectively £48 million and represent a 25 per cent. increase over DTI's annual spend on R and D and technology transfer for smaller firms.

During the last year we have continued, together with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to develop and improve the way export services are delivered. Our aim is to encourage potential exporters to think seriously about selling overseas and existing exporters to sell more. Many users of our services are small firms and we are particularly keen that help is provided to new and inexperienced exporters. In April this year the joint directorate was formed by merging the export service management units of the DTI and the FCO. The aim of this unit is to develop Government export promotion policy and ensure the coherent and consistent presentation and delivery of export services at home and overseas. At the same time, a new common identifier "overseas trade services" was introduced to cover all DTI and FCO export services. The effectiveness of the range of export services available to United Kingdom companies through this operation is monitored through an independent quality management system. Also, demand for our export services has significantly increased with sales of services having more than trebled in the past year.

In addition, smaller firms continue to be one of the priorities of my Department's single market campaign which, in particular, draws attention to the many sources of expertise, such as trade associations and chambers of commerce, that can provide relevant information and advice to help smaller firms prepare. To help such organisations improve their single market services, my Department has offered assistance under the "Help for Representative Organisations" package to more than 20 organisations. Furthermore, a total of 353,000 copies of the single market action guide for smaller firms have been distributed.

DTI regional offices serve as the initial point of entry for small business seeking the Department's help. In the past year, they have sought to reinforce their role as a gateway, not only to my Department's services, but also by signposting to services available from other small business support organisations, including training and enterprise councils, chambers of commerce and local enterprise agencies.

From 1 April this year, my Department is making available over a four year period £1·3 million to assist the development strategy of the Association of British Chambers of Commerce. This is aimed at restructuring the chamber movement by the end of 1994, with some 50 "core" chambers then offering a comprehensive range of business services to a consistent standard. It will be of particularly help to smaller firms. The assistance from my Department involves funding half of the salary costs for up to 30 two-year secondments to chambers, and a contribution towards the establishment of an electronic information network linking the "core" chambers.

It is also worth noting that in 1990-91, the inner cities initiative's task forces supported projects which have, so far, assisted 2,346 new and existing businesses, the majority of which are small ones.

The Government's deregulation initiative aims to reduce burdens on business and takes particular account of the problems with regulation faced by small firms. A

recent DTI publication, "Cutting Red Tape for Business", describes some recent achievements under the initiative, many of which have benefitted small businesses.

It would be prohibitively expensive to set out all the performance indicators which are collected as part of the Department's extensive professional evaluation programme, the aim of which is to ensure that the Department's activities obtain maximum value for money.

Petroleum Coke

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has on domestic appliance meltdown due to the high temperatures generated by imported petroleum coke.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 22 July 1991]:* My Department has found some evidence of damage to the metal parts of fires when petroleum coke has been used in closed appliances and in unblended form. However, there is little evidence of problems experienced by consumers when the fuel is used in open-grate fires and has been pre-blended before use with another solid fuel to provide additional ash to help protect the fire parts.

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received from the Solid Smokeless Fuels Federation regarding dangers in the use of imported petroleum coke as a domestic fuel.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 22 July 1991]:* My Department has received several letters from the Solid Smokeless Fuels Federation alleging that petroleum coke is unsafe for domestic use and its supply for this purpose should be prohibited.

Petroleum coke is covered by section 10 of the Consumer Protection Act 1987 which makes it an offence to supply goods which are not reasonably safe having regard to all the circumstances. My Department's investigations has not found sufficient evidence to establish that this fuel is inherently unsafe and I believe that a ban on its use could not be justified.

HEALTH

Dental Survey

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will place in the Library a copy of the dental survey commissioned by his Department.

Mr. Dorrell: A copy of the adult dental health survey has been in the Library since 5 March.

NHS Patients

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients were treated in hospitals by the national health service in 1971 and 1990.

Mr. Dorrell: In the year ending March 1989, national health service hospitals in England treated 6·56 million in-patient cases, an increase of 27 per cent. on the 1971 figure of 5·17 million. Since 1988-89 in-patient activity has been measured in terms of finished consultant episodes which contain figures for "well babies" in hospital following the mother's confinement. Finished consultant episodes have risen by nearly 2 per cent. from 7·34 million in 1988-89 to 7·48 million in 1989-90.

Peri-operative Deaths

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress he is making in implementing the recommendations of the confidential inquiry into peri-operative deaths; how many hospitals now comply with these and how many do not; and what estimate has been made of the costs of implementation.

Mr. Dorrell: Since publication of the report of the confidential enquiry into perioperative deaths—CEPOD—in 1986 considerable progress has been made in implementing its recommendations. Apart from drawing it to the attention of health authorities we made funds available in 1988 to extend the work nationally from the original three region study. National CEPOD produced its first report in 1990. In addition, we have built on the professional commitment demonstrated in the report and have financed the general introduction of medical audit. Consultants are expected by the medical colleges to participate in national CEPOD.

We do not collect information centrally about the number of hospitals complying with the recommendations, nor has an estimate been made of the costs of implementation.

Alzheimer's Disease

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many carers looking after relatives or friends with Alzheimer's disease receive nursing support.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally.

The level of provision of nursing services for people suffering from Alzheimers disease who are cared for at home is for decision by individual health authorities.

HIV

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the official statements made by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell), on and since 16 June, relating to the position of non-haemophiliacs who found themselves carrying the HIV virus as a result of infected transfusions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: I have made no official statements in the House about non-haemophiliacs infected from the HIV virus as a result of blood transfusions since 16 June 1991. I have given several interviews to the media in which I have confirmed the Government's view that it would be inappropriate to make exceptional provision for the blood transfusion cases.

Smoking

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consideration Her Majesty's Government have given to promoting a ban on smoking by staff in *(a)* all public institutions and *(b)* hospitals.

Mr. Dorrell: The Government encourage the introduction of non-smoking policies in all public institutions. Advice and guidance on the introduction of such policies is available from the Health and Safety Executive, the Health Education Authority and ASH workplace services.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will issue new guidance on this subject in the near future.

An independent consultant commissioned by the Department of Health has just completed work on preparing a new guidance manual for NHS managers on implementing non-smoking policies in hospitals and other health service premises. This will be issued as soon as possible.

Midwives

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the establishment of a separate grading structure for midwives.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Grading for the nursing, midwifery and health visiting professions is determined by the Nursing and Midwifery Staffs Negotiating Council, which agreed the current clinical grading structure, covering all three professions, in 1988. Any changes would be for the council to determine.

Original Pack Dispensing

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Sir N. Macfarlane) of 22 February, *Official Report*, column *304*, when he intends to begin consultations with the medical and pharmaceutical professions on changes to original pack dispensing; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is our intention to consult formally the medical and pharmaceutical professions and the pharmaceutical manufacturers on original pack dispensing before the end of the year.

Lung Conditions

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on seasonal and year-on trends of hospital admissions for breathing and lung-related illness; and what effort he is making to explore the links between acid air and these trends.

Mr. Dorrell: The available information on recent yearly trends is given in the table and shows the estimated number of in-patients treated where the main condition could be attributed to a breathing or lung-related illness. Information on the seasonal trends in the admission of these patients could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. When the executive summary of the first report of the advisory group on the medical aspects of air pollution was published on 8, May, in a reply to the hon. Member for Merionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) at column *495*, I announced that the group was continuing its work. This includes examining available information regarding the effects upon health of such levels of sulphur dioxide and acid aerosols as occur in the United Kingdom. A report should be available in early 1992.

Estimated numbers of completed consultant episodes for below mentioned ICD codes, National Health Service hospitals, England 1987-88 to 1989-90

ICD code	*Description*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
162	Malignant neoplasm of trachea, bronchus and lung	60,401	59,581	61,660
460–519	Diseases of the respiratory system	527,106	544,797	576,231
460–465 and 470–478	Diseases of the upper respiratory tract	216,393	212,482	225,560
480–486	Pneumonia	51,383	59,508	67,970
490–493	Bronchitis, chronic and unspecified, emphysema and asthma	112,278	110,839	105,868
490–491	Bronchitis, chronic and unspecified	13,219	12,247	12,288
493	Asthma	96,603	95,666	90,136

Source: Hospital episode statistics 1987-88, 1988-89, 1989-90. Data compiled by SM12A.

It must be noted that the figures are extracted from hospital episode statistics. They are provisional estimates based on incomplete data and may be subject to revision when ongoing analysis has been completed.

Community Health Councils

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to reject any proposed merger of community health councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) on 17 July, at column *194*.

Health Authorities (Union Members)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will review the position whereby trades union members representing health workers are disqualified from serving on the new health authorities.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are no plans to review the Health Authority Regulations: there is nothing to prevent a member of a health service union, who does not hold a paid appointment or office with that trade union, from serving as a non-executive member of a health authority.

Act Now

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what reply he has made in respect of the representations received on 8 July from Act Now in respect of sections 1, 2 and 3 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have written to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) who, along with members of the all-party disablement group and the Act Now committee, met with me on 8 July to discuss these sections of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986.

Hearing Aids

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people currently have a NHS hearing aid; what was the total issued in each of the past five years; and what assessment has been made of the numbers currently being provided and that will be required in future years for *(a)* children, *(b)* people of working age, *(c)* the younger elderly and *(d)* the very old.

Mr. Dorrell: Information about the numbers of peopple who have a NHS hearing aid is not available centrally. Mersey regional health authority acts as the centre of respnsibility for the procurement and distribution of hearing aids to the NHS. The total number of hearing aids supplied by Mersey RHA to NHS hearing aid centres in the most recent five-year period for which figures are available is shown in the table. Mersey RHA plan future requirements on the basis of established usage and demand identified by hearing aid centres.

Hearing aids supplied

Year	*Number*
1989-90	626,065
1988-89	628,470
1987-88	694,731
1986-87	640,949
1985-86	595,676

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies there have been of the use made of hearing aids; what are the main problems that deter people from using them; and what proportion of NHS aids are estimated to be unused.

Mr. Dorrell: The most recent information about the use made of hearing aids is contained in the reports of the surveys of disability in Great Britain, carried out by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys between 1985 and 1988. Copies are available in the Library. Information is not held centrally about the problems which deter people from using hearing aids or the number of NHS hearing aids which are unused.

Hearing Therapists

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current cost to a health authority of training a hearing therapist; and how the cost sub-divides into *(a)* the cost of the course, *(b)* the salary to the person taking the course and *(c)* living expenses.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current pay scale for hearing therapists; what are their promotion prospects; and what evidence he has received regarding the payment of varying rates for comparable hearing therapy work within the health service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Hearing therapists graded as medical technical officers—MTO—attract salaries ranging from £7,884 to £10,757 for the basic grade MTO 1 to £19,371 to £25,491 maximum for an MTO 5. Promotion on merit through the grades is available to all qualified hearing therapists. Pay flexibilities allow employing authorities to match pay to individual posts and local labour market conditions.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to increase the number of practising hearing therapists.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: None. It is for local health authorities to determine the number of hearing therapists they employ.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will ensure that hearing therapists have a pay scale that is recognised throughout the health service to provide consistent patterns of pay.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Hearing therapists are graded as medical technical officers whose pay is negotiated in the professional and technical staffs B—PTB—Whitley council. PTB pay scales are available throughout the health service.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what exploration there has been of the possibility of educational institutions in parts of the country, other than London, running courses for hearing therapists.

Mr. Dorrell: It is open to educational institutions to provide hearing therapy courses wherever the demand arises.

Training Courses (Grants)

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health for how many training courses for professions relevant to the health service there is a mandatory grant; and if he will list them.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: National Health Service bursaries are available for the following pre-registration training courses:

Project 2000 nursing
Midwifery
Dental hygiene
Radiography
Occupational therapy
Orthoptics
Physiotherapy
Clinical psychology[1]

[1] The majority of graduates are salaried employees.

Local education authority mandatory grants may also be claimed by students undertaking health care professional training courses where they are not in receipt of an NHS bursary, and where they are attending a course that has been designated under the Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations 1990.

Southern Derbyshire District Health Authority

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many doctors were working in the Southern Derbyshire district health authority in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* the latest year for which figures are available.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: At 30 September 1982 and 30 September 1989, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 255 and 301 junior doctors in post in the Southern Derbyshire health authority respectively. These figures exclude consultants and senior registrars whose contracts are held by the Trent regional health authority.

Pre-1982 figures are not comparable due to the reorganisation and boundary changes which took place in 1982.

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nurses there were in the Southern Derbyshire district health authority in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: At 30 September 1979 and 30 September 1990, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 1,420 and 3,950 nurses and midwives, excluding agency staff, in post respectively in the Southern Derbyshire health authority.

Tobacco Advertising

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will publish the fourth annual report of the Committee for Monitoring Agreements on Tobacco Advertising and Sponsorship.

Mr. Dorrell: The committee for monitoring agreements on tobacco advertising and sponsorship has submitted its fourth report to the United Kingdom Health Ministers and copies have been placed in the Library. We are very grateful to the committee, and particularly to the outgoing chairman, Sir Peter Lazarus and the new chairman, Sir John Blelloch, for their valuable work in continuing to monitor the agreements.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Chamber Lighting

Mr. Page: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make a statement on the outcome of the consultation process following the exhibition of two prototypes of the proposed new permanent lighting system in the Chamber, as described in his answer of 1 May, *Official Report*, columns *183-84*.

Mr. MacGregor: As I explained to the House on 1 May, two prototypes illustrating the proposed design for the new permanent lighting system in the Chamber were exhibited from 7 to 17 May. Comments from right hon. and hon. Members and others were invited by 23 May. Only one written response was received by the Select Committee on Broadcasting, from an hon. Member critical of the prototypes. In view of the lack of formal expressions of opposition to the proposed design, and taking into account the generally favourable reactions conveyed orally to Members of the Select Committee by hon. and right hon. Members and others, the Committee decided at its meeting on 10 June to confirm the basic design of the prototypes as the format for the new lighting system. I should emphasise, however, that some minor modifications may prove necessary as a result of subsequent discussions involving the Parliamentary Works Office, the Select Committee's technical advisers and English Heritage, regarding the details of the installation of the new lights. In particular, certain decorative features not present in the prototypes will be incorporated in the final design.

It is hoped that the new lights will be in operation by the end of the summer recess.

SCOTLAND

Community Care

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the projects submitted by Highland region for the recently announced £12·4 million bridging finance for community care, and the number that were granted funding.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Highland health board did not submit complete proposals in time to allow them to be considered along with the proposals of other boards.

Toxoplasmosis

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of cases of congenial toxoplasmosis recorded in Scotland as a fraction of total pregnancies for each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information, which has been derived from returns to the Scottish National Toxoplasma Reference Laboratory, is as follows:

Year	*Confirmed cases*	*Cases where evidence is suggestive*	*Total*	*Pregnancies*[1]	*Total cases per 100,000 pregnancies*
1979	—	1	1	66,866	1·5
1980	2	2	4	67,063	6·0
1981	—	1	1	67,889	1·5
1982	2	2	4	64,966	6·2
1983	2	1	3	63,596	4·7
1984	—	—	—	64,214	—
1985	2	—	2	64,968	3·1
1986	1	1	2	64,703	3·1
1987	—	—	—	64,932	—
1988	—	—	—	65,440	—

Year	Confirmed cases	Cases where evidence is suggestive	Total	Pregnancies[1]	Total cases per 100,000 pregnancies
1989	—	2	2	62,985	3·2
1990	—	—	—	[2]62,750	—

[1] These figures relate to pregnancies which have gone to full term
[2] Provisional

The Health Education Board for Scotland will shortly be issuing a leaflet giving advice on the avoidance of infections such as toxoplasmosis during pregnancy.

Air Pollution

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list how many tonnes of *(a)* sulphur dioxide, *(b)* nitrogen oxides and *(c)* particulate carbon, were discharged into the atmosphere in Scotland during the latest year for which figures are available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The most recent available figures for Scotland are for 1986 and are as follows:

	Kilotonnes
Sulphur dioxide	332
Nitrogen oxides	186
Smoke (as a product of coal combustion)	31

However, maps showing emissions of sulphur dioxides and nitrogen oxides by 20 km grid square in Scotland for 1987 were published in October 1990 by the review group on acid rain and by the photochemical oxidants review group. Copies of these publications have been deposited in the Library of the House.

Homelessness

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) on 13 March, *Official Report*, columns *613-19*, if he will now provide final figures for homelessness applications in 1989-90 and provisional figures for 1990-91 in each Scottish district council.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A small number of late returns have since been received. Revised figures for the authorities involved are as follows:

Applicant households under the homeless persons legislation 1989-90

	Number
Scotland	28,501
Clackmannan	439
Stirling	622
Stewartry	51
Aberdeen	1,962
Gordon	316
Ross and Cromarty	108
Skye and Lochalsh	65
Edinburgh	3,030
Dumbarton	1,486
East Kilbride	454
Eastwood	14
Glasgow	6,010
Hamilton	362
Kyle and Carrick	675
Motherwell	778
Renfrew	1,060
Strathkelvin	255
Angus	366
Shetland	116

We estimate that some 2,000 returns, mostly from Glasgow, remain outstanding. It is unlikely that substantial further numbers will now be received and these figures may be regarded as final. Subsequent revisions to the Scotland total will be published in Statistical Bulletins on Housing Trends in Scotland. Response from local authorities is not yet sufficient to release provisional figures for 1990-91.

Pine Wood Nematode

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to ensure all reasonable precautions are being taken to ensure that pine wood nematode is not introduced into the United Kingdom; and if he will make it his policy to take any measures to extend existing derogations.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The most likely way in which pine wood nematode could reach this country is in coniferous wood containing the organism and its vector, the longhorn beetle Monochamus. Under the terms of the European Community Plant Health Directive, all coniferous wood imported into the United Kingdom from countries where the nematode is found has to be kiln-dried to below a specified moisture content. This process, while it should kill the vector, is not effective in killing the nematode itself. The European Community has therefore embarked on a research programme aimed at replacing the kiln-drying specification with fully effective heat pasteurisation schedules. Pending the results of this research, expected in the autumn, the European Commission has authorised the United Kingdom and nine other member states to derogate from the kiln-drying requirement in respect of sawn coniferous wood from North America that has been inspected and certified to be free of residual bark and the vector's bore holes.

The present derogation expires on 31 December 1991, but it is expected that it will need to be extended for a limited period in order to allow time for the new pasteurisation schedules to be agreed and reflected in Community legislation and for North American industry to install the necessary equipment. In the meantime, I am advised by the Forestry Commissioners, who are the statutory plant health authority in respect of forest trees and timber, that the present arrangements provide the necessary level of protection against the risk of pine wood nematode becoming established here.

Cruden Houses

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many Cruden houses there are in Scotland: how many have been built in the last 30 years; and if he will give details of where these houses were built and when.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I take it that the hon. Member is referring to the non-traditional steel-framed houses built by Cruden Houses Limited. About 3,000 of these houses were built in Scotland between 1947 and 1950; none has been built since that date. The houses were located in the following areas.

Districts
Angus
Annandale and Eskdale
Argyll and Bute
Badenoch and Strathspey
Banff and Buchan
Berwickshire
Caithness
Clackmannan
Clydesdale
Cumnock and Doon Valley
Cunninghame
Dundee
Dunfermline
East Kilbride
East Lothian
Ettrick and Lauderdale
Falkirk
Gordon
Kilmarnock and Loudoun
Kincardine and Deeside
Kyle and Carrick
Midlothian
Moray
Nairn
Nithsdale
North East Fife
Perth and Kinross
Ross and Cromarty
Roxburgh
Stewartry
Stirling
Sutherland
Tweeddale
West Lothian
Wigtown

Islands
Shetland

Labour Statistics

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the unadjusted size of the work force in employment in Scotland in March.

Mr. Allan Stewart: In March 1991 there were an estimated 2,247,000 in the Scottish civilian work force in employment. This estimate is not seasonally adjusted.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the estimate of the number of self-employed in Scotland in March; and what it has been for each quarter for the past five years.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The table below gives the available information of the estimated number of self-employed in Scotland in each quarter for the past five years.

	Self-employed Thousands
1986	
Q1	204
Q2	205
Q3	202
Q4	200
1987	
Q1	197
Q2	194
Q3	199
Q4	204
1988	
Q1	210
Q2	215
Q3	220
Q4	226
1989	
Q1	231
Q2	236
Q3	236
Q4	235
1990	
Q1	234
Q2	[1]234

[1] Estimate of the self-employed has been held constant by the Employment Department since June 1990.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were on work-related government training schemes who were included in the work force in employment in Scotland figures; and how this number was calculated.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The Scottish civilian work force in employment in March 1991 included an estimate of 57,000 participants on work-related Government training programmes. In addition to this, those YT participants who have contracts of employment are counted in the employees in employment estimate, although it is not possible to say exactly how many there are.

The number shown as work-related Government training programmes cover YT and ET participants who, in the course of their participation, receive training in the context of workplace, but are not employees, self-employment or HM forces.

The number of YT participants included in the civilian workforce in employment in Scotland is derived by subtracting approximately 24 per cent. of the total number of YT participants, who are assumed to have contracts of employment (based on the number reported as having "employee status"). A further 1 per cent. is then subtracted to allow for those who are assumed not to receive any work experience. The number of YT participants included in the estimates has been held constant since March 1990 in the absence of any more recent estimates.

For ET participants, none of whom have contracts of employment, 3 per cent. are assumed to receive no training in the context of a workplace and so are excluded from the estimates.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many part-time female employees were included in the work force in employment figures for Scotland in March.

Mr. Allan Stewart: In Scotland in March 1991 an estimated 412,000 female part-time employees in employment were included in the civilian work force in employment figures.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what have been the numbers employed in the manufacturing, energy and water, service and other industries in each March since 1979 in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The table below gives the number of employees in employment in the manufacturing, energy and water, service and other industries in each March since 1979 in Scotland.

Thousands

	Manufacturing	*Energy/water*	*Services*	*Other industries*
March				
1979	604	71	1,190	199
1980	578	74	1,220	202
1981	519	73	1,217	189
1982	486	72	1,204	170
1983	450	70	1,189	171
1984	432	66	1,210	172
1985	432	65	1,227	166
1986	421	61	1,229	157
1987	405	55	1,236	157
1988	406	57	1,280	154
1989	412	57	1,326	152
1990	397	59	1,337	162
1991	388	61	1,355	152

Registers of Scotland

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the annual report of the Registers of Scotland executive agency will be published.

Mr. Lang: Copies of the annual report have today been placed in the Library.

Adult Education

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about his plans for the future of adult education.

Mr. Lang: The White Paper "Access and Opportunity" sets out proposals designed to encourage greater participation by people in education and training throughout their working lives.

I welcome the expansion of adult provision over recent years. This has been encouraged by programmes such as the Scottish wider access programme and by the reform of vocational qualifications. Further education colleges have played an important part in this process and will continue to do so.

Subject to the passage of legislation, I will take over from 1 April 1993 the duty of education authorities under Section 1 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to secure adequate and efficient provision of further education in the following areas:

(a) Courses leading to vocational qualifications;
(b) Courses leading to any Scottish Examination Board qualifications or GCE;
(c) Courses to meet special educational needs;
(d) Courses for speakers of languages other than the English language to gain proficiency in the English language;
(e) Courses preparing for access to higher education institutions or advanced vocational qualifications; and
(f) Courses and activities designed to facilitate adult participation in education and training.

Education authorities will also be given a power to secure provision of further education in these areas.

Education authorities will retain a duty to secure adequate and efficient provision of other areas of further education. This will include community education which encompasses social and recreational education.

Colleges of further education will, therefore, provide a wide range of education for adults and education authorities will retain their responsibility for community education. Provision for that can continue to be made in a wide range of facilities, including schools and colleges.

Electricity

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the Scottish electricity companies have produced statements on the preservation of amenity in accordance with schedule 9 to the Electricity Act 1989.

Mr. Lang: Statements setting out the manner in which the licensees propose to perform their duties under schedule 9 to the Electricity Act 1989, and which constitute the environmental guidelines the licence holders intend to follow, have been produced by Scottish Power plc, Scottish Hydro-Electric plc and Scottish Nuclear Ltd. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

Drinking Water

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many companies in Scotland are bottling and selling drinking water; and if he will list them and the water source.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 22 July 1991]:* Information on the number of companies bottling and selling such water is not held centrally.

Railways

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will meet Strathclyde regional council to discuss the provision of additional funding to ensure that the railway tunnel at Port Matilda, Gourock, Renfrewshire, remains open; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 22 July 1991]:* My right hon. Friend has received no request from Strathclyde regional council to discuss the provision of additional funding in connection with the railway tunnel at Fort Matilda. The Scottish Office were however represented at the site meeting on 2 July arranged by the Strathclyde passenger transport executive. The Government are aware of the problems concerning the condition of the tunnel, but this is a matter for Strathclyde regional council and British Rail in the first instance.

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what grants his Department intends to make available for the renovation of the Wemyss Bay railway station.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 22 July 1991]:* No application for historic buildings repair grant assistance for repairs to Wemyss Bay railway station has been received by Historic Scotland and until such an application is received and processed, it is impossible to say what, if any, grant may be offered.

Homelessness

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many homeless people there are in Scotland; and if he will give the numbers by districts and where the statistics are gathered from.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 22 July 1991]:* Information is collected by the Scottish Office of the numbers of households who apply to local authorities under the homeless persons legislation. Returns are submitted quarterly by the 56 district and islands councils. The latest figures at present available are for 1989-90. An analysis of the numbers of these applicants who were assessed by the local authorities in each area as homeless was given in table 17 of Statistical Bulletin HSG/1991/4. Copies were sent to all Members representing Scottish constituencies and are available in the House Library.

Since the publication of the bulletin, a small number of late returns have been received. Revised figures for the authorities concerned are given below.

Applicant households under the homeless persons legislation, who were assessed as homeless in 1989-90

	Number
Stirling	311
Stewartry	20
Ross and Cromarty	48
Dumbarton	434
Eastwood	11
Glasgow	1,852
Kyle and Carrick	285
Motherwell	180
Renfrew	396
Shetland	74

The revised total for Scotland as a whole was 11,203. Some authorities have failed to submit complete returns.

Youth Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list *(a)* the number of youth training places in his Department and *(b)* the number of places occupied in May for each of the years 1989, 1990 and the current year.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 18 July 1991]:* The number of youth training places available and occupied were:

	May 1989	*May 1990*	*May 1991*
Places available	21	15	6
Places occupied	14	7	4

The figures include places in government funded research institutions and the Forestry Commission in Edinburgh which were covered by the Scottish Office youth training scheme.

ENVIRONMENT

Housing Statistics

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in tabular form for each local authority in England and Wales *(a)* the resident population, *(b)* the number of local authority, the Commission for New Towns and housing association dwellings and *(c)* the numbers of people on the waiting list for local authority dwellings.

Mr. Yeo: A table listing the latest available information has been placed in the Library. For information about Welsh authorities I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Standard Spending Assessments

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library the proposals referred to him by Beverley district council, which the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State referred to in the debate on 11 June, *Official Report*, column 824, regarding an alternative method of calculating standard spending assessments.

Mr. Key: A copy of the report titled "Distributing the Revenue Support Grant" has been placed in the Library.

Local Government Finance

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the standard spending assessments for *(a)* education, *(b)* personal social services, *(c)* highway maintenance, *(d)* police, *(e)* fire and civil defence, *(f)* other services and *(g)* capital financing in each London borough for each year since 1979.

Mr. Key: Standard spending assessments—SSAs—were first introduced for the settlement year 1990-91 as a replacement for grant-related expenditure assessments. The SSAs for each London borough, split according to the requested service heads, are shown in table 2 of the SSA handbooks for 1990-91 and 1991-92, both of which are in the Library.

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the figure for the percentage of non-payers of *(a)* community charge bills in 1990-91 and *(b)* domestic rate bills in 1989-90 for each local authority in Essex.

Mr. Key: Information reported to the Department on the number of people who have not made a payment by 31 March 1991 as a percentage of the people who are liable in respect of a personal community charge, for authorities in Essex, is as follows:

Percentage of personal community charge payers who had not made a payment by 31 March 1991

	Per cent.
Basildon	9·4
Braintree	5·0
Brentwood	2·2
Castle Point	6·0
Chelmsford	3·0
Colchester	n/a
Epping Forest	5·5
Harlow	10·6
Maldon	1·2
Rochford	3·6
Southend-on-Sea	11·7
Tendring	8·3
Thurrock	6·2
Uttlesford	4·0

n/a = not available.

No information is held centrally on the number of non-payers of domestic rate bills.

Radioactive Pollution (Soviet Union)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what technical assistance the United Kingdom has offered to the Soviet Union to clean up radioactive pollution.

Mr. Baldry: The Government are participating in the programmes of international agencies, such as the International Atomic Energy Agency, to provide technical expertise and resources to assist the Soviet Union to handle the effects of the nuclear accident at Chernobyl. Also, United Kingdom companies are competing for contracts to clean up and redevelop the areas affected by radioactive pollution from Chernobyl.

Home Improvement Grants

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many home improvement grants have been given to households in Tower Hamlets for each year since 1979.

Mr. Yeo: The numbers of grants for improvement and renovation paid to private owners and to tenants, as reported by the London borough of Tower Hamlets in the annual housing investment programme returns, are in the table.

	Number
1978-79	44
1979-80	49
1980-81	40
1981-82	84
1982-83	81
1983-84	120
1984-85	165
1985-86	87
1986-87	232
1987-88	162
1988-89	100
1989-90	167

Recycling

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the amount of *(a)* glass, *(b)* paper and board, *(c)* ferrous metal, *(d)* tin, *(e)* zinc, *(f)* lead, *(g)* copper and *(h)* aluminium recycled as a percentage of consumption for each waste disposal authority in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Baldry: This information is not available. However, my Department is currently conducting a review of waste statistics, one of whose objectives is to ensure that information of this nature is available in future.

Private Sector Schools

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the amounts of city grant allocated on programmes to build for sale schools in the private sector for the years 1988-89 and to 1992-93.

Mr. Key: None.

Disabled Facilities Grants

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many applications have been received for disabled facilities grants in the value ranges *(a)* under £1,000, *(b)* £1,000 to £5,000, *(c)* £5,000 to £10,000 and *(d)* over £10,000;

(2) what percentage of applications for disabled facilities grants have been paid in full; what percentage have received half of the sum applied for; what percentage have received less than half the sum applied for; and what percentage have been refused any payment;

(3) how many applications have been received for disabled facilities grants; what is the average value of applications made under the scheme; and what is the average value of the grants made.

Mr. Yeo: Returns made by local authorities in England show that the average value of disabled facilities grants, paid in 1990-91, was £2,214. No other information, based on the returns of all local authorities, is available. However extrapolation from a study of sample of 35 local authorities suggests that, in 1990-91, approximately 5,000 applications for disabled facilities grants were received, 1,850 with a value below £1,000, 2,500 in the range £1,000 to £5,000, 350 in the range £5,000 to £10,000 and 300 over £10,000, and that the average value of applications made was £3,440. The same study suggests that, in 1990-91, 4 per cent. of the applications received for disabled facilities grants were refused any payment. No information on the percentages of applications which were paid in full, or received half or less than half the sum applied for, is available.

Housing

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the amounts allocated on programmes to the Housing Corporation for renewing grants under section 87 of the Housing Act 1985 for each of the years 1985-86 to 1992-93.

Mr. Yeo: I assume that the hon. Gentleman is referring to the programme of promotional and advisory grants administered by the Housing Corporation under, principally, section 87 of the Housing Associations Act 1985. The level of the corporation's programme, financed by grant-in-aid from my Department, has been as follows for the years in question.

	£000's
1985-86	342·1
1986-87	509·7
1987-88	472·3
1988-89	586·3
1989-90	1,109·0
1990-91	2,699·5
1991-92	3,702·0

Decisions on the level of the programme for 1992-93 have not yet been taken.

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the amounts allocated on programmes to urban development corporations for housing purposes or supporting infrastructures in the form of grants or subsidies for each of the years 1985-86 to 1992-93.

Mr. Yeo: Expenditure on the corporation's housing for sale programme, which supports low cost home ownership, was as follows:

	£ million
1988-89	94·7
1989-90	108·8
1990-91	64·9

A total of £105 million has been allocated for 1991-92, and a provisional allocation of £110 million has been made for 1992-93.

City Grant

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applications have been received for city grant projects; what percentage have been successful; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: To date, 387 applications have been made to the Department for city grant. Grant has been approved for 53 per cent. of these with decisions pending 44 applications.

Cruden Houses

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many Cruden houses there are in England and Wales; how many have been built in the last 30 years; and if he will break these figures down by year and between England and Wales.

Mr. Yeo: There are no Cruden houses in England and Wales.

European Community Environment Directives

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the European Council or Commission directives or decisions of 88/347/EEC of 16 June 1988, 88/609/EEC of 24 November 1988 and 89/429/EEC of 29 June 1989 on environmental affairs were implemented; and if he will make a statement in each case on the reason for the time taken in implementing the directive in United Kingdom legislation.

Mr. Baldry: Directive 88/347/EEC on dangerous substances in water was implemented through Department of the Environment circular 7/89 of 30 March 1989. It was taken into national law by the Surface Waters (Dangerous Substances) (Classification) Regulations 1989; and by a notice and direction to the National Rivers Authority under the Water Act 1989, which took effect in January 1990.

The United Kingdom programme and plan for achieving major cuts in emissions of sulphur dioxide and oxides of nitrogen from existing large combustion plants, as required by directive 88/609, was published in December 1990 in good time for the directive's deadline. The Environmental Protection Act 1990—EPA—and equivalent legislation in Northern Ireland provide the legal framework for implementing the plan. The whole range of implementing measures under the EPA relating to England and Wales have now come into force and will be followed in April 1992 by measures relating to Scotland, and to Northern Ireland as soon as the appropriate Order in Council for the introduction of equivalent procedures there can be made. Special interim implementing measures are being introduced with respect to Scotland and Northern Ireland.

A direction under the EPA relating to directive 89/429/EEC on municipal waste incineration—existing plant—is currently being prepared. Pending formal implementation of the directive through this direction, the United Kingdom authorities are applying conditions to existing municipal waste incinerators which are consistent with the operating conditions set down in the directive.

In each of these cases, measures were taken in good time to ensure practical implementation of the directive before the due date. In each case, however, some delay in giving formal legal effect to the directive was caused by the need to enact new primary legislation.

Atmospheric Pollution

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by county area how many tonnes of *(a)* sulphur dioxide, *(b)* nitrogen oxides and *(c)* particulate carbon were discharged into the atmosphere in England during the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Baldry: No figures are available on a county basis of sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides or particulate carbon emissions for the United Kingdom. However, emissions of sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides in tonnes have been compiled on a much finer spatial scale, 20km by 20km, for England, Wales and Scotland. These maps for 1987 were published by the review group on acid rain and the photochemical oxidants review group, respectively, in October 1990. Copies of these reports have been deposited in the Library of the House.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps have been taken to keep up to date his departmental helpline on atmospheric pollution.

Mr. Baldry: I refer to the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) on 8 May, *Official Report*, column *495*.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the total number of air pollution monitoring sites for each of *(a)* ozone, *(b)* carbon monoxide, *(c)* nitrogen oxides, *(d)* acid deposition, *(e)* atmospheric hydrocarbon, *(f)* trace germs, *(g)* smoke and sulphur dioxide and *(h)* lead in (i) the United Kingdom and (ii) each of the other European Community countries.

Mr. Baldry: The Department of the Environment is currently operating the following number of air pollution monitoring sites:

	Number
Ozone	18
Carbon monoxide	6
Nitrogen	12
Acid deposition	32
Atmospheric hydrocarbons	4
Trace gases	3
Smoke and sulphur dioxide	258
Lead	17

No comprehensive central records are kept by my Department of the number of monitoring sites in other

European Community countries. As regards sites monitoring nitrogen oxides, however, I would refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 22 April.

Fire Retardants

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the product groups on sale in the EC where there is wide use of Tetrabromobisphenyl A as a fire retardant; and what information he has on which product groups currently using Polybromobiphenyl ethers as a fire retardant would not be suitable for treatment with Terabromobisphenol A.

Mr. Baldry: The exact extent of use of TBBA—terabromobisphenol A—is commercially sensitive information and difficult to obtain. However, I understand that TBBA is used in acrylonitrile-butadiene-stryrene copolymers, polycarbonates and in epoxide and phenolic resins.

Detailed information on product groups which are unsuitable for treatment with TBBA is not available. The United Kingdom has stringent fire safety standards which are based on performance criteria not on the use or otherwise of specific fire retardants. Furnishing textiles and other materials treated with polybromobiphenyl ethers meet these standards. It is not known to what extent the same materials treated TBBA would meet these standards.

National Parks

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has received the recommendation of the Countryside Commission on the national parks review report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Yes. My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and Wales wish to congratulate the Countryside Commission on setting up this most timely review to mark the 40th anniversary of the legislation to establish the national parks of England and Wales and to thank Professor Ron Edwards and his team for their comprehensive and balanced report. Our national parks have played and continue to play a vital part in conserving and enhancing some of our most treasured landscapes and enabling the public to enjoy access to them.

The Government welcome the general thrust of the Edwards report and the recommendations based on it put to us by the Countryside Commission and the Countryside Council for Wales. We shall now address in detail their particular recommendations and hope to publish a considered response later in the year.

MINIS 12

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish his Department's MINIS 12 documents.

Mr. Heseltine: I am today publishing the MINIS 12 documents and a set has been placed in the Library.

Crown Suppliers

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if any financial liability has been taken on through premises to provide support to the consultants advising the management team who sought buy-out of the Crown Suppliers' transport business.

Mr. Yeo: As stated in my reply to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) on 24 January 1991, *Official Report* column *271*, Government support of £36,000 for advisers' fees has been paid to the management buy-out team who were seeking to acquire the Crown Suppliers' transport business. Towards the end of the sale competition they applied for additional support. Provisional agreement was reached with the teams' advisers that, subject to certain conditions, the Government would be prepared to pay 60 per cent. of the advisers' fees incurred, based on a maximum estimate of £185,000—£111,000. However, the sale of the business was aborted towards the close of March 1991 before the conditions had been fully met. Thus, although most, if not all, of the proposed additional expenditure had been incurred by the management buy-out team, no further payment was made by the Department.

With the agreement of the Treasury, Property Holdings wrote on 26 March to the management buy-out team members, and to the firms that advised them, to say that the Department did not accept any liability for the costs incurred. Nevertheless, the letter indicated that the Department would not rule out all payments if any of the parties wished to pursue the matter and was prepared to give the Government detailed information on the expenditure incurred.

It was not recognised at the time that the possibility of payment held out by this letter meant that it constituted a form of "letter of comfort" and that therefore a contingent liability of up to £111,000 had been incurred. I regret not bringing this matter to the attention of the House before the letter of comfort was sent. In accordance with Government accounting rules, I have now arranged for a copy of the letter to be laid before the House and for copies to be placed in the Library.

Council House Sales

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many dwellings each local authority has sold under the right-to-buy legislation or voluntarily since April 1979; and what percentage of the total local authority stock they represent.

Mr. Yeo: I have placed in the Library a table giving available information on local authority sales up to March 1991. It shows year by year information for each authority since 1985-86 together with cumulative figures since April 1979 and the proportion of their stock sold since April 1979.

Detergents

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what comments he has received on the report of the study he commissioned into the problems that may be caused by pollutants in detergents; and what steps he now proposes to take.

Mr. Trippier: We invited 37 organisations to comment on this report and received detailed replies from 14. They reported that the use of phosphorus in detergents declined by 20 per cent. between the first quarter of 1990 and first quarter of 1991, largely as a result of the introduction of phosphate free compact detergents. There was no consensus, however, on whether further substitution of phosphorus by other substances would have a net beneficial environmental effect.

On other chemicals sometimes used in detergents, the main concern reported was the need to limit the use of NTA—nitrilo triacetic acid—and EDTA—ethylene diamine tetracetic acid. In the light of these comments, I have decided:

(a) the use of phosphate in detergents and the environmental effects should be closely monitored, but there should be no ban on its use;

(b) the existing voluntary agreements with industry on use of EDTA and NTA in detergents should be strengthened, and research should be undertaken into other sources of inputs of these substances to the aquatic environment; and

(c) to invite English Nature and the Marine Conservation Society to be members of the Technical Committee on Detergents and the Environment and to give this Committee the following revised terms of reference:

"To monitor trends in the usage of chemicals in detergents and cleaning products.

"To keep under review the effects of detergent and cleaning products on natural waters, water supply and the treatability and safe disposal of sewage and sludge.

"To identify and review potential problems and recommend, as necessary, any research required to investigate these.

"To comment as necessary on environmental developments within the European Community and other international bodies affecting the UK soap and detergent industry.

"To report to the Department of the Environment of these matters at intervals of at least every two years."

Youth Training Places

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list *(a)* the number of Youth Training places in his Department and *(b)* the number of places occupied in May for each of the years 1989, 1990 and the current year.

Mr. Heseltine: My Department has one Youth Training scheme in operation at present. It is in Bristol and is run in conjunction with the Department of Transport. The information requested in respect of my Department's places is as follows:

	Number of places	*Number of places occupied*
1989	18	6
1990	10	7
1991	10	8

Council Tax

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many responses he has received to his consultation document on the council tax; and how and when he intends to make his response to the consultation exercise.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 19 July 1991]:* We have received some 850 representations in response to the recent consultation paper on the council tax. We will report on the outcome shortly.

Aggregates

Mr. Walden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider asking the regional aggregates working parties to delay the preparation of their regional commentaries until full consideration has been given to comments on the national forecasts recently published by his Department.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 22 July 1991]:* No. The views expressed by the regional aggregates working parties in their regional commentaries on the implications of the forecasts will be an important contribution to the revised draft guidelines which my Department will be preparing for public consultation.

Mr. Walden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to examine the present policy on aggregates of ensuring a steady supply for the construction industry, to ensure that it is still appropriate and encourages efficiency in aggregates' use.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 22 July 1991]:* It is premature to make any change to the present policies, but the Government have said that during the review of MPG 6 they will be reviewing whether the policy of ensuring a steady supply of primary aggregates for the construction industry is still appropriate and whether it encourages their most efficient use.

Mr. Walden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will revise mineral planning guidance note 6 so as to make it clear that long-term forecasts of primary aggregates demand are treated only as indicating the scope of the problem.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 22 July 1991]:* Any decision on the content of the guidelines to replace MPG6 will be taken in the light of the comments which are received on the recently published forecasts and on the draft revised guidelines which will be issued for public consultation.

Recycled Metals

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for the last available year the amount of *(a)* aluminium, *(b)* copper, *(c)* lead, *(d)* tin and *(e)* zinc recycled as a percentage of total consumption in (i) the United Kingdom and (ii) each of the other European Community countries.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 22 July 1991]:* The following information has been provided by the Government's Warren Spring laboratory. All figures are for 1989. They represent the amount of scrap used as a proportion of consumption. Figures may not have been constructed on comparable bases. Where a country is not listed, it is because the relevant figures are not available.

	Per cent.
Aluminium	
Belgium and Luxembourg	16
Germany	13
Italy	32
United Kingdom	21
Copper	
Belgium and Luxembourg	9
France	26
Germany	23
Greece	33
Italy	46
Spain	27
United Kingdom	40

	Per cent.
Lead	
Belgium and Luxembourg	40
France (estimated)	45
Germany	52
Italy	40
Spain	53
United Kingdom	74
Tin	
Belgium and Luxembourg	100
Germany	2
Italy	13
United Kingdom	70
Zinc	
Belgium and Luxembourg	11
France	11
Germany	8
Spain	11
United Kingdom	28

Petroleum Coke

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why he has decided not to list imported petroleum coke as a registered fuel for domestic heating appliances under the Clean Air Act 1956.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 22 July 1991]:* Application for authorisation under the Clean Air Act 1956 of a fuel for use in a smoke control area must be made to the Department of the Environment who arrange to have the fuel tested before authorising it. Regulations that came into effect this month authorised Pureheat ovoids, a blend of petcoke and coal; but no application has been received in recent years for authorisation of imported petroleum coke.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* his policies and *(b)* his Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; and if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 22 July 1991]:* The Government continue to place a high priority on helping small businesses, through improvements to the business climate, through deregulation and other measures through specific programmes of support and assistance.

Separate information on small businesses is not available. But all businesses will benefit from the simplification and clarification of the Building Regulations now being undertaken. It is intended that amended regulations will be made this autumn and come into operation next year.

The Planning and Compensation Bill includes a number of measures to improve the efficiency of the planning system, which should be of benefit to small businesses. We have amended the General Development Order to allow factory or warehouse extensions built as permitted development to be used for social or welfare purposes for employees, including creche facilities for their children.

The White Paper "Releasing Enterprise"—Cm. 512—notes that the system of integrated pollution control—IPC —would be less burdensome to industry as a whole than the previous arrangements. IPC was given statutory force by the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Homes (Demolition)

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, whether he proposes to introduce planning controls over the demolition of houses; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young *[pursuant to his answer, 10 May 1991, c. 622.]:* The Government have today published a consultation paper on proposed methods of extending planning control over the demolition of dwellinghouses in England and Wales. The options set out in the paper are designed to introduce controls selectively, where they are needed, while minimising the regulatory burden where demolition is unlikely to give rise to adverse effects on the local amenity and neighbouring property.

Local Authority Short-term Leases

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, whether he has plans to change the financial arrangements for short-term leases acquired by local authorities.

Sir George Young *[pursuant to his answer, 3 May 1991 c. 337.]:* My Department issued a consultation paper on 3 May 1991 proposing new accounting arrangements for houses and flats leased by local authorities from housing associations and private owners, and used as temporary accommodation for the homeless. I have carefully considered the responses to that consultation paper, and have now reached conclusions.

The main proposal was that leases acquired by local housing authorities after 31 March 1992 for a term of less than three years should be accounted for outside the housing revenue account. This would put them on a common financial footing with other property used by housing authorities as temporary accommodation for families accepted for housing under the homelessness legislation. I confirm that we intend to make a direction under section 74(3)(d) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 to this effect. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State accordingly has taken account of local authority expenditure on new short-term leases in making his proposals, also announced today, on total standard spending and aggregate external finance for 1992-93.

Many respondents to the consultation paper argued that the normal mechanisms for the distribution of revenue support grant would not focus resources sufficiently towards the relatively small number of authorities with heavy recourse to leasing. The consequence could be a heavy additional burden on the community charge for those authorities next year. My hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and I have given careful consideration to this argument. We have concluded that a specific grant should be available on a limited basis and for a limited period of more than three years to ease the transition to the new financial arrangements for those authorities worst affected. We shall announce details for the proposed grant arrangements shortly, and shall be seeking the views of the local authority associations on those proposals.

Respondents to the consultation document argued for an extension of the rule that exempt leases from the

requirement for credit cover if they are under three years. We have no immediate plans to change the capital finance rules, but will look further at this question.

Respondents to the consultation document also expressed concern about the rent subsidy arrangements for short-term leases. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security will be reviewing the current rent rebate threshold subsidy arrangements alongside housing benefit subsidy arrangements in general later in the year.

EMPLOYMENT

Industrial Training Boards

149. **Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many staff of industrial training boards in existence at the time of the White Paper "Employment for the 1990s" have since then been made redundant; and how many of those made redundant were training staff as opposed to administrative and support staff.

Mr. Jackson: On the best available figures, approximately 3,100 staff were previously employed by the seven industrial training boards at the beginning of 1989. Since 5 December 1988, a total of 739 staff have been made redundant for a variety of reasons, including operational efficiency, cessation of statutory duties and changes to the operation of youth training managing agencies. Of these, 370 were training staff. During the same period a number of boards have recruited about 300 new staff, the majority of whom were training staff.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many statutory training boards will remain after 31 July; and how many staff they will employ.

Mr. Jackson: From 31 July 1991, three industrial training boards will remain operational, employing a total of 1,550 staff.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current number of industrial training boards.

Mr. Jackson: Three industrial training boards are currently operational.

Remploy

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 16 July to the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney on Remploy, what assessment he has made of the financial and job consequences of the decline in orders placed.

Mr. Jackson: Remploy has continued to increase its annual sales turnover despite the loss of business from the Crown suppliers. Although 80 job opportunities for people with severe disabilities nationally have been lost as a result of that loss of business, there have been no redundancies amongst the disabled work force, as the reduction has been achieved through natural wastage. Remploy is taking active steps to build up its direct business with Government Departments.

East London TEC

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of the population of England is in the area covered by the East London TEC.

Mr. Jackson: Based on the OPCS mid-1989 population estimates, 2·5 per cent. of the population of England is within the area covered by the East London TEC.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the percentage of the funding for youth training, employment training, business enterprise training, the enterprise allowance scheme and other departmental training programmes in England received by the East London TEC.

Mr. Jackson: Budgets for 1990-91 have been allocated by funding block rather than individual scheme. The funding allocations for East London TEC, as percentages of the national figures, are:

	Per cent.
Block 1	1·6
Block 2	2·4
Block 3	1·6

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the percentage of unemployed persons in England within the area covered by the East London TEC.

Mr. Jackson: The number of persons unemployed within the East London TEC area in May 1991, seasonally unadjusted, represents 3·3 per cent. of the total number of unemployed persons in England.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the intended budget for the new training and enterprise councils at their inception; and how much has so far been spent.

Mr. Jackson: Budgets for training and enterprise councils are determined by the proposals which they set out in their agreed corporate and business plans within the limits voted by Parliament. In this financial year, TECs as a whole will have a budget of around £1·6 billion to meet the training and enterprise needs of their areas.

The TECs' rate of expenditure is a matter for them to determine, within the terms of their contract.

Labour Statistics

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the current levels of unemployment in the south-east region of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Jackson: In June 1991, the seasonally adjusted rate of unemployment in the south-east region, including London, was 6·9 per cent. of the work force.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of those applicants for unemployment benefit who were disqualified for any period were disqualified for the maximum 26 weeks under section 20 of the Social Security Act 1975 in each of the last five years *(a)* in Wales as a whole and *(b)* in each county or district in Wales.

Mr. Jackson: Questions on operational matters in the Employment Service executive agency are the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the agency's chief executive, to whom I have referred this question for reply.

Open Tech and Open College

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give figures for total public expenditure on *(a)* the Open tech project and *(b)* the Open college for each year since their foundation; and if he will make copies of each year's annual reports available in the Library.

Mr. Jackson: Expenditure on the Open tech programme was as follows:

	£ million
1983-84	4·5
1984-85	18·1
1985-86	17·6
1986-87	14·4

Progress on the Open tech programme was reported in successive Manpower Services Commission annual reports which are available in the Library.

In respect of Open college expenditure, I refer the hon. Gentleman to my reply to him of 22 April, *Official Report*, column *365*.

In common with other businesses, the Open college submits annual accounts, including a directors report, to the companies registration office.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many students have completed courses at the Open tech and the Open college in each year since their foundation; how many have gained recognised qualifications; and how these figures compare with initial targets.

Mr. Jackson: Open tech was not an institution and did not register students. Projects set up under the programme had, by 1987 produced 34,000 hours of new material which had been used by about 65,000 people. Monitoring of usage ceased in 1987 when the programme ended, but many of the materials produced are still in use.

By the end of March 1991, the Open college had sold 179,106 course packs, some of which will be used by more than one student.

Although the open learning market is now well established, at the times when the Open tech programme and the Open college were launched, the size of the market was uncertain and therefore no initial targets for numbers of students were set.

Materials produced by both the Open tech programme and the Open college were and are linked to vocational qualifications wherever possible, but registration for qualifications is a matter for individual students and no central records are maintained.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what evaluation his Department has carried out on *(a)* Open tech project and *(b)* the Open college; if he will make a statement on the conclusions reached; and if he will make the evaluations available in the Library.

Mr. Jackson: The evaluation strategy for the Open tech programme produced a number of reports between 1982 and 1987. I am arranging for a full list of available reports to be sent to the hon. Gentleman and for those reports not already in the Library to be placed there. These reports, and experience since, show that the Open tech programme was instrumental in helping to establish an open learning industry which has given the United Kingdom a world lead.

The Open college is a business which produces annual business plans, based on market research and evaluation studies, and monitors performance against these plans. As with other businesses, these plans are commercial-in-confidence. The Department receives regular progress reports from the college and is currently setting up jointly with the college an evaluation of its impact on the training system. I will make sure that copies of the evaluation are placed in the Library in due course.

The Open college has played an important part in helping to maintain and develop a United Kingdom open learning industry.

Business (VAT)

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many businessess in the east midlands were registered for value added tax in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Forth: At the end of 1979 there were 88,200 businesses registered for VAT in the east midlands. By the end of 1989, the latest year for which figures are available, this figure had risen to 113,400 businesses.

Accident Management Software

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make it his policy to encourage the use of accident management software packages in places of work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The Health and Safety Commission places great emphasis on effective management for the control of work related health and safety risks. Accident management software packages are a potentially powerful tool in this context. In addition to encouraging accident monitoring and analysis by employers, the Health and Safety Executive has approved the use of copyright licensed computer generated forms for meeting employers' statutory accident and ill health reporting obligations under the Reporting of Injuries, Disease and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement concerning the approach of the Health and Safety Executive's accident prevention advisory unit to the use by employers of Accidata accident management software.

Mr. Jackson: The Health and Safety Executive's accident prevention advisory unit through its contacts with employing organisations and its publications emphasises the importance of safety performance monitoring in the effective management of work-related health and safety risks. It supports the use of accident management software for this purpose and is familiar with the Accidata system, but it does not endorse particular systems.

Technical and Vocational Education Initiative

Mr. Madel: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for how long his Department will continue to fund the TVEI programme in schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson *[holding answer 22 July 1991]:* The Department is responsible for TVEI. Funding for the

initiative continues until 1997-98. Within that timetable, education authorities will progressively leave the initiative from summer 1992, depending upon their date of entry.

The initiative has been successful in fulfilling its purpose of embedding training and vocational education in the education system. It has been a major facilitator for a range of educational developments, including the national curriculum, national record of achievement and innovative teaching and learning styles.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* his policies and *(b)* his Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; and if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 22 July 1991]:* The Government continue to place a high priority on helping small businesses, through improvements to the business climate, through deregulation and other measures and through specific programmes of support and assistance. Despite the difficult economic climate the latest statistics on VAT registration show that there was a net average increase of around 800 businesses per week during 1990.

Measures operated by my Department to assist small businesses include the loan guarantee scheme, which enhances smaller firms access to finance. In the 12 months to 30 June 1991, a total of 3,297 loans were guaranteed to a value of £82 million.

Continuing efforts are being made to improve the access of small firms to Government contracts. The publication and distribution of booklets designed for both Government purchasers and small firms which identify purchasing needs, Departmental contacts and give guidance on improving Government purchasing procedures is an on-going activity. In this area we have also commissioned a study of small firms perceptions of supplying central Government Departments with a view to further improving our policies. My Department continues to publicise its own contracts and there is a departmental guide for those companies who want to tender including small firms. Managers are encouraged to use local small firms in devolving the purchasing function and budgets when appropriate.

My Department continues to address the problems faced by small businesses because of the late payment of commercial debt. During 1990, my Department obtained support for prompt payment from most of the United Kingdom's top 100 companies. In addition, I offered to take up, on behalf of individual small businesses, cases of late payment by the top 100 companies or Government Departments. This year, we have begun an examination of the Government's own departmental record on the payment of bills and are preparing a new guidance pack on payment and debt collection in co-operation with the Institute of Credit Management.

The Department also continues to pursue its policies of reducing the burdens on business. In addition to maintaining a close interest in domestic deregulation. I also seek to ensure that EC legislation does not impose unnecessary burdens, with the circumstances of small businesses very much in mind.

My Department has successfully passed responsibility for running a range of measures which assist small businesses to training and enterprise councils. The TECs have a great deal of flexibility and are tailoring assistance to meet the needs of their local economy.

The small firms service existed to provide high-quality information, advice and counselling to new and established small businesses. It dealt with 317,000 inquiries, and gave more than 50,000 counselling sessions to more than 36,000 clients in its full year of operation. Its functions have been transferred to TECs, although the London centre is still operational under a specific arrangement with TECs in the London area. TECs have plans to make significant improvements to this service so that it will be even more effective in meeting local needs.

Business and enterprise training evolved in the period 1990-91 out of the business growth training programme which had been introduced in the previous year. It enables TECs to offer a wide range of business training to help meet the needs of small businesses and owner-managers. The range is varied and includes tailored packages of advice and counselling, financial support, subsidised consultancy support and business skills training. More than 100,000 owner-managers were assisted in the period.

The enterprise allowance scheme provides an allowance in the early months of trading and on-going support to unemployed people who start their own businesses. It helped more than 60,000 people in the period. From April 1991, TECs have been able to adapt the scheme to suit local economic needs. Early indications are that TECs are placing greater emphasis on increasing the quality of the businesses they support to improve their chances of survival.

The enterprise training element of employment training and the business enterprise programme help unemployed people to prepare for business start-up through the provision of targeted training in all the basic aspects of business. In many cases TECs started to adapt these programmes into integrated packages of support for people who wish to start up in business, together with the enterprise allowance and local business counselling. More than 18,000 people were helped by the business enterprise programme in the period, and in the first three quarters of the period more than 12,000 people entered the enterprise training element of employment training.

My Department continues to make substantial grants available to Business in the Community, local enterprise agencies and the Prince's Youth Business Trust amongst others. To take the Prince's Youth Business Trust as an example, my Department agreed to match private sector donations, up to £40 million, received by appeals up to 31 March 1990, to support young people who want to set up their own business.

The Department monitors all its programmes and also commissions external evaluations which are published. In May 1991 we published "Small Firms in Britain" which was sent to all Members of Parliament. This report surveys developments in the sector, includes key statistical indicators and outlines overall Government policy towards small firms.

Horizon and Tide Programmes

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what programmes in the United Kingdom are benefiting from the EC's Horizon and Tide programmes and budgets.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 22 July 1991]:* On 19 April the European Commission notified that the United Kingdom had been allocated 15·6 million ecu—£11·1 million—for the Horizon programme over the period 1991-1993. The Government submitted the operational programme, outlining their intentions for the use of Horizon resources, on 12 July after an extension of the deadline had been agreed with the Commission. Individual project applications will be invited following consultation with the European Commission on the operational programme. This will be at the end of September.

The Tide programme is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Operational Strategy

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is his latest estimate of the whole time equivalent staff savings to be made from the operational strategy;

(2) if he will give a regional breakdown of the staff savings made to date as a result of the operational strategy.

Miss Widdecombe: The operational strategy is estimated to save 21,000 posts by 1995-96. Savings made by April 1991, analysed according to the seven former regions are as follows:

	Number
North East	2,076
Midlands	1,300
London North	1,009
London South	1,193
Wales and South West	850
North West	3,160
Scotland	1,438
Total	11,026

Incomes Statistics

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set out the percentage change in income during the period 1979 to 1987 both before and after housing costs of each percentile group in the population.

Mr. Jack: The figures are set out in the table. As explained to the hon. Member in my letter of 20 December 1990, these figures are not statistically valid; the differences between changes in consecutive percentiles are completely swamped by the large sampling errors involved. Both sampling errors and possible data problems at the extremes render the changes below the tenth percentile very uncertain, and particularly so below the fifth.

Such statistics rest on a small number of cases, and are particularly vulnerable to distortion by household incomes which may be both exceptional and unrepresentative. The way in which the bottom percentile is distorted is clearly illustrated when comparing the position between the years 1983-85, which shows a 61 per cent. increase in real income for the bottom percentile.

Percentage change in real income by percentile of income distribution 1979-87

Percentile	*Increase net of expenditure on housing* *Per cent.*	*Increase in income overall* *Per cent.*
1	[1]−22·6	[1]+6·7
2	[1]−16·2	[1]+6·8
3	[1]−7·3	[1]+10·4
4	[1]−1·8	[1]+9·9
5	[1]+0·1	[1]+8·5
6	[1]−1·2	[1]+6·7
7	[1]−0·6	[1]+5·9
8	[1]−0·7	[1]+5·9
9	[1]−0·1	[1]+6·2
10	[1]0·0	[1]+6·4
11	+0·4	+6·7
12	+0·5	+7·4
13	+1·0	+7·6
14	+1·8	+7·3
15	+2·4	+6·8
16	+2·6	+7·5
17	+3·0	+7·9
18	+3·6	+7·8
19	+3·2	+7·8
20	+3·0	+8·0
21	+2·8	+7·9
22	+3·1	+8·2
23	+3·0	+8·6
24	+2·5	+8·6
25	+2·8	+8·6
26	+3·4	+8·4
27	+3·6	+9·0
28	+4·1	+8·8
29	+4·7	+9·4
30	+4·9	+9·9
31	+5·3	+10·1
32	+5·6	+10·3
33	+5·9	+10·6
34	+7·2	+10·6
35	+7·9	+10·6
36	+8·1	+10·5
37	+8·8	+11·0
38	+8·9	+11·3
39	+9·7	+11·4
40	+9·8	+12·0
41	+10·9	+12·1
42	+10·7	+12·1
43	+11·1	+12·4
44	+11·3	+12·8
45	+11·9	+13·1
46	+11·8	+13·5
47	+12·0	+14·0
48	+12·9	+14·1
49	+13·6	+14·3
50	+13·7	+14·3
51	+14·0	+14·4
52	+14·8	+15·1
53	+15·0	+15·2
54	+15·1	+15·6
55	—	+16·0
56	+15·6	+16·2
57	+15·4	+16·2
58	+15·7	+16·4
59	+16·1	+15·9
60	+16·3	+16·0
61	+16·5	+15·9
62	+16·7	+15·8
63	+16·7	+15·9
64	+16·9	+16·4
65	+17·5	+16·7
66	+17·8	+17·3
67	+18·2	+17·7
68	+18·5	+18·0

Percentile	Increase net of expenditure on housing Per cent.	Increase in income overall Per cent.
69	+18·9	+18·0
70	+19·7	+18·3
71	+20·0	+18·7
72	+20·4	+18·9
73	+20·7	+18·8
74	+21·2	+19·2
75	+21·4	+19·3
76	+21·5	+20·5
77	+22·1	+20·9
78	+22·8	+21·6
79	+23·6	+22·0
80	+24·4	+22·3
81	+24·8	+22·9
82	+25·2	+23·3
83	+24·7	+23·5
84	+24·5	+24·2
85	+25·0	+23·7
86	+27·0	+25·7
87	+27·9	+26·5
88	+28·3	+27·2
89	+29·3	+29·0
90	+29·5	+29·5
91	+30·3	+31·0
92	+32·2	+32·2
93	+34·6	+33·1
94	+39·1	+35·4
95	+40·3	+38·8
96	+42·5	+40·6
97	+49·0	+42·3
98	+55·2	+50·8
99	+72·4	+61·5

[1] Figures for the lowest decile, and particularly those for the lowest five percentiles, are subject to a very high degree of statistical uncertainty due to potential errors arising from the limited size of the sample and other data problems.

Supportive Housing Accommodation

Mr. Bellotti: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what were the total payments made to residents of supportive housing accommodation project homes in Staffordshire in each financial year since 1988-89.

Miss Widdecombe: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Bellotti: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how supportive housing accommodation project homes in Staffordshire qualified as special social services hostels in order to attract DSS payments for the residents.

Miss Widdecombe: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Debt

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what reviews or research he is undertaking into the extent of debt amongst the two lowest income deciles of households.

Mr. Jack: The Department is co-sponsoring a major survey by the Policy Studies Institute of "Credit and Debt in Britain". The survey covers the use of credit and problems of debt among the population as a whole, but low-income families were over represented to ensure that sample sizes were large enough to produce robust information. Preliminary results from the survey, which took place in 1989, were published in March 1990. The final report is due to be published later this year.

Residential Care Homes

Mr. Bellotti: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will bring forward proposals to increase income support for people in residential homes for those with learning difficulties; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Income support levels will be reviewed in the usual way in the course of the 1992 uprating exercise, however enhanced limits are already available to these people.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the representations he has received on the adequacy of income support rates for residential care and nursing homes in the home counties since April 1990.

Miss Widdecombe: Several representations, not necessarily specific to the home counties, have been received since April 1990 on the issue of income support for residents of such homes.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to introduce an enhanced rate of income support for residential care and nursing homes in the home counties.

Miss Widdecombe: There is already an addition for the Greater London area of £23, for people in residential care homes. The addition for people in nursing homes, was increased by £10 to £33 in April. However, the information currently available does not provide a sufficiently secure base for detailed geographical or local variation between different categories of care or homes beyond these present additions for the Greater London area.

Family Support

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the most recent estimate of the number of families in receipt of *(a)* income support, *(b)* family credit and *(c)* one-parent benefit in Wales.

Mr. Jack: The administration of income support, family credit and one parent benefit is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the estimated take-up of family credit each year since it was introduced.

Mr. Jack: The latest information about the number of families taking up family credit is for the end of April 1991 when the caseload was 340,000. This compares with 314,000 at the end of April 1990, and 285,000 at the end of April 1989. However, no further information regarding percentage take up is available beyond that given in my reply to the hon. Member on 27 February at columns *542-43*.

Industrial Deafness

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what criteria are applied by his Department for those seeking disablement benefit for industrial deafness; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: To qualify for disablement benefit for occupational deafness a person must *(a)* have worked for at least 10 years in one or more of the occupations for which the disease is prescribed; *(b)* if no longer in a prescribed occupation, claim within five years of leaving that work; and *(c)* suffer sensorineural hearing loss of at least 50 decibels in each year, being due in the case of at least one ear to noise at work.

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people were awarded disablement benefit for industrial deafness in the last 12 months.

Mr. Scott: There were approximately 1,200 new awards of industrial injuries disablement benefit due to industrial deafness in the year to 1 April 1989, the latest period for which figures are available.

Social Fund

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what reviews or research he is undertaking into the degree of hardship associated with loans under the social fund.

Mr. Scott: Repayment rates for social fund loans are flexible, and take account of individual applicants' circumstances to help ensure that they do not suffer hardship as a result of repaying a loan. The research currently being undertaken by the social policy research unit at the university of York looks at the extent to which the social fund is meeting need.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will replace the system of loans under the social fund by an additional system of grants.

Mr. Scott: No. Interest-free loans provided by the social fund help people on income support to budget their expenditure. They are a more equitable form of help than grants, given that those on low incomes but not on benefit also have to budget for large items of expenditure out of their income.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of social fund loans was spent on *(a)* cookers, *(b)* beds and bedding, and *(c)* essential household furniture for the years 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is not available. However, the following figures on loans expenditure by application purpose may be helpful.

	Per cent.
Furniture and household equipment	
1988-89	72
1989-90	74
Bedding	
1988-89	2
1989-90	2

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many income support claimants were repaying a social fund loan of 10 per cent. On m[illegible]e of their applicable amount on 1 January 1989, 1 Jan[illegible]y 1990 and 1 January 1991, respectively.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many income support claimants were repaying a social fund loan on 1 January 1989, 1 January 1990 and 1 January 1991.

Mr. Scott: Statistics are collated at the end of each month. The figures given are therefore those for 31 December each year. It is not possible to separately identify people who were receiving income support on these dates.

The number of people repaying loans was:

	Number
31 December 1988	255,579
31 December 1989	400,590
31 December 1990	421,853

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list for each year since April 1988 how many cases referred to the social fund inspectors have resulted in *(a)* a decision by the inspector partly or wholly in the claimant's favour and *(b)* a decision partly or wholly in the claimant's favour following remittance back to the local social security office.

Mr. Scott: The information is in the table:

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Decisions made by an inspector to award a payment	83	522	2,008
Decisions referred back to local office by an inspector, and payment awarded	470	1,136	1,649

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list for each quarter since April 1988 the proportion of social fund applications which have been refused for *(a)* community care grants, *(b)* budgeting loans and *(c)* crisis loans.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is as follows. The figures are percentages.

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Budgeting Loans				
June	33	39	39	46
September	38	43	43	—
December	35	42	45	—
March	35	38	46	—
Crisis Loans				
June	12	8	8	10
September	9	7	9	—
December	8	7	9	—
March	7	6	9	—
Community Care Grants				
June	51	52	54	70
September	50	54	58	—
December	48	54	60	—
March	41	53	63	—

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the number of *(a)* social fund applications and *(b)* crisis loans for each office in London for the last two years.

Mr. Scott: Information about numbers of applications and numbers of awards made, for all offices, is in the Library.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants applied for grants or loans under the social fund during the financial year 1990-91 in each of the benefit offices of Newcastle upon Tyne; how many were turned down and for what reason; and what was the average size of the grant, crisis loan or budgetary loan in the year.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications for the social fund in each London office have been refused on the basis of overspent budgets in the year 1990-91.

Mr. Scott: No social fund applications were refused on this basis.

Industrial Injuries

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is the total value of benefits clawed back from claimants as a consequence of the subsequent award of compensation for industrial injuries and the number of claimants affected, during each year since 1 January 1987;

(2) what research has been undertaken into the effect of the enactment of legislation providing for a clawback of social security benefits from people who receive such awards as a consequence of injury suffered after 1 January 1987 on the amount of damages awarded by the courts;

(3) what research has been undertaken into the effect of the enactment of legislation providing for a clawback of social security benefits from people who receive such awards as a consequence of injury suffered after 1 January 1987 on the amount of damages awarded by the courts.

Mr. Jack: The compensation recovery scheme was introduced on 3 September 1990 in accordance with the Social Security Act 1989. Under this scheme, compensators are required to offset an amount equal to the value of benefits received for the injury in question and to pay this to the Department. Since the scheme was introduced the total amount paid to the Department in employer liability cases was approximately £3·8 million. The number of claimants involved was 5,751.

Before 3 September 1990 compensators may have, under the Law Reform (Personal Injuries) Act 1948, reduced the compensation payments in line with benefits received, but no money was repaid to the Department.

No specific research into court awards has been undertaken since the compensation recovery scheme was introduced. However, in common with other aspects of the new arrangements, the Department is keeping the situation under review.

Pensioners' Incomes

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the most recent figures on pensioners' incomes; and what were the comparable figures in 1974 and 1979.

Mr. Newton: Recent data from the 1988 Family Expenditure Survey show that the average pensioner's total net income increased by over 33 per cent. in real terms between 1979 and 1988. Table 1 shows a breakdown of the individual components which contributed towards this increase

Table 1

Pensioners Incomes	*1974*	*1979*	*1988*	*Real terms percentage Increase 1974-79*	*Real terms percentage Increase 1979-88*
Total social security benefits	47·20	53·00	60·70	12	14
Occupational pensions	12·40	13·90	27·70	12	99
Savings income	11·30	9·50	20·00	−16	110
Earnings	14·30	10·40	9·80	−27	−6
Total gross income	85·10	86·90	118·20	2	36
Total net income	77·40	79·60	106·30	3	33

1. *Source:* Family Expenditure Survey.
2. £s per week at 1988 prices.

In 1988, 74 per cent. of all pensioners received income from savings and the average amount that they received was £29·80. Also, 51 per cent. of all pensioners had an occupational pension and the average amount received was £47·00. Table 2 shows the comparable figures for 1974 and 1979.

Table 2
Pensioners income from savings and occupational pensions 1974, 1979 and 1988

	1974	*1979*	*1988*
Percentage of pensioners with savings income	53	62	74
Average amount (£ per week) received from savings income	21·50	15·30	29·80
Percentage of pensioners with occupational pensions	35	41	51
Average amount (£ per week) received from occupational pension	33·40	33·70	47·00

Notes:

1. *Source:* Family Expenditure Survey.
2. £s per week at 1988 prices.
3. Averages are based on those pensioners who actually received savings income or occupational pensions.

A greater proportion of those pensioners who had retired only recently, ie within the five years immediately preceding the survey, received incomes from these sources: in 1988, 78 per cent. of recently retired pensioners had savings income while 63 per cent. received income from an occupational pension.

In 1988, 20 per cent. of all pensioner savings income was derived from 'non-bank' sources, for example from share dividends; the same was true of 14 per cent. of savings income in 1979.

Other points to emerge from the analysis are that: the proportion of pensioners in the lowest quintile of income distribution was 28 per cent. in 1988, compared with around 40 per cent. in 1979; single pensioners who receive all their income from state benefits have income 25 per cent. higher in real terms than those in 1979; the increase for married couples was 22 per cent.; the average pensioner's gross income represented 59 per cent. of the average earnings of all manual workers; 46 per cent. of pensioners owned their homes outright in 1988 compared with only 38 per cent. in 1979.

Resettlement Facilities

Mr. Fishburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what factors influenced the decision to close Bridge House resettlement unit; what alternative provision the Resettlement Agency made for the residents; and what plans the Resettlement Agency has for the disposal of the building.

Miss Widdecombe: The management of resettlement units is a matter for Mr. Tony Ward, the chief executive of the Resettlement Agency. He will write to my hon. Friend and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Benefits Agency

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will ensure that questions from hon. Members which he diverts to the Benefits Agency are replied to *(a)* by the chief Executive and *(b)* within a reasonable period.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 18 June at columns *104-5*. Letters from the Benefits Agency in response to parliamentary questions should normally reach hon. Members within 24 hours of a question being answered.

Suspended Benefit Payments

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his Department's policy and practice regarding suspended benefit payments.

Mr. Scott: We consider it would normally be inappropriate to pay benefit in cases which are the subject of an appeal to the social security commissioner or the courts or in like cases dependent upon the outcome of such an appeal. We propose to amend regulation 37 of the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations 1987 to put this beyond doubt.

Cold Weather Payments

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what progress he has made in reviewing the weather station linkages in the cold weather payments scheme.

Mr. Scott: I am pleased to inform my hon. Friend that in response to representations made to me and subsequent detailed consultation with the Met Office, I will lay regulations well before the onset of winter which will significantly improve the weather station linkages. The changes are as follows.

The high-lying villge of Eskdalemuir is to be linked to the Eskdalemuir weather station instead of the low-lying warmer station at Dumfries. The high-lying area surrounding the villages of Wanlockhead-Leadhills, near Dumfries, are also to be linked to Eskdalemuir weather station instead of to Dumfries. The northern part of the district of Clydesdale, which is currently linked to Dumfries weather station, and the whole of the district of Motherwell, which is currently linked to Edinburgh weather station, will be linked to the weather station at Glasgow. The area surrounding Honiton and Axminster in Exeter, currently linked to the weather station at Chivenor, will be linked instead to a higher lying weather station at Dunkeswell. The latter station has not previously been used in our scheme. The areas surrounding the town of Kyle, presently linked to Kinloss weather station, and around Kyleakin, currently linked to Fort William, will be linked instead to the weather station at Tiree, which is also new to our scheme, replacing Fort William.

Further changes in linkages will be made to improve climatological representation in the coastal area of the Borders Region, which includes parts of Ettrick and Lauderdale, Roxburgh, and Berwickshire—the towns of Kelso, Eyemouth, Duns and Coldstream. These areas are currently linked to Esdkdalemuir weather station, and will be linked to Boulmer weather station. A strip of the south coast of England, including the towns of Romsey, Totton, Lymington, Brockenhurst, Lyndhurst, Chichester, and Bognor Regis, linked variously to Herstmonceux, Boscome Down, and Bournemouth weather stations, will be linked to Southampton weather station.

We will also further improve the sensitivity of the scheme to local conditions by linking entitlement to postcode areas. This will also allow automatic payments to be made.

Finally, the Blackpool, Exeter, and Fort William weather stations are to be removed from the scheme. The first two have closed, and the last is no longer considered reliable. Tiree weather station will be included to replace Fort William; Chivenor station will absorb the area previously covered by Exeter except for the area to be covered by Dunkeswell weather station; and the Blackpool linkages are to be shared between the Eskmeals, Carlisle, and Aughton stations. This will leave a total of 63 stations in place of the current total of 64 in Great Britain.

In addition to these changes, the linkages will continue to be monitored and further amendments introduced where appropriate.

Special Hardship Payments

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security where an initial claim for benefit from a 16 or 17-year-old is referred to the special hardship claim unit, what is the average delay between the initial claim being made at the benefit office and referral to the unit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: I understand from the chief executive of the Benefits Agency that the information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, a young person who calls at a Benefits Agency office, and who needs to be interviewed to establish whether income support can be paid, should be interviewed in private on the day that he or she calls, and immediately the interview is completed, the details of the claim are referred by telephone to the severe hardship claims unit. A decision on whether benefit can be awarded is given immediately by the unit where all the necessary information is available and 100 per cent. of cases are cleared within 24 hours of referral. The MORI report shows that of those young people awarded income support under severe hardship provisions 28 per cent. received money on the same day and an additional 37 per cent. received payment within a few days.

If a young person claims by post and cannot be interviewed within 48 hours of the time that the claim was received, for example, because there are delays in contacting the customer, the case must be referred to the assistant manager in the district who has personal responsibility for the quick and effective handling of such claims.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of claimants who made successful or unsuccessful claims for special hardship payments were represented by an adviser; and what research his Department has commissioned into this matter.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is not routinely collected. However, the research commissioned by this Department from MORI—"A Survey of 16 and 17 Year Old Applicants for Severe Hardship Payments"—found that 46 per cent. of all respondents were accompanied by someone when claiming. There was no statistically significant difference in the outcome of the claim between those who were accompanied and those who were not.

Young People

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the current numbers of 16 and 17-year-olds who are *(a)* in employment, *(b)* in full-time education, *(c)* on youth training, *(d)* receiving a bridging allowance or *(e)* receiving income support.

Mr. Jack: The latest estimates of the numbers of 16 and 17-year-olds in these categories are as follows:

(a) 784,000 in employment
(b) 724,000 in full-time education
(c) 260,000 on Youth Training in England and Wales
(d) 13,000 on bridging allowance
(e) 21,000 on income support

I will ask the Secretary of State for Employment to write to the hon. Member giving details of youth training figures for Scotland when these become available.

Note: All figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand.

Sources:

(a) Labour Force Survey, Spring 1990
(b) Department of Education and Science, Scottish Office and Welsh Office, July 1991
(c) Employment Department, July 1991
(d) Employment Department, June 1991
(e) Income Support Statistics, Annual Enquiry May 1990.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what proportion of young people who receive income support during the child benefit extension period because *(a)* they were recently in care or *(b)* have to live away from their parents due to estrangement, have found work or training by the end of that period;

(2) how many 16 or 17-year-olds have been awarded income support on the grounds of pregnancy 11 weeks before their expected date of confinement; and how many of them were continuously *(a)* receiving benefits, *(b)* on youth training or *(c)* in employment during the earlier months of pregnancy.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications for social fund crisis loans from 16 and 17-year-olds have been *(a)* awarded and *(b)* refused.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost, as statistics held do not record details of an applicant's age.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on what date he expects to publish the MORI report on income support and 16 and 17-year-olds.

Mr. Jack: The MORI report was published on 16 July. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North, (Mr. Wilson) on 17 July at column *161*.

Long-term Care Patients

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security for how long his Department has been considering the issue of the benefit entitlement from his Department of patients and clients in long-term local authority care proposed to be placed in the care of successor agencies, the private sector or trusts; when his press release regarding the curtailment of such benefit entitlement issued on 25 June was sent to local authorities, and on what dates; and how many subsequent inquiries from local authorities and others his Department has received.

Miss Widdecombe: The benefit entitlement of people in local authority care homes that are transferred to the private or voluntary sector has been under active consideration for some time. Officials have been considering the matter in some detail since February 1991. The press release was not issued to local authorities as a matter of course, but only on request. The draft directions referred to in the press release were issued by the Department of Health to local authorities associations on the same day. The Department has received a small number of inquiries about the press release, but no record has been kept of the exact number.

Poll Tax

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has anything to add to his answers on the cost of abolishing the poll tax 20 per cent. contribution rule on 27 June, to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside, *Official Report*, column *519*, and of 2 May to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), *Official Report*, column *328*.

Miss Widdecombe: The estimated cost of abolishing the 20 per cent. contribution which I gave in my reply to the hon. Member on 27 June at column *519* updated the estimate that I gave in my reply to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) on 2 May at column *328*. I wrote to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East on 27 June to draw his attention to the revised estimate.

Contributions Agency

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he will be in a position to publish the 1991-92 compliance targets for the Contributions Agency.

Mr. Jack: The Contributions Agency's business plan was published on 2 April 1991 and contained compliance targets that were based on agreed incremental improvements over estimated performance in 1990-91. As such they were provisional. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has now agreed the following compliance targets for 1991-92:

To increase collection of contributions arrears by 10 per cent. to £218 million.

To increase Class 1 arrears identified from survey by 35 per cent. to £17·5 million.

To increase the number of new Class 2 contributors identified by 60,000.

To increase identified Class 1 adjustment by 35 per cent. to £16·3 million.

Actively Seeking Work Rule

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to place in the Library a copy of the research commissioned by his Department into awareness of the actively seeking work rule.

Mr. Jack: I have done so today.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* his policies and *(b)* his Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; and if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 22 July 1991]*: The Department and its agencies have introduced a number of specific measures in support of the Government's general policy of placing a high priority on helping small businesses. The measures, of both policy and procedure, include:

(i) The Department has continued to consult regularly its panel of employers over the last 12 months, both at formal meetings and in correspondence. We have, in addition, set up a sub-group of the main panel specifically to consider Child Support Agency matters. A representative of small businesses is a member of the sub-group. We have also conducted a major consultation exercise with employers and employers' organisations, including those representing small businesses, on the administrative arrangements for the collection of NI contributions on cars and fuel.

The Contributions Agency, which was launched officially in April 1991, has established additional consultation arrangements with employers and employers' representatives. The first Contributions Conference was held in July 1990; this is to be an annual event with the next Conference scheduled for 6 August 1991. In addition two specialist group seminars were arranged in January and February 1991 and the Agency intends to continue this pattern with at least two seminars each year. The National Federation of Self-Employed and Small Businesses, and the Forum of Private Business regularly attend the Contributions Agency's conferences and seminars.

(ii) Small businesses benefitted when, as a result of research by independent consultants in 1989, we made changes to the literature sent to employers in February 1990. The Department commissioned further research which was conducted in September and October last year to establish employers' reactions to these changes. They were very favourable but further improvements were identified which were reflected in the literature issued to employers in March 1991.

Included in the 1991 communications package was a revised Employers' Guide to National Insurance (NI) contributions, and a new Quick Guide to NI contributions, Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) and Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP). The new Quick Guide is simpler in style and language and more sympathetic to employers' needs than earlier versions. It was written following close liaison with small employers and payroll administrators.

(iii) The Contributions Agency is conducting a customer market survey, with the help of external consultants. The survey is being carried out to establish the views of the Agency's customers (including small and large employers, and the self-employed) on the service currently provided and to obtain their requirements for improvements or changes to existing services. The survey's findings will help to determine how the quality and range of the Agency's service, and its information and advice systems, could be enhanced.

(iv) The Contributions Agency is currently in the final stages of producing both a Contributors' and Employers' Charter. These will provide a clear statement of the service standard to be provided by the Agency. The present intention is to publish the Charters this summer.

(v) With assistance and funding from the Department, the Institute of Data Processing Management produced a test package, in September 1990, which covered the detailed processing of SSP and SMP. Software producers are now able to test their software against this package and thus ensure the accuracy of their product and advertise it accordingly. Employers can consequently purchase, with confidence, software which will greatly assist them in the administration of SSP and SMP.

(vi) The Statutory Sick Pay Act 1991 introduced a change from 100 per cent. reimbursement of SSP paid to 80 per cent. Provision, in the form of "Small Employers' Relief" (SER) was made in the Act to help certain small employers who have above normal levels of sickness in their workforce. Employers who qualify for SER can revert to 100 per cent. reimbursement of SSP if they are liable to pay SSP to an employee for more than six weeks within a period of incapacity for work. We consulted small employers' representatives on the detail of the SER scheme and also on the drafting of

the explanatory leaflet NI 278—"Statutory Sick Pay —Small Employers' Relief" which was sent to all known employers.

(vii) From April 1991, businesses whose average monthly payments to the Inland Revenue of Pay As You Earn (PAYE) and NI contributions, were less than £400 in total, were given the option of making their payments quarterly rather than monthly. Seven hundred thousand businesses (half of all employers) could benefit from this measure.

(viii) A Purchasing and Supply Manual has been produced and distributed to all parts of the Department, including the Agencies. It contains a section on small firms, stressing the need to give them an opportunity to tender for the Department's business and to pay invoices promptly. We continue to give prominence, on our training courses for purchasing staff, to the need to consider using small firms and give each participant copies of the Department of Employment booklet "Think Big Buy Small" and "Tendering for Government Contracts". We have an entry in the latter document and are to produce our own booklet for suppliers.

We have not designed performance indicators specifically for monitoring achievements in this area but the Department has a system to monitor proposals which impact on business, to ensure the needs of small businesses are taken into account. We attach particular importance to action taken to help small firms and will continue to explore further ways of doing so.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 24 July 1991

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Public Record Office

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the Lord Chancellor's response to Dr. David Starkey's representations on the public opening as a tourist attraction of the Public Record Office in central London, after the move to Kew.

The Attorney-General: My noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor has not yet received any representations from Dr. David Starkey. Dr. Starkey has, however, requested a meeting with the Lord Chancellor and the Lord Chancellor hopes that this can be arranged after the summer recess.

Judges (Pensions)

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Attorney-General what plans the Government have for changes in the pension arrangements for judges.

The Attorney-General: Last December, the Government issued a consultation paper proposing a number of changes to the judicial pension schemes. In the light of the responses to that paper, we have now decided to bring forward legislation at a convenient opportunity to establish a revised, unified pension scheme, which will apply to salaried judicial officers throughout the United Kingdom. My noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor has today written to the Lord Chief Justice with details of the proposed revised scheme and copies of that letter are being sent to all those in England, Wales and Northern Ireland who submitted comments on the consultation paper. A copy is also being placed in the Libraries of both Houses. The Secretary of State for Scotland is writing similarly to the Lord President of the Court of Session, and copies of his letter will be sent to all those in Scotland who commented on the consultation paper.

TRANSPORT

Lead-free Petrol

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals his Department has to stimulate the use of lead-free petrol.

Mr. Chope: Regulations already in force—SI 198 No. 1522—require all spark-ignition cars first manufactured on or after 1 October 1990 to be capable of running on unleaded petrol. On 26 June the EC Council of Ministers adopted an amending directive requiring, among other things, that all spark-ignition cars first used on or after 31 December 1992 must be constructed so that they can run only on unleaded petrol. Regulations introducing the directive into United Kingdom law will be laid later this year. As a fiscal incentive to greater use of unleaded petrol, the Chancellor in his last Budget further increased the duty differential between it and leaded petrol.

A13, Canning Town

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the traffic counts for *(a)* cars and *(b)* lorries on the A13 from Burdett road junction to the Canning Town flyover in each year since 1979.

Mr. Chope: The available estimates are as follows:

Annual average daily flows

	1982	*1988*
All vehicles	36,000	45,000
Cars and taxis	23,000	31,000
Light goods vehicles	3,300	4,600
Heavy goods vehicles[1]	6,600	6,300

[1] Goods vehicles with an unladen weight of 1·5 tonnes or more.

These figures are based on 12-hour counts on a single day and are thus subject to sampling error.

Noise Prevention

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what inquiries he is undertaking into the efficacy of new sound-baffling techniques now used in other EC countries.

Mr. Chope: Three avenues of inquiry are being followed. The Transport and Road Research Laboratory is investigating the acoustic performance of novel noise barriers. Consultants are preparing a design guide for new types of environmental barrier informed by an earlier extensive study of continental noise barriers. Officials from my Department are contributing to the development of a European standard on anti-noise devices including noise barriers.

Taxis (Seat Belts)

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will seek information from other European Community countries on the regulations governing compulsory wearing of seat belts in the rear of taxis.

Mr. Chope: The draft European Community directive on the compulsory use of seat belts in vehicles of less than 3·5 tonnes, is currently under discussion. There is no exemption proposed in that directive in respect of the wearing of car seat belts by the occupants of taxis whether they are purpose built or non-purpose built. It appears, therefore, that all other European Community Countries are content that such regulations should be incorporated within their own domestic law.

Transpennine Road Crossings

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current position on the consultant's report on transpennine road crossings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: We expect the final report soon. We shall make a statement once we have assessed its findings and recommendations.

School Crossing Safety

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research has been carried out by his Department into the relative safety of pelican crossings and school crossing patrols, equipped where necessary with warning signs and amber flashing lights; if he will place copies of the supporting statistics in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Research on the safety of pelican and zebra crossings is underway and a report is expected later this year. No assessment has been made of the relative safety of school crossings but advice on their provision is contained in the Department's advice note TA 52/87.

M11 Link Road

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 3 June, *Official Report*, column 55, whether he has had any further communications with the European Commission about the proposed M11 link road; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: No.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to undertake an environmental impact assessment of the proposed M11 link road; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The Department has already carried out an environmental impact assessment of the link road. The document was presented at the 1983 public inquiry into the need for the scheme and its line.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport into what category the proposed M11 link road falls.

Mr. Chope: The scheme to which the hon. Gentleman refers as the M11 link road is, to give it its full title, the A12 Hackney Wick to M11 link road and falls into the category of an all-purpose trunk road.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what Government funds have been made available to provide replacement housing for all those displaced by the proposed M11 link road; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The Department of Transport has, over the years, purchased some 250 properties at full market value from people wishing to move from the area affected by this road scheme. The firm intention to go ahead with it has been known for a number of years, as have its likely housing implications. The Department of the Environment has taken these into account in making housing investment programme allocations to the housing authority most directly concerned, the London borough of Waltham Forest.

Diesel Pollution

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his latest estimate of the cost of the implementation of European Community draft directive document No. 6701/90 on pollution from diesel engines to *(a)* the Exchequer (i) directly and (ii) channelled via the European institutions and *(b)* industry.

Mr. Chope: It is estimated that there will be no cost to the Exchequer either directly or via European institutions. The draft directive proposes to introduce stricter emission limits in two stages—1992-93 and 1995-96—with the potential for a third in 1999. They will affect diesel-engined trucks and buses over 3·5 tonnes. If the strictest limits for stage II are adopted, and if they result in an overall 4 per cent. fuel penalty, fuel costs in the United Kingdom would rise by £70 million, pre-tax, per year. Increases in capital costs would range, typically, from £500 for a 7·5-tonne truck costing £14,000 to £2,000 for a 38-tonne truck costing £45,000. The overall vehicle fleet replacement cost might rise by £60 million per year. Applying stage I limits would cost considerably less.

The cost of the implied reduction in the sulphur content of diesel fuel is uncertain but should not exceed 5p per gallon or £120 million a year for the 9 million tonnes of diesel consumed in the United Kingdom each year.

Seat Belts

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his latest estimate of the cost of the implementation of European Community draft directive document Nos. 9228/88 and 10333/90 on seat belts to *(a)* the Exchequer (i) directly and (ii) channelled via the European institutions and *(b)* industry.

Mr. Chope: Discussion of this draft directive is continuing in Brussels and its final form has not yet been agreed. As currently drafted the directive would have only minor cost implications for the Exchequer, but there would be some extra costs for those manufacturers of vehicles covered by the directive who do not at present fit seat belts at all anchorage points, but who would need to do so from 1 January 1992.

Ship Ownership and Registration

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the figures for *(a)* the total number of British-owned ships, *(b)* the number of British-registered ships and *(c)* the percentage of British-registered ships to British-owned ships for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. McLoughlin: Statistics of British-owned ships are not available before 1986.

British[1] owned and British[1] registered ships[2]: 1986-91

Year[3]	*British owned*	*British registered*	*Percentage of British registered to British owned ships*
1986	2,215	2,121	95·8
1987	2,321	2,038	87·8
1988	2,303	2,010	87·3
1989	2,187	1,936	88·5
1990	2,114	1,863	88·1

[1] United Kingdom mainland—including Northern Ireland but excluding the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands.
[2]. Comprises vessels of 100 gross registered tons and above, including non-trading vessels.
[3] As at 31 December.

Inland Waterways Freight

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many applications have been made for grants under section 36 of the Transport Act 1981; how many of these applications have been approved; what was the total budget available for the grants; and what was the total amount spent on these grants for each year from 1981.

Mr. Freeman: The Government have awarded seven inland waterways freight facilities grants since 1981. There have also been a number of enquiries from industry which have not led to grant applications. There is no separate budget for section 36 grants: these and the grants for rail freight facilities available under section 8 of the Railways Act 1974 share a common budget, which is set at £3·8 million for 1991-92. The total number of section 36 grants awards is as follows:

	Number of grants	*Value of award (£)*
1983	1	369,340
1984	2	920,575
1985	1	26,950
1986	1	63,494
1990	1	20,000
1991	1	402,832
Total	7	1,803,831

Network SouthEast

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has received British Rail's final response to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on Network SouthEast.

Mr. Freeman: I have today placed a copy of British Rail's response in the Library of the House. In making its final response to the MMC report, BR has accepted all of the commission's 54 recommendations and has already fully implemented 24 of them. British Rail has set out the action it is taking, or intends to take, to achieve the remaining 30 recommendations. I welcome the steps BR has already taken in implementing these recommendations and will continue to monitor progress.

Vehicle Inspectorate

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the vehicle inspectorate executive agency annual report for 1990-91 will be published.

Mr. Chope: The annual report has been published today. Copies are being placed in the House Library.

Orange Badges

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he is yet in a position to bring forward proposals for revising the orange badge scheme.

Mr. Chope: As I have explained in reply to previous questions, my aim has been to reach a better consensus among user groups before proceeding with any changes to the scheme. Following a recent meeting with representative organisations, that position has now been reached.

I therefore propose to proceed with a package of measures, based largely on the Department's proposals circulated for comment last year. The main changes will be to introduce the new passport-style badge which, together with the new offence provision in the Road Traffic Bill, will be a major step in tackling abuse; automatic entitlement will be extended to those in receipt of mobility allowance and war pensioners' mobility supplement; eligibility will be extended to people with very severe upper limb disabilities who regularly drive a vehicle; and there will be an increase from two hours to three hours in the limit on yellow line waiting.

I am not proposing any change to the discretionary eligibility criterion, as was originally proposed, but I shall be writing to the local authorities, who operate the scheme, to request that they give greater emphasis to ensure that badges are issued only to those who are entitled to receive them.

I intend to bring forward amending regulations as soon as possible in the autumn.

Traffic Examiners

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any information on the average numbers of hours per week spent by traffic examiners at *(a)* weighbridges, *(b)* at the roadside undertaking checks and *(c)* other administrative duties; and if he is satisfied with the extent of enforcement activity by traffic examiners.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 22 July 1991]:* Information is not collected at present in this particular format. It could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

Traffic examiners have increased their enforcement activity significantly in the past five years and the merger with the vehicle inspectorate should build on this and enable the improvement to be taken forward.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many traffic examiners were in post in 1990-91; and what is the proposed number of posts for 1991-92.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 22 July 1991]:* The average number of traffic examiners in post in 1990-91 was 216. The number currently in post is 201; recruitment is in hand to increase this is to a level of around 220 to meet current activity demands.

Overloading

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from *(a)* trading standards officers and *(b)* the Association of Chief Police Officers regarding the changing of prosecution criteria for overloading offences.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 22 July 1991]:* We have consulted widely among enforcement bodies about the revised guidelines which the Department's traffic examiners will apply in dealing with overloaded lorries. Trading standards officers and the police have indicated that they wish to retain full discretion in deciding when to prosecute for overloading, according to the circumstances detected and this is recognised in the Department's guidelines.

Steam-driven Vehicles

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many steam-driven vehicles are registered for vehicle tax at the showmen's rate; if he will take steps to ensure that the right to draw three trailers under this arrangement is maintained; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 23 July 1991]:* Information on the number of steam-driven vehicles registered at the showman's rate is not readily available.

Provided that the steam-driven vehicle is a locomotive, as defined in the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use)

Regulations 1986, it may tow up to three trailers or four if one is used solely for the carriage of water, provided none of the trailers exceeds 7 m in length. I have no plans to change this arrangement.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Potholes

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many potholes there are at Woodford Green in the borough of Castlereagh; and what proposals he has for their elimination.

Mr. Needham: There are no potholes in Woodford Green. Parts of the road surface are showing signs of wear, but these do not present a hazard to traffic. The road will continue to be monitored and remedial action taken if required.

Pollution Control

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the cases where fines have been imposed under the Pollution Control and Local Government (NI) Order 1978 (S.I., 1978, No. 1049) (Northern Ireland No. 19) article 8, subsection 3, since the order was introduced; and if he will make a statement as to whether the Government have any plans to increase the maximum fine of £400 for contravention of the conditions under which a disposal licence has been granted.

Mr. Needham: Records of prosecutions by district councils for contravention of a condition of a disposal licence are not held centrally. However, the information required will be sought from the councils and I shall write to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible. In fact, the current maximum fine under article 8(3) is £2,000. Consideration is being given to introducing legislation on the lines of part II of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 which would provide for a maximum penalty of £20,000 or a term of imprisonment or both.

Rural Housing

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what level of additional financial resources he will allocate to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in order to undertake all the requirements in relation to addressing rural unfitness as outlined in the policy statement entitled "The Way Ahead".

Mr. Needham: Careful consideration will be given to any proposals for additional funding which may arise from this important initiative. However, it is, in the first instance, a matter for the Housing Executive to consider the extent of any additional resources it requires.

Education

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) whether the Department of Education will undertake an investigation of the professional, managerial and curricula viability of alternative strategies to the closure of small rural and urban schools;

(2) whether the Department of Education will conduct a full review of the educational needs of rural communities, in consultation with other departments, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the town and country planning service.

Dr. Mawhinney: These issues are matters which I understand are presently the subject of consideration by Education Forum and have been included in a draft policy statement on rural schools which it has prepared. I also understand that Education Forum has referred the draft statement to its constituent organisations for consideration and may be seeking a meeting with my right hon. and noble Friend the Paymaster General to discuss the issues in due course.

The Department of Education already liaises with the planning service and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive when determining the educational needs of any area.

Blue-ear Pig Disease

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what consultations he has had with the Government of the Irish Republic regarding blue-ear pig disease; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what steps he has taken to prevent the transfer of blue-ear pig disease in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Following confirmation of blue-ear pig disease in Great Britain the Department of Agriculture issued immediate guidance to farmers and others on precautions to be taken to prevent the introduction of the disease into Northern Ireland. The thrust of the advice is that only essential visitors, vehicles and equipment should be allowed into pig units and that anyone intending to import pigs from Great Britain should seek veterinary guidance before so doing. The full guidance is contained in a press release of 14 June 1991, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

The Department of Agriculture has previously advised veterinary practitioners of the nature of the disease and its clinical signs and pathology.

Senior veterinary and other officials of the Department of Agriculture have met with their opposite numbers from the Department of Agriculture and Food in Dublin to discuss the implications of the spread of the disease and determine a common approach, with European Community guidance, in order to minimise the potential introduction of the disease to the island of Ireland.

Cruden Houses

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many Cruden houses there are in Northern Ireland; how many have been built in the last 30 years; and if he will give details of where these houses were built and when.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 23 July 1991]:* None.

Waste Incinerator

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what formal and informal discussions have taken place between Government Departments, public agencies in Northern Ireland and any Government Departments and public agencies in the Republic of Ireland regarding a possible national waste incinerator.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 17 July 1991]:* I refer the hon. Gentleman to the replies given to his questions on 29 January 1991, at column *471* and 12 February 1991, at column *413*.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether any routes have now been identified for the possible transportation of toxic waste to the Du Pont site at Maydown.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 17 July 1991]:* There has been no change in the position since the reply given to the hon. Gentleman's question on 19 February 1991, at column *95*.

Youth Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list *(a)* the number of youth training places in his Department and the Northern Ireland Departments and *(b)* the number of places occupied in May for each of the years 1989, 1990 and the current year.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 18 July 1991]:* The information is as follows:

	Total places	*Places occupied*		
		May 1989	*May 1990*	*May 1991*
Department of Finance and Personnel	8	7	3	3
Department of Agriculture	20	12	9	7
Department of Economic Development	25	1	6	14
Department of Education	4	1	2	2
Department of Health and Social Services	25	13	12	13
Department of the Environment	20	12	4	11
Totals	102	56	36	50

There are no specifically designated youth training places in the Northern Ireland Office, either currently or for earlier years.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* his policies and *(b)* his Department and the Northern Ireland departments in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; and if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 22 July 1991]:* The Government continue to place a high priority on helping small businesses through improvements to the business climate, through deregulation and other measures, and through specific programmes of support and assistance.

Government policy in relation to small businesses in Northern Ireland is administered by the Local Enterprise Development Unit which is funded by the Department of Economic Development. The table sets out a number of indicators comparing the results of LEDU's performance in 1989-90 and 1990-91.

	1989-90	*1990-91*
Jobs promoted	5,944	6,986
Cost per job (£)	4,344	4,175
LEDU percentage contribution to project costs	31	28
Number of offers made	1,122	1,355
Grant commitments (£ million)	24·412	25·680

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list those schools in which a vote has taken place on grant-maintained status showing the constituency in which each school is situated.

Mr. Fallon: The information requested by my hon. Friend is as follows.

School	*Where situated*
Skegness Grammar School	Lindsey East
St. James' CE School Bolton	Bolton South East
Hendon School	Hendon South
The GS for Girls Wilmington	Dartford
Queen Elizabeth's GM Grammar School	Lindsey East
Baverstock Grant-Maintained School	Hall Green
The Kings School Grantham	Grantham
Old Swinford Hospital	Halesowen and Stourbridge
Heckmondwike Grammar School	Batley and Spen
Bankfield High School	Halton
Netherthorpe School	Derbyshire North East
Ribston Hall High School	Gloucester
Claremont High School	Brent North
Southfield School For Girls	Kettering
Guildford County School	Guildford
Rickmansworth School	Hertfordshire South West
Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School	Kensington
Watford Boys Grammar School	Hertfordshire South West
Stratford School	Newham North West
Francis Bacon School	St. Albans
Wilmington Grammar School For Boys	Dartford
North Halifax High School	Halifax
Crossley Heath School	Halifax
Wymondham College	South Norfolk
Pate's Grammar School	Cheltenham
Audenshaw High School	Gorton
Wilsons School	Carshalton and Wallington
Queensbury School	Bedfordshire South West
London Oratory School	Fulham

School	Where situated
Queen Elizabeth's GM School For Boys	Chipping Barnet
Colyton Grammar School	Honiton
Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School	Darwen and Rossendale
Castle Hall Grant-Maintained School	Dewsbury
Small Heath School	Small Heath
St. Francis Xavier's College	Garsten
London Nautical School	Southwark and Bermondsey
Beechen Cliff School	Bath
Lancaster Royal Grammar School	Lancaster
Longfield High School	Rutland and Melton
Southlands School	Reading East
Marling School	Stroud
Stroud High School	Stroud
Bishopshalt School	Uxbridge
Wolverhampton High School For Girls	Wolverhampton South West
Adams' Grammar School	Shropshire North
Bridgewater Hall School	Milton Keynes
Brindley Hall School	Milton Keynes
Handsworth Grammar School For Boys	Birmingham, Ladywood
Carre's Grammar School	Grantham
Bournemouth Grammar School	Bournemouth East
The Maplesden Noakes School	Gravesham
Ecclesbourne School	West Derbyshire
The Cornwallis School	Maidstone
St. George's School	Grantham
Reading School	Reading East
Chalvedon School	Basildon
Bullers Wood School For Girls	Chislehurst
Lancaster Girls Grammar School	Lancaster
King Edward VI Grammar School	East Lindsey
Hardley Secondary School	Romsey and Waterside
Kingsley Park Middle School	Northampton North
Manor High School	Harborough
Newbold Grange High School	Rugby and Kenilworth
Oldfield School	Bath
Bingley Grammar School	Shipley
Westcliff High School for Boys	Southend West
Woodroffe School	Dorset West
St. Bartholomew's School	Newbury
St. George's CE School, Gravesend	Northfleet and Gravesend
Sexey's School	Somerton and Frome
Nonsuch High School for Girls	Sutton and Cheam
St. Augustine RC School	Westbury
Beaconsfield High School	Beaconsfield
Great Barr School	Perry Barr
Burgate School	New Forest
Kingswood School	Corby
Caistor School	Gainsborough and Horncastle
Thamesview School	Gravesham/Gravesend
Queensmead School	Ruislip and Northwood
Haydon School	Ruislip and Northwood
Homewood School	Ashford
Dartford Grammar School	Dartford
Kirkbie Kendal School	Westmorland and Lonsdale
Clitheroe Royal Grammar School	Ribble Valley
Moseley Park School	Wolverhampton South East
Newton CE School	Ribble Valley
Vyners School	Uxbridge
Bourne Primary School	Stamford and Spalding
Highams Park School	Chingford
Southlands Comprehensive School	Folkestone—Hythe
St. Helen's Primary School Bluntisham	Huntingdon
Langley Park Boys School	Beckenham
Coopers School, Chislehurst	Chislehurst
Collingwood School, Camberley	Surrey North West
Raines Foundation School	Bethnal Green and Stepney

School	Where situated
Graveney School	Tooting
Moulton Primary School	Daventry
St. John the Baptist School, Woking	Woking
Watford Girls' Grammar School	Hertfordshire South West
Blessed Hugh More RC Secondary School	Grantham
Southpark High School	Lincoln
The Longlands School	Halesowen and Stourbridge
Simon Digby Comprehensive School	Solihull
Foster's Grammar School for Boys	West Dorset
Lord Digby's Grammar School for Girls	West Dorset
Highwood School	Stroud
Sir James Altham School	Hertfordshire
Castlemount School	Dover
Ramsden School for Girls	Orpington
Kettering Boy's School	Kettering
Hindley Park High School	Wigan
Swanscombe High School	Dartford
Walsingham School	Battersea
Harwood School	Fulham
Foster's Boys Grammar School	West Dorset
Lord Digby's Girls Grammar School	West Dorset
Cliffe Woods Middle School, Rochester	Medway
Edenbridge Middle School	Sevenoaks
Queen Elizabeth School	Penrith and the Border
Aylsford School	Tunbridge and Malling
Parmiters School	South-West Hertfordshire
The Down Primary School Bridgnorth	Ludlow
Kettleshulme CE Primary School	Macclesfield
Ellerdine Primary School	The Wrekin
Crossgates Primary School	Rochdale
Drayton Manor High School	Ealing North
Copland Community School, Wembley	Brent East
Greenway Comprehensive School	Uxbridge
Wold Newton Primary School	Bridlington
William Gladstone School	Brent East
Magdalen CE/Meth Primary School	East Linsey
St. Mary's R.C. Primary School	North Hereford
Appledore CE Primary School, Ashford	Ashford
St. Aidan's School, Carlisle	Carlisle
Northolt High School	Harrow West
Mellow Lane School	Hayes and Harlington
Townmead School	Hayes and Harlington
Arley Primary School, Northwich	Tatton
Sheppey School	Faversham
Arnewood School	New Forest
Budmouth School	West Dorset
Kelsey Park School	Beckenham
Oakwood Park Grammar School	Maidstone
The Plume School	Colchester and Maldon
Ravens Wood School	Ravensbourne
Wood End First School	Harrow West
Wood End Middle School	Harrow West
Northwood School	Ruislip and Northwood
Senacre High School	Maidstone
Send C of E First School	Esher
Manor County First School Byfleet	Woking
The Crypt School, Gloucester	Stroud
de Stafford School, Caterham	East Surrey
Greenford High School	Ealing North
Ellen Wilkinson School	Acton

School	Where situated
Dartford Grammar School for Girls	Dartford
Desborough Comprehensive School	Windsor and Maidenhead
Yarborough High School	Lincoln
Gamlingay Village College (Middle School)	Mid Bedfordshire
Riddlesdown High School	Croydon South
Exhall School	Stratford-on-Avon
Glyn School, Epsom	Epsom and Ewell
Redgate Middle School, Hunstanton	North West Norfolk
Snodland CE Primary School	Tunbridge and Malling
King John Middle School	Corby
Hayes School	Ravensbourne
Wrotham School	Tunbridge and Malling
Simon Langton Boys' Grammar School	Canterbury
The Park School, Rayleigh	Rochford
Gordon's School	Woking
Hartshill School	North Warwickshire
Heathside Secondary School	Chertsey and Walton
Barnhill Comprehensive School	Hayes and Harlington
Heacham Middle School	Norfolk North West
Walford High School	Ealing—North
Brentside High School	Ealing—Southall
Ringwood Comprehensive School	New Forest
Cliffe Woods Primary School Rochester	Medway
Hayes Manor School	Hayes and Harlington
Turnham Junior School	Deptford
Burntwood School for Girls	Tooting
Elmbridge School	Brentwood and Ongar
Lincoln Christ's Hospital School	Lincoln
Newborough Primary School	Peterborough
Ravensdale Middle School	Mansfield
Hawkedale First School	Spellthorne
Oldborough Manor High, Maidstone	Maidstone
Loddon Middle School	South Norfolk
Hatchford Junior and Infant School	Meriden
The Skinner's School, Tunbridge Wells	Tunbridge Wells
Woolley CE First School	Wakefield
Stoneleigh First School	Epsom and Ewell
The Admiral's Middle School	South West Norfolk
South Holmwood CE First School	Mole Valley
Brookmead First and Middle School	South West Bedfordshire
Christ Church CE JMI School Chorleywood	South West Hertfordshire
Downham Market High School	South West Norfolk
Eden School	Carlisle
Norwich Road First School	South West Norfolk
Wortley CE J and I School	Barnsley West and Penistone
Cranbrook School	Tunbridge Wells
Belmont Primary School	South Derbyshire
North Rauceby School	Grantham
William Alvey Junior School, Sleaford	Grantham
Gresham Primary School	North Norfolk
Salterlee J and I School	Halifax
The Philip Morant School	Colchester South and Maldon
Borrow Wood Junior School	Derby North
Boyton County Primary School	North Cornwall
Deanefield School, Reading	Reading West
Newstead Wood School	Orpington
Langley Grammar School, Slough	Slough
Rainham Mark Grammar School	Gillingham
Elmwood County Primary School	Rochford

School	Where situated
Crofton Junior School, Orpington	Orpington
Parkstone Grammar School, Poole	South Dorset
La Retraite School	Streatham
Epsom and Ewell High School	Epsom and Ewell
John Fisher School, Purley	Croydon South
Ethelburga JMI School	Battersea
Gartree School	East Linsey
Hassall Green Methodist Primary School	Crewe and Nantwich
Castle Hills School, Gainsborough	Gainsborough and Horncastle
Dereham Church First School	Mid Norfolk
Myton School, Warwick	Warwick and Leamington
Sale Grammar School for Boys	Altrincham and Sale
Chesterfield School	Chesterfield
Droylsden County High School	Ashton-Under-Lyne
Hadham Hall School	Hertford and Stourtford
Weald of Kent Grammar School	Tunbridge and Malling
Ruffwood School	Knowsley North
Eckington School	North East Derbyshire
St. Joseph's RC High School	Halton
Watford Girls Grammar School	Watford
Wade Deacon County School	Halton
Ravensbourne School for Girls	Chislehurst
Millais School	Horsham
Queen Elizabeth's Senior High School	Heywood and Middleton
Chichele School	Wellingborough
Siddal Moor High School	Heywood and Middleton
Gaynes School	Upminster
St. Helena School	Chesterfield
St. Gregory's RC High School	Warrington South
Sir Thomas Rich's School	North Avon
Preston Manor High School	Brent North
Armthorpe Comprehensive School	Doncaster Central
The Grammar School for Boys Wilmington	Dartford
Failsworth Upper School	Oldham
Ailwyn Community School	Huntingdon
Ripon Grammar School	Skipton and Ripon
Woodford County High	Woodford and Wanstead
Blackfield Middle School	Romsey and Waterside
Dearneside Comprehensive School	Barnsley East
Blackpool 6th Form College	Blackpool North
Hoo St. Werburgh Middle School	Medway
Kings School	Winchester
Grange School	Halesowen and Stourbridge
Alexandra High School	West Bromwich West
Manor High School, Oadby	Harborough
Morecambe High School	Morecambe and Lunesdale
Banbury School	Banbury
Blackthorn Middle School	Northampton North
Chestnut Grove School	Battersea
King Edward VI School	Lindsey East
Whickham School	Blaydon
St. Theresa's RC Secondary Girls School	Lewisham East
Ridgeway School	Swindon
Featherstone High School	Southall
Villiers High School	Southall
Weaverham High School	Tatton
Boothroyd Junior School	Batley and Spen
John Henry Newman School	Stevenage
King James 1st Comprehensive School	Bishop Auckland
South Farnborough County Infants	Aldershot
Waltham Toll Bar	Brigg and Cleethorpes
Silverdale School	Sheffield Central
St. Thomas More RC High School, Stoke	Stoke on Trent South
Booth Lower School	Northampton North

School	Where situated
High Oakham Middle School	Mansfield
St. Paul's CE Primary School	Chipping Barnet
St. Peter's Primary School Tunbridge Wells	Tunbridge Wells
Sir Wilfred Martineau School	Birmingham, Hodge Hill
Warmbrook Junior School	High Peak
Tudor Grange School	Solihull
Windmill Ridge School	Mansfield
Nower Hill High School	Harrow West
Silverhill Primary School	Derby South
Neroche Primary School Ilminster	Yeovil

Parallel Processor Research

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he proposes to make an additional grant to the Science and Engineering Research Council in this and succeeding years to cover its contribution to the new parallel processor research programme.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I understand that the SERC has made provision for a contribution to this high power computing programme to be met from its existing grant in aid for 1991-92 and provision continues in its forward planning for 1992-93 and 1993-94.

My right hon. and learned Friend will be announcing the sums available by way of grant in aid for the latter two years at the appropriate time, but it will be for the SERC to decide the detailed allocation of the grant available.

Schools (Opting Out)

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, how many schools have chosen to opt out of local authority control.

Mr. Eggar: A total of 315 schools have held or are committed to holding ballots amongst parents on whether to apply for grant-maintained status. Of those who have already voted, 229 have voted in favour of applying for grant-maintained status.

"Polytechnics in Tomorrow's Britain"

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to "Polytechnics in Tomorrow's Britain" to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 25 November to Friday 29 November 1991.

Education Expenditure

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the amount spent per child in each of the local education authorities in England in the last year and in 1979; and what proportion came from central Government and from local government.

Mr. Fallon: The table shows school-based expenditure per pupil in each local education authority for 1979-80 and for 1988-89, the latest year for which information is available.

Spending on education is financed by a number of sources, including rates and the community charge, Government revenue support grant and specific grants, and fees and charges for services. Rates, community charge and revenue support grant are made available to fund all of the local authority's services, and are not hypothecated between individual services. It is not therefore possible to identify how much of the spending per pupil is financed centrally or locally.

Net Institutional Expenditure[1] Per Pupil, Cash

	1979-80		1988-89	
	Nursery and Primary Schools £	Secondary Schools £	Nursery and Primary Schools £	Secondary Schools £
Barking	495	715	1,255	1,970
Barnet	475	690	1,250	1,820
Bexley	425	630	1,100	1,685
Brent	595	785	1,375	2,305
Bromley	435	665	1,165	1,770
Croydon	455	670	1,180	2,040
Ealing	555	720	1,385	2,145
Enfield	425	605	1,110	1,715
Haringey	605	760	n/a	n/a
Harrow	465	745	1,115	1,740
Havering	435	675	1,095	1,860
Hillingdon	465	670	1,195	1,870
Hounslow	500	685	1,270	1,895
Kingston-Upon-Thames	455	635	1,175	1,900
Merton	520	660	1,210	1,660
Newham	580	740	1,360	2,140
Redbridge	440	680	1,070	1,735
Richmond-Upon-Thames	485	635	1,180	1,640
Sutton	415	605	1,090	1,630
Waltham Forest	495	785	1,250	2,435
ILEA	720	945	1,605	2,505
Birmingham	415	615	1,040	1,640
Coventry	440	630	1,065	1,940
Dudley	365	545	1,020	1,840
Sandwell	440	630	1,175	1,885
Solihull	385	570	1,040	1,650

	1979-80		1988-89	
	Nursery and Primary Schools £	Secondary Schools £	Nursery and Primary Schools £	Secondary Schools £
Walsall	420	600	1,200	1,885
Wolverhampton	470	635	1,190	1,745
Knowsley	415	640	1,165	1,990
Liverpool	475	675	1,150	1,905
St. Helens	385	605	1,050	1,710
Sefton	410	590	1,015	1,600
Wirral	400	580	1,070	1,755
Bolton	385	575	1,015	1,635
Bury	415	595	1,080	1,730
Manchester	520	775	n/a	n/a
Oldham	405	575	1,125	1,590
Rochdale	425	650	990	1,700
Salford	410	630	1,085	1,860
Stockport	380	560	1,035	1,730
Tameside	410	580	1,115	1,660
Trafford	400	550	1,050	1,710
Wigan	395	610	1,025	1,845
Barnsley	455	620	1,065	1,645
Doncaster	460	630	1,175	1,655
Rotherham	395	570	1,125	1,635
Sheffield	465	635	1,230	1,810
Bradford	460	540	1,160	1,605
Calderdale	415	575	1,145	1,665
Kirklees	395	545	1,110	1,620
Leeds	480	490	1,155	1,545
Wakefield	425	540	n/a	n/a
Gateshead	465	600	1,180	1,770
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	525	695	1,225	1,870
North Tyneside	465	610	1,145	1,780
South Tyneside	510	650	1,150	1,825
Sunderland	445	620	1,005	1,665
Avon	425	580	1,050	1,630
Bedfordshire	475	610	1,115	1,635
Berkshire	410	595	1,030	1,570
Buckinghamshire	415	630	1,065	1,715
Cambridgeshire	410	600	1,005	1,480
Cheshire	410	605	960	1,545
Cleveland	430	610	1,075	1,770
Cornwall	375	565	1,010	1,525
Cumbria	410	590	1,140	1,685
Derbyshire	395	565	1,080	1,755
Devon	390	545	975	1,535
Dorset	405	560	1,020	1,485
Durham	450	575	1,130	1,575
East Sussex	415	605	1,025	1,565
Essex	390	585	1,050	1,635
Gloucestershire	405	565	1,010	1,545
Hampshire	380	565	1,040	1,580
Hereford and Worcester	385	565	1,000	1,440
Hertfordshire	440	650	1,130	1,745
Humberside	425	575	1,155	1,690
Isle of Wight	425	550	1,055	1,495
Kent	385	570	935	1,475
Lancashire	375	580	985	1,620
Leicestershire	400	590	1,085	1,770
Lincolnshire	385	580	1,005	1,475
Norfolk	410	575	1,070	1,585
North Yorkshire	425	595	1,030	1,595
Northamptonshire	380	570	1,005	1,545
Northumberland	425	580	1,090	1,630
Nottinghamshire	390	585	1,115	1,745
Oxfordshire	430	590	1,125	1,665
Salop	375	580	1,075	1,695
Somerset	370	530	1,025	1,570
Staffordshire	435	600	1,050	1,610
Suffolk	420	525	1,020	1,485
Surrey	415	620	1,050	1,635
Warwickshire	385	570	1,025	1,635
West Sussex	385	555	1,005	1,530
Wiltshire	395	565	1,045	1,555

[1] Excluding costs of school meals, home to school transport, central administration and financing costs of capital expenditure.
n/a denotes that an expenditure return has not been received from the LEA.

Teachers

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his estimate of the total number of teachers employed on a permanent basis in maintained schools in England in 1990-91 with comparable figures for each of the past 12 years.

Mr. Fallon: Figures for teachers employed on a permanent basis cannot be separately identified. The table gives the total number of teachers—full-time equivalents—employed for one month and more in local education authority maintained and grant-maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools 1979-91.

Year (January)	*Numbers of Teachers (000's)*
1991	[1]382·4
1990	385·7
1989	385·4
1988	389·5
1987	392·6
1986	392·1
1985	395·6
1984	401·8
1983	406·1
1982	412·1
1981	421·4
1980	430·3
1979	433·3

[1] Provisional
Source: Form 618G

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table giving the estimated total number of teachers employed by each of the inner London boroughs, with an aggregate total, for the latest available date, and his estimate of the pupil:teacher ratio, and average class size for primary and secondary schools in each borough, with comparable figures for the former Inner London education authority for each of the preceding five years.

Mr. Eggar: The latest available information is for January 1990. The only information at that date for the inner London boroughs relates to teachers and classes within schools. The table shows the latest available information.

Average class sizes, pupil : teacher ratios in maintained schools in inner London and teachers employed by the Inner London Education Authority 1985 to 1990

	Nursery, primary and secondary		*Primary*[1]		*Secondary*	
	Teachers employed by ILEA (FTEs)	*Overall PTR*[2]	*within school PTR*[3]	*average class size*[4]	*within school PTR*	*average class size*
1990						
City	n.a.	n.a.	17·40	26·0	—	—
Camden	n.a.	n.a.	19·20	24·4	14·90	20·7
Greenwich	n.a.	n.a.	19·70	24·9	15·80	22·2
Hackney	n.a.	n.a.	18·30	23·33	14·15	21·5
Hammersmith and Fulham	n.a.	n.a.	18·30	23·2	14·30	19·5
Islington	n.a.	n.a.	18·50	24·1	16·45	22·1
Kensington and Chelsea	n.a.	n.a.	18·50	24·2	13·65	18·4
Lambeth	n.a.	n.a.	19·15	24·2	14·20	20·7
Lewisham	n.a.	n.a.	19·60	24·9	14·70	19·9
Southwark	n.a.	n.a.	19·95	24·5	15·60	22·6
Tower Hamlets	n.a.	n.a.	18·10	25·0	14·05	21·2
Wandsworth	n.a.	n.a.	17·95	22·5	14·35	19·5
Westminster	n.a.	n.a.	17·25	23·6	14·20	20·7
ILEA						
1990	18,524·9	14·65	18·80	24·1	14·75	20·8
1989	18,295·4	14·70	18·30	23·5	14·40	20·2
1988	20,020·0	13·50	17·60	22·3	13·10	19·0
1987	20,492·1	13·30	17·15	22·1	12·60	18·4
1986	20,569·1	13·40	17·15	21·8	12·80	18·6
1985	20,394·6	13·75	17·15	20·6	13·05	18·4

[1] Excluding nursery.
[2] Based on all teachers employed by ILEA.
[3] Based on qualified teachers only in schools.
[4] Classes with one teacher.

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what expenditure on city technology colleges has been planned for the years 1991-92 to 1994-95; and how much in each year is committed to *(a)* running costs and *(b)* capital costs, or remains uncommitted.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In financial year 1991-92 the planned expenditure on city technology colleges is £50·62 million. Of this, £23·93 million is for capital costs and £26·69 million for running costs.

The apportionment between capital and running costs in future years has yet to be determined. The planning figures are as follows:

	£ million
1992-93	47·53
1993-94	48·65
1994-95	49·86

Class Sizes

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table giving his estimate of *(a)* pupil:teacher ratio and *(b)* average class sizes for (i) primary and (ii) secondary schools in England, for 1990-91 and each of the past 12 years.

Mr. Fallon: Figures are given in the table. The "within school" pupil:teacher ratios and average class sizes are not yet available for 1991. The overall PTR for 1991 is provisional.

Average class sizes and pupil:teacher ratios in local authority maintained, and grant-maintained, schools in England 1979 to 1991 (January)

	Primary[1]		Secondary		Nursery, primary secondary
	PTR[2]	class size[4]	PTR	class size	PTR[3]
1979	23·10	25·9	16·75	21·0	18·95
1980	22·70	25·4	16·65	20·9	18·70
1981	22·60	25·2	16·60	20·8	18·55
1982	22·50	25·1	16·65	20·7	18·45
1983	22·30	24·8	16·50	20·6	18·15
1984	22·15	24·7	16·25	20·4	17·90
1985	22·20	24·9	16·15	20·4	17·75
1986	22·10	25·5	15·95	20·3	17·55
1987	21·90	25·4	15·65	20·2	17·30
1988	22·00	25·4	15·40	19·9	17·00
1989	21·95	25·7	15·30	19·9	17·00
1990	22·00	25·9	15·25	20·0	16·95
1991	..	..	..	..	[5]17·25

[1]Excluding nursery.
[2]Based on qualified teachers only in schools.
[3]Based on all teachers employed by LEAs.
[4]Classes with one teacher.
[5]Provisional.

Assisted Places Schemes

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the inspections of schools which form part of the assisted places scheme carried out in 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Fallon: The inspection of independent schools by Her Majesty's inspectorate forms part of a planned programme under which all such schools are looked at over a period of about seven years. In the case of schools in the assisted places scheme, Her Majesty's inspectorate is also consulted prior to their admission into the scheme. Participating schools have to satisfy stringent criteria for admission and monitoring of their academic achievements is carried out on a regular basis.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list by each individual school which forms part of the assisted places scheme examination results by subject at GCSE and at A-level.

Mr. Fallon: Examination results by main subject at individual schools are not immediately available, but the last annual survey of assisted places schools' GCSE and A-level examination results for the academic year 1989-90, shows that, for that year, 90 per cent. of GCSE entries by assisted pupils resulted in grades A to C, with 45 per cent. achieving grade A and 33 per cent. achieving grade B. Ninety per cent. of A-level entries resulted in grades A to E, with nearly 29 per cent. achieving grade A and 25 per cent. achieving grade B.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list those schools which have been refused inclusion in the assisted places scheme.

Mr. Fallon: Schools are selected for the assisted places scheme not only on the basis of a sound academic standard but also with regard to geographical location and the desirability of securing an equitable distribution of places between girls and boys.

The table lists those schools that have, as yet, not been successful in gaining admission into the assisted places scheme for any of the above reasons.

Assisted places scheme: schools which have applied for membership but which have been unsuccessful

Abbotsholme, Uttoxeter
Bedstone College, Bucknell
Bentham, Lancaster
Birkdale, Sheffield
Box Hill, Dorking
Claremont Fan Court, Surrey
Clayesmore, Dorset
Combe Bank, Sevenoaks
Convent of the Holy Child Jesus, Birmingham
Convent of Our Lady of Providence, Hampshire
Convent of Our Lady, St. Leonards-on-Sea
Croft House, Dorset
Culcheth Hall, Atrincham
Elmslie Girls, Fylde, Lancashire
Fernhill Manor, New Milton
Fulneck Boys, Pudsey
Halliford, Surrey
Heathfield School, Pinner
Hollygirt, Nottingham
Holy Trinity Convent, Bromley
Huyton College, Liverpool
Kelly College, Tavistock
Kent College, Pembury
Kings, Gloucester
Lubavitch House, London N16
Leicester High
Menorah Grammar, London NW11
Moira House, Eastbourne
The Mount, London NW7
Notre Dame Senior, Cobham
Our Lady's Convent Senior, Abingdon
Oswestry School
Pierrepont, Farnham
Presentation College, Reading
Princethorpe College, Rugby
Purcell (member of the Music and Ballet Scheme)
Reading Blue Coat School
Rickmansworth Masonic, Hertfordshire
Rosemead, Littlehampton
Royal Russell School, Croydon
Royal Wolverhampton Grammar School
St. Anne's, Windermere
St. Brandons, Clevedon
St. Columba's College, St. Albans
St. Edmunds, Canterbury
St. Edwards, Cheltenham
St. Francis College, Letchworth
St. George's, Ascot
St. Hilda's, Whitby
St. Martin's Solihull
St. Mary's Convent, Folkestone
St. Mary's Convent, Worcester
St. Mary's, Shaftesbury
St. Michael's, Oxted
St. Nicholas, Fleet
St. Teresa's Convent, Dorking
St. Ursula's High, Bristol
Sacred Heart, Tunbridge Wells
Scaristck Hall, Lancashire
Shandy Stage School
Shebbear College, Devon
Stella Maris Convent, Bideford
Stonar School
Stratford House, Bromley

Tattenhall School, Wolverhampton
Upper Tooting High
Wentworth Milton Mount
Westonbirt, Tetbury
Westwood House, Peterborough

Running total 69 schools.

Assisted places scheme—schools which have expressed an interest in joining the scheme but who have not yet been invited to apply for membership

Micklefield School, Seaford, Sussex
Shaw House School, Heaton, Bradford
St. Joseph's School, Lincoln
The Royal Naval School, Surrey
Mount St. Mary's Convent School, Exeter
Ockbrook School, Derby
St. Mary's School, Buckinghamshire
Sidcot School, Avon
Highclaire School, Sutton Coldfield
Edgbaston High School, Birmingham
Northwood College, Middlesex
St. Clair's, Oxford
Bremond College, Coventry
St. James' Independent School for Boys, London SW1
The Dixie Girls School, Leicestershire
Park School for Girls, Ilford
Worth School, Crawley, Sussex
Shiplake College, Henley-on-Thames
Gads Hill School, Kent
Dunottar, Reigate, Surrey
St. Elphin's School, Matlock, Derbyshire
Padworth College
St. Dominic's Priory
Moorhouse School
The Abbey School/St. Augustine's College
New Hall School
Hallfield School
The School of St. Clare, Penzance
St. Dominic's School
St. John's School, Billericay
Redroofs Theatre School
St. Mary's Convent School, Worcester
Immanuel College, Hertfordshire
St. Edmunds School, Kent
Raphael School, Essex
The Grammar School, Hull
Kingswood College (telephone inquiry)
Convent of the Sacred Heart School
Our Ladies Convent High School (telephone inquiry)
St. Augustine's Priory School, Ealing
Kelly College
Stanborough Secondary School, Watford
Seventh Day Adventive Schools, Watford
Sharmondean School, Buckingham (telephone inquiry)

Running total 44 schools.

Open University

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide figures for the cost of a qualifying graduate in a university or polytechnic in the United Kingdom, calculated by the same method as that which his Department used in its estimation of the cost of an Open university graduate in the Review of the Open University, page 67, paragraph 182.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Open university's calculated unit cost of a part-time honours graduate was some £12,000 in the calendar year 1989. Differences in the data available on universities and polytechnics rule out an identical calculation, but a broadly comparable average figure for a full-time graduate in the academic year 1988-89 was £17,200, which includes an element for the amortised capital cost.

Education Authority Employees

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list, for each local education authority, the number of *(a)* teaching staff employed within the maintained sector, *(b)* non-teaching school-based employees and *(c)* administrators and other local education authority employees, for the latest available year.

Mr. Fallon: Information showing the number of teachers employed by each LEA in the nursery, primary and secondary schools sector is given in DES statistical bulletin 9/91 which is available in the Library.

Tables provided by the Local Authority Conditions of Service Advisory Board showing the numbers of teaching and non-teaching staff (full-time and part-time) employed by each LEA (including special and further education) have been placed in the Library.

No information is available separately on the numbers of non-teaching school-based employees. Information on certain categories of school-based employees was collected in January 1991, but is not yet available for publication.

Foundation for Sport and the Arts

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, further to his answer of 18 April, *Official Report*, column *217*, if he will list each of the sports organisations with which he has held meetings with regard to the Foundation for Sport and the Arts since that date, together with the dates on which such meetings took place.

Mr. Atkins: I have, since 18 April, had meetings with a wide variety of sports organisations. The subject of the Foundation for Sport and the Arts has been discussed at a number of these.

Research Councils

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy on appointing hon. Members to the research councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Members of the research councils are chosen to provide a balance of expertise and experience across the total membership, both in the disciplines concerned and, more generally, in business and public life. Hon. Members with appropriate expertise or experience can be considered for appointment to the research council.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the hon. Members who have been appointed to the research councils since 1979.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The following is a list of hon. Members appointed to the research councils from 1 January 1980 to the present time:

Agriculture and Food Research Council
Mr. Tim Boswell, MP: November 1988 to July 1990;
Mr. Roger Knapman, MP: January 1991, continuing.

Medical Research Council
Dr. B. Mawhinney, MP: June 1980 to June 1983;
Sir David Crouch, MP: January 1984 to July 1987;

Mrs. V. Bottomley, MP: December 1987 to July 1988;
Mr. R. Key, MP: November 1989 to October 1990;
Miss Emma Nicholson, MP: February 1991, continuing.

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Blackburn, 18 April, *Official Report*, column *216*, on official visits, if he will list the official visits he has made since that date to schools, sixth-form colleges, further education colleges, universities, polytechnics and other educational establishments; with the dates, name of the establishment, its area and the purpose of the visits, in each case.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My visits since 18 April 1991 have been as follows:

26 April: Nottingham Polytechnic
1 May: Jewish Free School, Camden, Kingsway FE College
2 May: Nottingham University
9 May: Chaucer Technical School, Canterbury High School
17 May: St. Pauls C of E VA School, Hills Road 6th Form College, St. Ivo Secondary School, Huntingdon
7 June: Rushcliffe School
11 June: Bourne Primary School, Valley End CE Primary School
14 June: Wye College (London University)
19 June: Chestnut Grove Secondary School
21 June: Harry Carlton Secondary School and Djanogly CTC, Nottingham
24 June: Westminster School
26 June: Liverpool Polytechnic
2 July: Sheffield Polytechnic
16 July: The Arnewood School, New Milton
19 July: Bretton Hall College of HE

Teacher Appraisal

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on school teacher appraisal.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I have today laid regulations before Parliament to require the appraisal of all school teachers in England and Wales. The first teachers will be appraised from this September.

Appraisal will help teachers improve their professional skills and develop their full potential. It will encourage better planning and delivery of the curriculum. For individual teachers, it will lead to greater confidence and improve morale. The best teachers will receive the support, praise and recognition they deserve. All teachers will be helped to improve their performance.

The regulations put in place a simple and straightforward appraisal process. The process will include observation by a senior colleague of the teacher's work in the classroom. The teacher being appraised will then discuss with that senior colleague the teacher's performance and professional development and they will set targets for the teacher's future progress. There will be a follow-up meeting in the second year of the appraisal cycle.

I have consulted representatives of the teachers and of the employers on the details of the regulations and on the circular which accompanies them. As a result, the regulations contain extra safeguards for individual teachers should appraisers wish to collect information from other teachers at the school, or from governors or parents.

The regulations entitle the chairman of governors to see the appraisal statement of the head and the targets set for teachers at the school. The chairman will be expected to treat these as confidential.

There will be no automatic link between appraisal and performance and promotion or pay. However, I believe that head teachers should take into account information from appraisals in advising governors on decisions on promotions and pay.

Higher Education Funding Councils

Mr. Hague: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what arrangements he is making to prepare for the higher education funding councils.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The present chairmen of the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council and the Universities Funding Council were appointed for a three-year term ending on 31 October this year. The chairman of the Universities Funding Council, Lord Chilver, indicated at the time of his appointment that he would not want to serve a second term of office. I have decided to appoint Sir Ron Dearing from 1 November this year as chairman of both the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council and the Universities Funding Council.

I am writing today to both the present chairmen inviting the councils to draw up by the end of October a joint plan of work to prepare for establishing the new English higher education funding council. The full text of my letter is available in the Library.

Environmental Education

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when the committee to make recommendations on the future development of environmental provision within further and higher education will be established; and what will be its terms of reference.

Mr. Fallon [*pursuant to his reply, 16 May 1991, c. 219-20*]: The terms of reference of this committee will be:

In the light of available evidence on the levels and main forms of environmental knowledge, skills and awareness which the workforce will need in order to respond to the current and anticipated requirements of the economy and society for greater environmental responsibility

(a) to assess the main strengths and weaknesses of current environmental provision (excluding research) in further and higher education in England and Wales, taking account of the treatment of environmental issues within the generality of scientific, technological and vocational course curricula as well as the provision of courses which are principally concerned with specific aspects of environmental management or with environmental issues more generally; and

(b) to recommend priorities for the future development of environmental further and higher education (as defined in (a) above), with particular reference to

(i) the respective roles of initial education and vocational continuing education and training concerned with the updating of knowledge and skills

(ii) the relative priority to be accorded to the different strands of provision identified in (a) above

(iii) the most effective and practicable means of strengthening the treatment of environmental issues (where relevant) within vocational courses which are not themselves specifically environmental in focus

(iv) the role of interdisciplinary courses in Environmental Science or Environmental Studies.

The recommendations at (b) should be directed, as appropriate, to further and higher education institutions.

examining and validating bodies, professional institutions, and other bodies with significant influence on the content of curricula within further and higher education.

The committee will start work in the autumn, and will be asked to present its report within 12 months. Its chairman will be Professor Peter Toyne, rector of the Liverpool polytechnic. I will write to the hon. Member setting out the committee's membership when this is finalised, and will arrange for a copy of my letter to be placed in the Library.

ENERGY

Coal Mining

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the names and addresses of coal mines operating in England and Wales, noting the number of miners employed in each; and whether they are in the public or private sector.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The British Coal Corporation is responsible for its own operational mines, and is the licensing authority under the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946. The information requested is therefore a matter for the corporation.

British Nuclear Fuels Ltd.

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of British Nuclear Fuels Ltd.

Mr. Wakeham: I meet Sir Christopher Harding frequently and most recently on 22 July. Sir Christopher told me some months ago that he would like to give up the chairmanship at the end of his second term of office next year. I have decided that his successor will be John Guinness, currently permanent secretary at the Department of Energy. I should like to pay tribute to Sir Christopher's very real contribution to BNFL and the United Kingdom nuclear industry over his five years in office and to wish him well for the future.

Energy Research

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, further to his reply of 26 April, *Official Report*, column *614*, what was the annual expenditure in each year since 1979 of his Department in R and D on *(a)* nuclear fusion, *(b)* nuclear fission, *(c)* cleaner coal combustion technologies, *(d)* solar photovoltaics, *(e)* electrical energy storage and *(f)* wind powered generation.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: In order to make a meaningful comparison between the various technologies, due account should be taken of the total level of public sector expenditure—for example, over £500 million was spent in the public sector over the last decade on R and D on coal utilisation technologies. Comparable figures are not readily available for the other technologies mentioned, and I shall write to the hon. Member when more information has been obtained.

EC Directives

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest estimate of the cost of the implementation of European Community draft directive document No. 10445/90 on the oil supply situation to *(a)* the Exchequer (i) directly and (ii) channelled via the European institutions, *(b)* industry and *(c)* the British consumer.

Mr. Moynihan: The Commission has been asked to reconsider its proposals in the light of the views of member states including the United Kingdom. Detailed costing of the proposals as they stand would not therefore be worth while.

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest estimate of the cost of the implementation of European Community draft directive document No. 9791/90 on hot-water boilers to *(a)* the Exchequer (i) directly and (ii) channelled via the European institutions, *(b)* industry and *(c)* the British consumer.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Government have not at this stage estimated the costs of implementation to the Exchequer because the draft is still under discussion and it is anticipated that there will be changes to the draft before there is further progress. On *(b)* and *(c)*, I refer my hon. Friend to my reply of 17 July 1991, at column *163*, to his recent question on this topic.

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest estimate of the cost of the implementation of European Community draft directive document No. 9025/90 on nuclear fusion research to the Exchequer *(a)* directly and *(b)* channelled via the European institutions.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: If implemented in its present form, the Government estimate that the net cost of this programme to the Exchequer could be some £65 million to £70 million, with a further £15 million channelled via the Joint European torus project at Culham.

In practice, the actual United Kingdom contribution to the EC budget for individual programmes will depend not only on the level of expenditure, but on the level and timing of payments, and the relative shares of the programme.

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest estimate of the cost of the implementation of European Community draft directive document No. 10149/90 on energy efficiency to *(a)* the Exchequer (i) directly and (ii) channelled via the European institutions, *(b)* industry and *(c)* the British consumer.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: European Commission document No. 10149/90 is a communication to the Energy Council on specific action for vigorous energy efficiency —SAVE—accompanied by a proposal for a Council decision on the promotion of energy efficiency in the Community.

It was agreed by the Council of Energy Ministers on 31 May that, subject to the approval of the European Parliament, the decision would have three main components: expenditure by the EC on measures listed in article 2 of the draft decision; various draft directives on energy efficiency—each to be considered separately—and an advisory committee of officials from member states.

The costs of implementing the SAVE decision will be met by the European Commission whose five-year schedule of estimated commitments and expenditure is as follows:

Million ecu

	Commitments	Payments
1991	4·5	3
1992	6·5	6
1993	8	8
1994	8	9
1995	8	9
TOTAL	35	35

Thirty-five million ecu is approximately £24·5 million. In principle, the United Kingdom public expenditure cost is likely to be about 18 per cent. of these figures. In practice the actual United Kingdom contribution to the EC budget for individual programmes will depend not only on the level of expenditure, but on the level and timing of payments, and the relative shares of the programme.

Home Insulation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give his most up-to-date estimate of the number of households in England and Wales, whose properties have been draught-proofed or otherwise insulated under the home energy efficiency scheme in each quarterly or six monthly period since its inception.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: During the first six months of operation, claims were received in respect of some 70,000 insulation jobs under the home energy efficiency scheme. Of these, some 58,000 jobs in respect of 49,000 households were in England and Wales.

PRIME MINISTER

Non-natural Disasters

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Prime Minister if he will place in the Library a list of the non-natural disasters involving injury or loss of life in the United Kingdom since 1961.

The Prime Minister: The information is not available centrally.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Medical Service

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he has given in the light of the Woolf inquiry report into the reorganisation of the prison service to integrate the prison medical service in the national health service.

Mrs. Rumbold: We are committed to securing real and lasting improvements in the quality of patient care for the prison population. A recent efficiency scrutiny of the prison medical service provides an opportunity to bring this about. The scrutiny report found that the PMS should move closer to the national health service, but that it should remain managed as part of the prison service as a whole. We have accepted this finding, which is in keeping with a number of earlier studies of medical services in prison. Follow-up work to the scrutiny is well in hand and a consultation exercise about to begin will help determine the means of moving closer to the NHS.

Crime Prevention

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will meet the independent television companies to discuss the report from his Department on the fear of crime and the screening of crime prevention and detection programmes.

Mr. John Patten: The report on the fear of crime, which was produced by a working group chaired by Mr. Michael Grade, was drawn to the attention of the chairman of the Independent Broadcasting Authority which later commissioned a research report on crime reconstruction programmes. This suggested that although such programmes may increase the level of fear, their value in assisting the police is widely recognised. There are signs, which the Government welcome, that the programme makers have taken account of the messages in these reports.

Begging

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what policies Her Majesty's Government are proposing to combat the problem of begging.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The police already have adequate powers to deal with begging and the problems associated with it. No new measures are proposed to deal with the problem.

Young Offenders

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will establish a test project in the Harwood area of Bolton involving all the relevant local authorities and services, together with parents, to identify potential young offenders with the aim of developing a strategy for reducing the incidence of youth crime;

(2) how many projects are currently, or will shortly be in operation, as part of the Government's campaign to reduce the youth crime rate; and if he will list them by area and specification.

Mr. John Patten: There are many local initiatives which can contribute to preventing offending, including police schemes for activities for school children during the holidays and projects for reducing offending by young people, some of them funded through the probation service and the Government's safer cities programme. My right hon. Friend is exploring what more can be done further to develop policies for reducing the number of crimes committed by young people.

Sexual Offences

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans Her Majesty's Government have to introduce a programme to reduce the incidence of sexual offences.

Mr. John Patten: The Criminal Justice Bill strengthens the courts' powers to protect the public from sexual offenders. Courts will be able to impose a custodial sentence, or a longer one than is justified by the seriousness of the offence, upon a sexual offender who poses a risk of serious harm to the public. They will also be able to order longer and more intensive supervision for sex offenders

following their release from custody or when they are sentenced to probation. On 7 June we announced our plans to introduce structured treatment for sex offenders in prison.

Terrorism

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans Her Majesty's Government have to reduce the incidence of terrorism.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Her Majesty's Government are fully committed to tackling terrorism, and we regard it as essential that the police should have the resources and powers they need in carrying out this difficult task. The Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 provides a legislative framework and the annual report on the operation of the Act helps us to keep under constant consideration whether the powers contained within it are suitable and adequate. The Government are also committed to working to combat terrorism, in co-operation with other countries, both bilaterally and multilaterally, for example through the Trevi group in Europe.

Civil Defence Grant

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total amount of civil defence grant for *(a)* staff costs, *(b)* building work, *(c)* equipment costs and *(d)* other costs received by each London borough for each year since 1979.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I will write to the hon. Member.

Probation Hostels

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what difficulties are experienced by probation hostels in obtaining rent from residents as a result of the ineligibility of 17-year-olds to receive income support; and what action he intends to take to resolve this problem.

Mr. John Patten: Some probation hostels have reported difficulties in obtaining rent from 17-year-olds. We are considering this matter further with relevant other Government Departments.

Hong Kong

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for British citizenship made under the provisions of the British Nationality (Hong Kong) Act 1990 have been *(a)* granted and *(b)* refused, under each class and category of the scheme; and when he expects all the applications made before 28 February to have been decided.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: As at 23 July 1991, the numbers of applicants recommended by the governor to the Secretary of State and registered as British citizens under the British Nationality (Hong Kong) Act 1990 were as follows:

	Number
Sensitive Service class	158
Entrepreneurs' class	12
Dependants of the above	278
Total	448

None of those recommended by the Governor has been refused registration.

The Hong Kong Government estimate that the majority of recommendations will have been made to the Secretary of State by around the middle of 1993. Final decisions on registration will be taken as quickly after recommendation as resources allow.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* British nationals and *(b)* holders of certificates of identity from Hong Kong have been admitted to the United Kingdom in each quarter since January 1990 as *(a)* persons of independent means, *(b)* self-employed persons, *(c)* business people, *(d)* visitors, *(e)* students, *(f)* husbands and fiances, *(g)* wives and financées and *(h)* other dependent relatives.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The available information for British dependent territories citizens and British nationals (overseas) from Hong Kong is given in the table. Figures on admissions of holders of certificates of identity from Hong Kong are not available.

Admissions to the United Kingdom of BDTCs and BN(O)s from Hong Kong

Number

Admission category	*1990*					*1991*
	1st quarter	*2nd quarter*	*3rd quarter*	*4th quarter*	*Year*	*1st quarter*[1]
Visitors						
—ordinary	6,000	10,400	17,700	6,900	40,900	4,900
—business	1,430	1,650	1,590	1,270	5,940	1,100
Students	430	310	6,830-	860	8,430	500
Husbands and fiances[2]	10	20	20	20	70	10
Wives and fiancees[2]	40	50	50	40	160	40
Parents and grand-parents[2]	..	..	10	[3]—	..	10
Children[2]	20	30	130	30	210	40

.. Not available
[1] Provisional figures.
[2] Seeking, or accepted for, settlement in the United Kingdom.
[3] Five or fewer.

Immigration

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* husbands, *(b)* wives and *(c)* dependent children have been refused (i) extension of stay and (ii) settlement in the United Kingdom on the grounds that he is not satisfied that they can be maintained and accommodated without recourse to public funds in each quarter since January 1990.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The available information relating to after-entry cases is given in the table. Information on dependent children is not readily available.

Refusals, on grounds of maintenance and accommodation, of after-entry applications by husbands and wives

Number of persons

	Refusals to grant probationary year on grounds of:			*Refusals*[1]
	Accommodation	*Maintenance*	*Maintenance and accommodation*	
1990				
Quarter 1				
Husbands	1	—	—	3
Wives	—	—	1	4
Quarter 2				
Husbands	3	1	2	8
Wives	—	1	—	8
Quarter 3				
Husbands	3	1	1	8
Wives	—	1	—	5
Quarter 4				
Husbands	1	—	—	7
Wives	1	1	—	1
1991				
Quarter 1				
Husbands	—	3	—	7
Wives	—	—	—	7

[1] Refusals of settlement after probationary year on general considerations, including recourse to public funds.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average time taken by his Department to investigate cases referred from overseas posts in order to assess whether the maintenance and accommodation requirements of the immigration rules have been met.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is not available in the form requested. The estimated average time taken by the immigration service to deal with all categories of cases deferred by entry clearance officers during the past 12 months was about 61 days.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications from over-age re-applicants from the Indian subcontinent seeking to join a sponsor settled in the United Kingdom have been *(a)* made, *(b)* deferred, *(c)* refused and *(d)* granted in each year since 1986 and the first quarter of 1991; and how many such re-applicants in each category had undergone successful DNA tests.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The available information is that a total of 570 applications from over-age re-applicants in the Indian sub-continent to join parents in the United Kingdom have been decided under the terms of the concession announced by my right hon. Friend the then Home Secretary on 14 June 1989 at columns *461-62*. All these cases involved over-age re-applicants who have established relationships by means of DNA evidence but do not qualify for admission under the immigration rules. Entry clearance has been authorised in 116 of these cases and refused in 454.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many wives and dependant children applying for entry clearance in the Indian subcontinent in each quarter since January 1990 were refused *(a)* on first application and *(b)* on second or subsequent application.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Quarterly information up to the end of 1990 on the total numbers of wives and children in the Indian subcontinent refused entry clearance to the United Kingdom is published in table 18 of Cm. 1571 "Control of Immigration: Statistics, United Kingdom, 1990", a copy of which is in the Library. In the first quarter of 1991, 166 wives and 171 children were initially refused entry clearance. Separate information on first-time applicants and re-applicants is not available centrally.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were waiting for special quota vouchers in *(a)* India and *(b)* east Africa in (i) May 1990 and (ii) December 1990; when those issued with vouchers on those dates had applied; how many vouchers were issued in (1) India and (2) east Africa in (A) 1990 and (B) the first quarter of 1991; when those applying now can expect to receive vouchers; and how many applicants there were for vouchers in (v) India and (w) east Africa in (x) 1990 and (y) the first half of 1991.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information which is currently available is given in the tables.

Table 1: Persons applying for a special voucher for entry to the United Kingdom

Number of persons

	Applications newly received[1]		*Vouchers issued*		*Applications awaiting a decision at end of quarter*	
	1990	*1991 1st quarter*	*1990*	*1991 1st quarter*	*1990 2nd quarter*	*1990 4th quarter*
India	360	90	600	220	950	790
Kenya	270	50	250	50	560	570
Tanzania	30	+	20	+	70	70
Malawi	10	+	10	+	+	+
Zambia	40	+	40	10	20	10
Elsewhere	10	+	10	+	+	10
Total[2]	720	150	920	290	1,600	1,400

+ Five or fewer.
[1] Including applications subsequently withdrawn or lapsed.
[2] Total may differ from sum of countries due to rounding.

Table 2: Waiting times for persons applying for a special voucher

Months

	Waiting time to main interview for: Persons interviewed at end of quarter			[1]*Persons applying at end of quarter*
	Quarter 2 1990	*Quarter 4 1990*	*Quarter 1 1991*	*Quarter 1 1991*
India[2]	32	24	20	20
Kenya	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
Tanzania	1½	1	1	1
Malawi[3]	—	½	½	½
Zambia	1	1	1	1

[1] Data relate to expected waiting time.
[2] Data relate to non-priority applicants. Priority applicants (ie widows with a child in the United Kingdom, heads of household aged 65 or over, and special compassionate cases) are interviewed within three months.
[3] Within a week.

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Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many nationals of *(a)* Jamaica, *(b)* Turkey, *(c)* Morocco, *(d)* the United States of America, *(e)* Australia, *(f)* Malaysia, *(g)* Hong Kong, *(h)* Guyana, *(i)* Trinidad, *(j)* Colombia, *(k)* Algeria, *(l)* Canada and *(m)* Ghana were (i) granted and (ii) refused permission to enter the United Kingdom at ports of entry in each quarter since January 1990 to the latest available date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is given in the table.

Passenger admissions and persons refused leave to enter and removed, for selected nationalities.

Number

	1st quarter 1990		*2nd quarter 1990*		*3rd quarter 1990*		*4th quarter 1990*		*Year 1990*		*1st quarter 1991*	
	Admissions	*Refused and removed*	*Admissions*	*Refused and removed*	*Admissions*	*Refused and removed*	*Admissions*	*Refused and removed*	*Admissions*	*Refused and removed*	*Admissions*[1]	*Refused and removed*
Jamaica	5,600	160	7,870	140	10,700	135	6,280	145	30,500	580	4,700	102
Turkey	17,100	82	17,900	71	25,800	120	18,700	116	79,500	389	13,700	80
Morocco	4,620	353	3,420	102	7,090	112	3,780	67	18,900	634	2,700	36
USA	510,000	313	872,000	321	944,000	345	514,000	340	2,840,000	1,319	339,000	286
Australia	80,900	45	150,000	58	170,000	52	102,000	64	504,000	219	70,700	74
Malaysia	13,900	107	21,700	256	27,500	235	17,500	260	80,500	858	11,100	126
Hong Kong (BDTCs & BN(O)s)	15,300	40	18,300	75	34,800	68	13,500	78	81,900	261	14,000	35
Guyana	1,090	15	1,510	11	2,370	8	1,210	23	6,180	57	1,000	13
Trinidad & Tobago	3,360	32	4,890	31	6,760	37	3,810	31	18,800	131	3,000	27
Colombia	3,340	130	6,020	265	6,400	177	4,300	178	20,000	750	3,400	103
Algeria	4,950	748	4,070	81	7,500	84	3,670	65	20,200	978	2,100	47
Canada	98,800	21	199,000	20	224,000	36	110,000	37	632,000	114	75,500	21
Ghana	7,900	110	8,940	118	12,600	123	9,250	128	38,700	479	7,500	128

[1] Provisional figures.

Visa Applications

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for *(a)* single entry and *(b)* multiple entry visit visas were (i) received, (ii) granted and (iii) refused at each post in the Indian subcontinent, Ghana, Nigeria and Jamaica in each quarter of 1990 and the first quarter of 1991; and what was the delay between application and interview for those whose applications were felt to need a second or long interview at each of the above posts in (1) June 1990, (2) January 1991 and (3) June 1991 or the nearest available date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on applications in Jamaica for a visit entry clearance, and separate

information on applications in the other countries for single entry and multiple entry visit visas, are not available centrally. The other information requested is given in the tables.

Table 1: Persons applying for a visit visa to the United Kingdom

Number of persons

	Applications			
	Newly received[1]	*Granted*	*Of which: granted on appeal*	*Refused initially*
Dhaka				
1990				
1st quarter	2,260	1,500	—	620
2nd quarter	3,420	2,600	20	700
3rd quarter	3,380	2,420	—	820
4th quarter	2,200	1,510	20	570
Year	11,260	8,020	50	2,720
1991				
1st quarter	1,700	1,230	[3]—	400
New Delhi				
1990				
1st quarter	8,980	6,990	40	1,420
2nd quarter	19,740	16,390	40	2,520
3rd quarter	13,560	10,240	20	2,340
4th quarter	8,370	5,760	20	1,230
Year	50,650	39,380	110	7,510
1991				
1st quarter	7,360	5,620	20	600
Bombay				
1990				
1st quarter	7,990	7,420	20	800
2nd quarter	18,490	16,510	20	1,840
3rd quarter	10,300	9,070	40	1,400
4th quarter	5,910	4,930	20	920
Year	42,700	37,920	100	4,970
1991				
1st quarter	6,710	5,410	30	1,140
Calcutta				
1990				
1st quarter	1,160	1,110	[3]—	30
2nd quarter	3,130	3,070	—	50
3rd quarter	2,360	2,330	—	30
4th quarter	920	900	[3]—	30
Year	7,570	7,410	[3]—	150
1991				
1st quarter	980	920	[3]—	40
Madras				
1990				
1st quarter	1,930	1,900	[3]—	40
2nd quarter	4,170	4,120	[3]—	40
3rd quarter	2,890	2,850	[3]—	40
4th quarter	1,320	1,280	[3]—	30
Year	10,310	10,140		
1991				
1st quarter	1,540	1,490	[3]—	50
Islamabad				
1990				
1st quarter	7,770	5,100	70	1,440
2nd quarter	13,370	9,980	50	2,970
3rd quarter	12,300	8,980	70	2,720
4th quarter	9,750	7,320	60	2,950
Year	43,190	31,380	240	10,080

	Applications			
	Newly received[1]	*Granted*	*Of which: granted on appeal*	*Refused initially*
1991				
1st quarter	6,930	4,610	60	2,040
Karachi				
1990				
1st quarter	4,510	3,690	10	680
2nd quarter	10,670	9,340	[3]—	750
3rd quarter	8,710	7,310	10	970
4th quarter	4,860	4,150	10	710
Year	28,750	24,490	40	3,110
1991				
1st quarter	2,720	2,510	[3]—	250
Accra				
1990				
1st quarter	2,790	2,190	10	600
2nd quarter	4,070	3,310	[3]—	810
3rd quarter	5,960	4,450	10	1,200
4th quarter	4,040	2,850	[3]—	600
Year	16,860	12,800	20	3,210
1991				
1st quarter	3,280	2,320	[3]	520
Lagos				
1990				
1st quarter	10,380	7,190	[3]—	1,910
2nd quarter	12,500	9,220	—	2,390
3rd quarter	17,190	15,620	—	2,520
4th quarter	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
Year	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
1991				
1st quarter	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
Kaduna				
1990				
1st quarter	1,650	1,360	—	310
2nd quarter	1,720	1,390	—	330
3rd quarter	2,620	1,860	—	440
4th quarter	2,100	1,550	—	360
Year	8,140	6,150	—	1,450
1991				
1st quarter	1,320	1,070	—	170

[1] Including applications subsequently withdrawn.
[2]— Not available.
[3]— Five or fewer.

TABLE 2: Waiting time for persons applying for a visit visa who required a lengthy interview

Post	*Number of days waiting time for person interviewed at end of period*		
	June 1990	*January 1991*	*May 1991*
Dhaka	—	—	—
New Delhi	—	—	—
Bombay	—	—	3
Calcutta	—	—	—
Madras	—	—	—
Islamabad	10	1	6
Karachi	—	—	—
Accra	3	2[1]	9[2]
Lagos	4	n.a.	n.a.
Kaduna	—	8[1]	8[2]

— Same day.
[1] At end of December 1990.
[2] At end of March 1991.
n.a. Not available.

Naturalisation and Registration

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his best estimate as to how many applications for *(a)* adult registration with entitlement, *(b)* naturalisation and *(c)* registration of minors his Department (i) will receive and (ii) expects to grant in 1991-92.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information is not available for estimates in the form requested. We estimate that in the financial year 1991-92 we will receive the following applications:

	Numbers
Registration of adults	5,500
Registration of minors	11,000
Naturalisation	23,000

In the same period we expect to grant about 17,000 registrations of all kinds and about 47,000 naturalisations.

Citizenship

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for British citizenship under section 4(5) of the British Nationality Act 1981 have been *(a)* made, *(b)* granted and *(c)* refused, in each year since 1983 and to the latest convenient date in 1991; and how many of those granted have been on the grounds of service in the armed forces.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information is not readily available in the exact form requested and could be provided in such a way only at disproportionate cost. As at 17 July 1991, the total number of applications received since 1 January 1983 and their disposal is as follows:

	Servicemen	Others	Total
Received	61	554	615
Granted	59	13	72
Refused	—	532	532
Withdrawn	1	1	2
Still under consideration	1	8	9

Note: The numbers in the first column are former sevicemen in Hong Kong as described in the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) on 23 April 1986 at columns 147-48.

Entry Clearance

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for entry clearance from *(a)* wives, *(b)* husbands, *(c)* fiancés and *(d)* fiancées in each British post in all countries apart from those of the Indian sub-continent were (i) granted and (ii) refused in each quarter since January 1990; how many such applications in each category at each post and in each quarter were refused (1) wholly and (2) partly because of the primary purpose rule; what was the refusal rate at each post; and what percentage of those refusals were (x) wholly and (y) partly on primary purpose grounds.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The only information requested which is available centrally is that on applications granted and refused in Hong Kong and is given in the following table.

Applications in Hong Kong for entry clearance to the United Kingdom

Number of persons

	Applications Granted[1]	Applications Refused initially
Wives		
1990 1st quarter	60	[3]—
2nd quarter	60	[3]—
3rd quarter	70	[3]—
4th quarter	30	—
1991 1st quarter	50	[3]—
Husbands, fiancés[2]		
1990 1st quarter	20	[3]—
2nd quarter	40	[3]—
3rd quarter	30	—
4th quarter	20	—
1991 1st quarter	20	[3]—
Fiancées		
1990 1st quarter	10	—
2nd quarter	10	—
3rd quarter	10	[3]—
4th quarter	10	[3]—
1991 1st quarter	[3]—	[3]—

[1] Granted initially or on appeal.
[2] Data for husbands and fiancés separately are not available.
[3] Five or fewer.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for entry clearance as working holidaymakers have been *(a)* received, *(b)* granted and *(c)* refused in (i) India, (ii) Bangladesh, (iii) Australia, (iv) Ghana, (v) Nigeria and (vi) Canada during 1990 and 1991.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not available centrally.

Data Protection

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his latest estimate of the cost of the implementation of European Community draft directive document No. 8460/90 on data protection to *(a)* the Exchequer (i) directly and (ii) channelled via the European institutions, *(b)* industry and *(c)* the British consumer.

Mrs. Rumbold: We are considering how best to estimate direct costs to the Exchequer, to industry and to British consumers of implementation of the draft directive. The Commission has estimated that the costs of two committees established under the directive would be £39,136 per annum from 1993. I cannot yet say what the whole cost to the Exchequer might be.

In practice the actual United Kingdom contribution to the EC budget for individual programmes will depend not only on the level of expenditure, but the level and timing of payments, and the relative shares of the programme.

Escapees

Sir Michael MacNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many escaped prisoners or persons being held on remand are currently being sought by the police.

Mrs. Rumbold: A revised system of collecting information on incidents in prison establishments was introduced in June 1988.

Based on the information available, a total of 297 prisoners, both convicted and on remand, who escaped between 1 June 1988 and 22 July 1991 remain unlawfully at large, and are being sought by police.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made on the replacement of routine animal toxicity testing; and how long he expects the LD50 test to remain in use.

Mrs. Rumbold: The development of alternatives to the use of living animals in toxicity testing is a continuing

process. Considerable progress has been made in topical toxicity testing. In systemic tests, especially in the areas of genotoxicity and some reproductive toxicity, in vitro pre-screening tests are increasingly being introduced. However, it has to be recognised that the validation of alternatives, and the acceptance of these by international regulatory bodies, is a lengthy process.

Encouraging moves have been made to replace the need for formal LD50 testing for certain, but not all, regulatory purposes. A British initiative has led to the development of an alternative to the LD50 test which uses fixed doses and does not depend upon lethality as an end point. Work is continuing to ensure that the validity of the fixed-dose procedure is recognised by international regulatory bodies. The use of the LD50 test may, however, remain necessary for certain types of toxicity testing, for some time.

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what funds for alternative research and validation the Government are providing in support of the objectives of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply of 28 November 1990 to the question from the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) at columns *416-17* and to my reply of 3 June 1991 to the question from the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) at column *71*.

During the current financial year, the Home Office is making £215,000 available to fund research into the reduction, refinement or replacement of the use of living animals in scientific procedures.

Jury System

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to review the jury system.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Minister of State to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler) on 8 July at column *249*.

Football

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list in full the countries other than Italy and Scotland with which his Department has agreed procedures for corresponding offences under section 22 of the Football Spectators Act 1990; and if he will make a statement on the progress of talks regarding the extension of the Football Spectators Act to offences committed *(a)* in Sweden and *(b)* in any other country.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Agreements establishing corresponding offences under section 22 of the Football Spectators Act 1989 currently exist only in respect of Italy and Scotland. The Government believe that the establishment of corresponding offences in other countries would be of benefit both to us and to them. We are therefore in the process of seeking to negotiate agreements with a number of countries, including Sweden, although differences in legal systems often make the negotiations complex.

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the 92 Football League clubs together with the total season's attendance at (A) matches played in the Football League and (B) matches played in the FA cup, Rumbelows' cup, ZDS cup and Leyland DAF cup competitions, with the total numbers of *(a)* arrests and *(b)* ejections at each category of such matches and the numbers of (i) arrests, (ii) ejections, and (iii) arrests plus ejections as a percentage of the total attendance at each category of such matches, accurate to four decimal places for each of the seasons 1987-88, 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91; and if he will make a statement on attendance rates and arrest rates at each category of such matches.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The aggregate figures for attendances, arrests and ejections for each division in the Football League in the last two seasons are contained in the following table:

	Division 1	*Division 2*	*Division 3*	*Division 4*	*Total*
Attendance					
1990-91	8,605,006	6,279,173	2,521,497	1,621,714	19,027,390
1989-90	7,878,132	6,842,661	2,789,315	1,850,086	19,360,194
Increase/decrease (per cent.)	+9	−8	−10	−12	−2
Arrests					
1990-91	1,747	1,710	411	251	4,119
1989-90	1,857	2,203	1,151	734	5,945
Increase/decrease (per cent.)	−6	−22	−64	−66	−31
Ejections					
1990-91	2,822	1,713	296	239	5,070
1989-90	3,318	2,707	574	374	6,973
Increase/decrease (per cent.)	−15	−37	−48	−36	27

These figures indicate that, while in 1990-91 attendances remained broadly at the same level as the previous year, the numbers of arrests and ejections fell by 31 and 27 per cent. respectively. This represents a most welcome fall in the level of trouble at football matches. The additional information requested by the hon. Member is volumjnous. I shall write to him with it shortly.

Immigration (Carriers' Liability)

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department pursuant to his answer of 18 July, if he will break down the outstanding £14·851 million immigration fines between carriers registered in *(a)* Europe, *(b)* Asia, *(c)* the United States and Canada and *(d)* elsewhere.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Records of charges made under the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987 do not show carriers' place of registration.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many notices have been issued to each airline under the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987 in each quarter since January 1990; how much money has accrued as a result; and how many such notices have been contested by each airline.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is not the practice to disclose information on the record of individual airlines under the Act. The total number of notices issued to carriers—airlines and sea operators—in each quarter since January 1990 was as follows:

Quarter ending	*Number of notices*
31 March 1990	1,912
30 June 1990	2,603
30 September 1990	3,656
31 December 1990	3,351
31 March 1991	2,843
30 June 1991	2,759

A total of £8·017 million was received during this period, and representations were made by carriers in 4,967 cases.

Deportation

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many decisions to make a deportation order, by nationality of the potential deportee, where there is only a right of appeal as provided under section 5 of the Immigration Act 1988, have been made in each quarter since 1 August 1988; and on what basis these decisions have been made.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The total numbers of decisions to deport affected by the provisions of section 5 of the Immigration Act 1988 in each of the quarters since 1 August 1988 are shown in the table. All these decisions were made under section 3(5)*(a)* of the Immigration Act 1971, which provides that a person who is not a British citizen shall be liable to deportation if, having only a limited leave to enter or remain, he does not observe a condition attached to the leave or remains beyond the time limited by the leave. Information about the nationality of those affected could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

	1988	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
1 January to 31 March	—	856	688	727
1 April to 30 June	—	658	644	759
1 July to 30 September	[1]285	829	634	—
1 October to 31 December	692	729	744	—

[1] From 1 August.

Deportation

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received from hon. Members during *(a)* each quarter of 1990 and *(b)* the first quarter of 1991 to delay the removal of passengers refused entry at British ports of entry; and, for both periods, how many representations resulted in (i) the delay of the passenger's removal for up to a week, (ii) the delay of the passenger's removal for more than a week and (iii) the reversal of the immigration officer's decision.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: This information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his Department's current policy on enforcing deportation decisions against genuine students who have been found to be working in breach of their conditions of entry; whether he will publish his instructions to staff about this; what criteria he uses to assess whether a person is a genuine student; and whether he will list the colleges which he would not recognise as providing courses of study for overseas students acceptable under the immigration rules.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Any overseas student who wishes to work during his free time or vacations may do so by obtaining permission from the Department of Employment. Each case in which a student is found working without such permission is considered on its individual merits. As required by the immigration rules, all relevant factors are taken into account before deciding whether deportation is the right course. As a general rule, it is not our practice to remove genuine students under deportation powers unless their offences are serious and persistent. A genuine student in this sense is one who meets the requirements of the immigration rules for the grant of leave to enter or remain as a student. This approach is reflected in staff instructions. There are no plans for these to be published.

The Immigration and Nationality Department keeps records of information which has come to light about individual colleges, and account is taken of this by staff when dealing with applications from students. Staff are made aware of what information is available by means of internal notices which are part of staff instructions and are not published.

Naturalisation

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many outstanding applications for naturalisation as a British citizen are *(a)* less than one year old, *(b)* between one and two years old and *(c)* more than two years old.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On 22 July 1991 the number of outstanding applications for naturalisation was as follows:

	Number
Less than 12 months old	12,193
More than 12 months but less than 24 months old	16,757
More than 24 months old	23,997

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for entry clearance in order to seek asylum in the United Kingdom were *(a)* received and *(b)* granted, by country, during 1990 and the first quarter of 1991.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I will write to the hon. Member.

Gipsy Encampments

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to introduce legislation to tighten up the police's powers concerning the control of gipsy encampments.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Trespass is essentially a matter for the civil law. However, section 39 of the Public Order Act 1986

gives the police powers to deal with aggravated trespass. In announcing his conclusions following a review of this section, *Official Report*, Vol. 191, column *487*, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said that the Government had no plans to change the law. But we have issued guidance to the police on its application; a copy is in the Library.

Designation under the Caravan Sites Act 1968 gives local authorities the means to seek quick-acting powers to move on gipsy caravans parked other than on official sites.

Gipsies, like everyone else, are subject to the normal criminal law.

Police, Rochdale

Sir Cyril Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the latest published figures for crime reporting and detection in the Rochdale police area.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not collected centrally for the Rochdale police division. I understand from the chief constable of Greater Manchester that in the first quarter of 1991 there were 6,861 recorded crimes of which 2,312 were detected.

National Lottery

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate has been made of how many jobs would be created by a national lottery.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It seems likely that a national lottery would create new jobs, but no estimate has been made. This is one of the matters included in the Government's further consideration of the arguments for and against allowing one or more privately run lotteries on a national scale.

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received concerning a national lottery.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In the 12 months to 30 June 1991, we received letters from 28 hon. Members or Peers, and 158 from members of the public or organisations, 19 of which were from the same person, the majority of which advocated a national lottery.

Community Service Orders

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many community service orders were made and in how many cases breach proceedings were instigated *(a)* in the last year before national standards were introduced and *(b)* in the last year for which figures are available; and in each of these years what was the number and percentage of breach proceedings that resulted in a custodial sentence.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is published in Home Office Statistical Bulletin (7/91) (Tables 1, 8), a copy of which is in the Library.

Sexual Offences Bill, Isle of Man

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 26 April, *Official Report*, column *560*, if he will give further details of the nature of the comments made by his Department to the Isle of Man Government regarding drafts of the Isle of Man Sexual Offences Bill.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My reply on 26 April to a question from the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) explained the policy of Her Majesty's Government in relation to reform of the Isle of Man's law on homosexuality.

As I indicated in my reply on 16 July to questions from my hon. Friend, drafts of the current Isle of Man Sexual Offences Bill which the Island Government sent to the Home Office included clauses providing for the necessary reform. Comments on the drafts sent by the Home Office to the Island Attorney General did not concern those clauses. Those comments, on clauses 1(4), 3, 4(3), 7(2)(c),12(3), 25, 34(2) and 36(2) of the Bill, drew attention to potentially comparable provisions of United Kingdom law and their interpretation, and gave advice on recommendations of the Criminal Law Revision Committee in its 15th (1984) Report on Sexual Offences.

Winston Silcott

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether, in the light of new evidence submitted to the Home Office on 13 July in regard to the conviction of Winston Silcott for the murder of PC Keith Blakelock in 1985, he will consider referring the conviction of Silcott to the Court of Appeal.

Mr. John Patten: The representations, which were received in the Home Office on 15 July, are now being considered by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. He will reach a decision as soon as possible.

UK Charity Lotteries Ltd.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from the Advertising Standards Authority and the Gaming Board about advertisements published by UK Charity Lotteries Ltd.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We and the Gaming Board have been concerned that some aspects of UK Charity Lotteries Ltd.'s advertising campaign do not satisfy the requirements of the Lotteries and Amusements Act 1976. The board has referred this matter to the Director of Public Prosecutions, whose advice is awaited. We have not received representations from the Advertising Standards Authority.

Prisons

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will announce the outcome of his further review of the prison estate.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I announced on 19 December last year the outcome of a review of the prison service estate which had been conducted in 1990. I said then that there would be a further review in the light of the projections of the prison population which would be available in early 1991. Revised projections were published on 21 May and a copy is in the Library.

The further review has now reached its consultative stage. It has taken into account:

the new projections;

the opening between April this year and 1993 of 10 new local prisons and remand centres; and

the accelerated programme to end slopping out by the end of 1994, which I announced on 25 February.

I also asked the prison service to have regard to the relevant proposals in the report of Lord Justice Woolf and Judge Stephen Tumim on the prison disturbances in April 1990 (Cm. 1456), in particular the removal of unsuitable prisons from the estate and the development of a prison or cluster of prisons which would serve most of the needs of a community. The proposals for the prison estate arising from this review are consistent with the approach suggested by Woolf. Planning is founded on geographical clusters of establishments and my proposals are aimed at improving the balance of accommodation in each of the main areas of population.

All the following proposals will be subject to full consultation with staff and other interests.

At this stage 15 establishments could be affected by proposed changes in their role as follows:

Establishment	*Role*
HMYOI Castington	To be retained as a young offender institution.
HMYOI Deerbolt	Establishment of a juvenile unit within existing buildings (in 1992-93).
HMP Nottingham	To be retained as a training establishment.
HMYOI Lancaster Farms	To be used as a remand centre as well as a young offender institution (in 1992-93).
HMP Risley	To be used as both a local and training prison as new accommodation comes into use.
HMP Leeds	To be used as both a training and a local prison as new accommodation comes into use.
HMP Stafford	To postpone part conversion to local prison to 1995-96.
HMP Gloucester	To convert from local prison to a remand centre (in 1992-93).
HMYOI Eastwood Park	To close as a young offender institution (in 1992-93) and re-open as a female establishment (in 1993-94).
HMYOI Hollesley Bay Colony	To convert to part adult use (in 1992-93).
HMP Bedford	To convert partly to a remand centre (in 1992-93).
HMP Reading	To convert to a remand centre (in 1992-93).
HMP Elmley	To open as part local and part category C training prison (in 1991-92).
HMP Coldingley	To convert from a category B to a category C training prison (in 1992-93).
HMYOI Guys Marsh	To convert partly to a remand centre (in 1992-93).

It is also proposed that the following establishments should close, mainly because the quality of their living accommodation renders them unsuitable for continued prison service use:

HMYOI Kirklevington Grange
HMYOI Werrington
HMYOI Hewell Grange
HMYOI Finnamore Wood Camp
HMRC Pucklechurch
HMP Oxford
HMP Aldington

These closures would take place in 1992-93, except for that of HMRC Pucklechurch which would close in 1993-94. In addition some units at HMP Drake Hall, HMP Highpoint and HMP Norwich would also close.

Making the best use of the estate is, of course, a matter of continuing concern and activity, for example adjusting catchment areas for prisons which serve the courts. In the light of this I may want to make further proposals for changing the use of the estate in due course.

I am seeking the views of staff, boards of visitors and the trade unions on these proposals and have placed in the Library copies of a background note to them.

When these consultations are complete. I shall make a further announcement.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will request the Governor of the Bank of England to report to the House in due course on all matters related to the closure of BCCI.

Mr. Maples: The Governor appeared before the Treasury and Civil Service Committee on Tuesday 23 July.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer in what lists of accredited or approved banking or related institutions, issued by his Department or by the Bank of England, the BCCI was included, before its collapse; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maples: The BCCI was authorised to take deposits under the Banking Act 1987 and therefore included in any list of such institutions, such as the list which the Bank of England is required to publish under section 17 of the Banking Act.

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will ensure the publication of the September 1990 Price Waterhouse report on BCCI commissioned by the College of Regulators; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No. Any reports commissioned by the College of Regulators would be covered by the provisions of the Banking Act which prevents disclosure except in exceptional circumstances. The audit reports which the Bank of England received on BCCI will, however, be available to the inquiry under Lord Justice Bingham which was announced to the House in my statement of Friday 19 July, at columns *715-29*, and details of which were given in my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's statement of Monday 22 July, at columns *757-64*.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was learned from the Bank of England's inquiries into Barlow Clowes about the use made by Barlow Clowes of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International and about the proprieties of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International's role in that case.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 19 July 1991]:* Nothing. The Bank's inquiries into Barlow Clowes were focused on that organisation's United Kingdom activities and in particular whether it was in breach of the 1979 Banking Act. The Bank's direct interest ended in October 1985 with the grant to Barlow Clowes of a prevention of fraud (investment) licence following reorganisation of the business.

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the funding of the inquiry into the affairs of BCCI.

Mr. Maples: Parliamentary approval to this new service will be sought in a supplementary estimate for the HM Treasury vote (class XVIII vote 1). Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £500,000 will be met by repayable advances from the contingencies fund.

Charities (Tax Relief)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total amount of charitable donations for which tax relief was given in each of the last 15 years.

Mr. Maude: The available information is as follows:

Donations to charities subject to tax relief

	Covenants[1]	*Donations under the payroll giving scheme*	*Transfers to charities on death*[2]	*Single donations from companies*[1 3]	*Gift aid*[1 3]
	£ million	*£ million*	*£ million*	*£ million*	*£ million*
1976-77	Not available	—	50	—	—
1977-78	Not available	—	50	—	—
1978-79	140	—	78	—	—
1979-80	180	—	94	—	—
1980-81	200	—	67	—	—
1981-82	250	—	92	—	—
1982-83	300	—	135	—	—
1983-84	350	—	202	—	—
1984-85	400	—	231	—	—
1985-86	450	—	302	—	—
1986-87	500	—	326	4	—
1987-88	650	1	[4]330	9	—
1988-89	700	3·5	[4]340	21	—
1989-90	725	7	[4]380	28	—
1990-91	[4]825	[4]10	[4]380	[4]17	[4]43

[1] Includes tax repayments to charities by Inland Revenue.
[2] Covers estates above the capital transfer tax/inheritance tax threshold. For transfers made before 15 March 1983 and on or within one year of death, the amount of transfer qualifying for relief was limited; amounts in excess of the limits are excluded from the figures.
[3] Single donations from companies are included under gift aid from October 1990.
[4] Provisional.

Long-term Care

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his policy on the taxation of benefits paid for by, or provided out of, insurance or pension-related policies for long-term care.

Mr. Maude: Insurance or pension-related policies providing long-term health care benefits are only just beginning to become available in the United Kingdom. These policies may take a number of forms. The appropriate tax treatment of the benefits payable under those policies will depend on the precise form the policy takes.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Donald Thompson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many claims by do-it-yourself house builders for refunds of value added tax under the provisions of Customs and Excise Notice No. 719 were met in whole or in part during the years ended 31 December 1989 and 31 December 1990.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: A total of 9,585 claims were paid by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise in 1989 and 9,886 in 1990.

EC Directives

Mr. Favell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the cost of the implementation of European Community draft directive document No. 8162/90 on procurement procedures to *(a)* the Exchequer (i) directly and (ii) channelled via the European institutions and *(b)* industry.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: European Community document No. 8162/90 has been overtaken by the Commission's modified proposal, 6925/91, and subsequent discussions in the Council. The proposal is for a directive —the remedies directive—to ensure compliance with the procurement procedures applicable to the utilities in the energy, telecommunications, transport and water sectors under Council directive 90/531/EEC. Both directives are to be brought into effect in most member states by 1 January 1993. In the form in which it is likely to be adopted the remedies directive will involve the same basic system as Council directive 89/665/EEC, the parallel provision for ensuring compliance with the supplies and works directives by the public bodies to which they apply. Suppliers and contractors harmed by a breach of Community procurement law, or the national rules which implement it, will be able to seek remedies from the courts. It is too soon to estimate the likely number of cases and thus to estimate the costs to the court system. There will be some administrative costs in providing information to the Commission about alleged breaches and in establishing an attestation system under which the utilities may voluntarily subject their procurement procedures and practices to independent examination and certification. There may also be minor administrative costs in forwarding to the Commission applications for the use of a voluntary conciliation procedure. There will be additional costs to the Commission in monitoring compliance with the underlying procurement directive and the Commission has now estimated that the expenses of advisory committee discussions on the present proposal will be of the order of £13,000 a year. There would be additional costs for the European Court of Justice if an increased number of references to it under article 177/EEC resulted from the directive. Costs to the utilities will depend on the number of cases taken to court and can be avoided by compliance with the underlying procurement directive. The Council's rejection of a Commission

proposal for compulsory attestation has removed a significant potential cost for the utilities. Last minute amendments to the provisions for the conciliation procedure as an alternative to litigation will put the costs on the parties concerned.

Civil Service

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the percentage of civil service jobs located in Scotland as a percentage of the total number of civil servant jobs in Great Britain in 1979, 1985 and the latest available date for which figures are available.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The percentages are as follows:

Percentage of all civil servants employed in Scotland

	Percentage
1979	9·7
1985	10·4
1990	9·8

Note: 1990 is the latest year for which figures are available.
Source: Civil Service Statistics.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will list the units and the Government Departments of which they formed part which moved to Scotland as part of the relocation of civil service jobs, the number of jobs involved in each case and the site in Scotland to which they moved, between 1979 and the latest date for which figures are available;

(2) if he will give the total number of civil service jobs relocated between 1979 and the latest date for which figures are available and the percentage of these which moved to Scotland;

(3) if he will list the number of civil service jobs re-located from other parts of the United Kingdom to Scotland in each year since 1979.

Mrs. Gillian Shepherd: Prior to the introduction of current relocation policy in March 1988, it is estimated that Departments moved a total of some 12,000 posts out of the south-east, about half under the Government's centrally directed dispersal programme and half at departments' own initiative. Comprehensive data on posts which were located or relocated at departments' own initiative are not held centrally, but the Inland Revenue opened a new office in Cumbernauld in 1987 with 32 posts. Relocations to Scotland under the dispersal programme were as follows:

Department	*Number of posts*	*Location*
MOD: including pay and records offices; Directorate of Contract; Defence Certification Authority etc	1,330	Glasgow
ODA (including Overseas Manpower Services, Pensions and Account departments, etc); Crown Agents Pensions Division	600	East Kilbride

Since March 1988, nearly 9,300 further posts have been located or relocated outside the south-east by Government Departments. Of these, the following related to Scotland:

Department	*Number of posts*	*Location*
Department of Social Security: work transferred from London social security offices	510	Glasgow
Inland Revenue: new TOBBI office	43	Glenrothes
Inland Revenue: PAYE work	40	Edinburgh
	40	Glasgow
	25	Livingston
Inland Revenue: Operations division—specialist tax work	10	Glasgow
Home Office (Passport Office)	88	Glasgow
Ministry of Defence (Contracts branch)	70	Glasgow
Overseas Development Administration: including statistics, staff training and personnel work	53	East Kilbride
Cabinet Office: Civil Service Occupational Health Service	22	Edinburgh
Office of Electricity Regulation: local offices	18	Edinburgh
	4	Perth
Department of Trade and Industry: Insolvency Service posts	5	Edinburgh
TOTAL	928	

Altogether, at least 2,890 posts have been located or relocated to Scotland since April 1979, which represents over 13 per cent. of total posts located or relocated away from the south-east. A broad annual breakdown for these posts is as follows:

	Number
1979	0
1980	0
1981	425
1982	170
1983	190
1984	75
1985	1,070
1986	0
1987	30
1988	110
1989	305
1990	440
1991	75

Further locations and relocations to Scotland are now planned by departments which will involve more than 1,500 extra posts. These include further posts for the Inland Revenue TOBBI office at Glenrothes; new TOBBI offices at Falkirk and Dundee; a new PAYE office at East Kilbride; a new DSS Child Support Agency office for Falkirk and new Health and Safety Executive oil safety directorate posts for Aberdeen.

Football Pools

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the sums received by the Exchequer from football pools betting duty for each year since 1979-80 and as a total over the same period.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Receipts from pool betting duty were as follows:

	£ million
1979-80	136·1
1980-81	157·0
1981-82	176·0
1982-83	199·3
1983-84	204·9
1984-85	218·0
1985-86	235·3
1986-87	254·2
1987-88	277·0
1988-89	279·0
1989-90	303·8
1990-91	303·9
	2,744·5

Duty-free Shopping

Mr. Hind: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the future of duty-free shopping for travellers within the European Community.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Government have carefully considered all the evidence received from industries likely to be affected by abolition of the current duty-free arrangements in the light of the European Commission's position that duty-free should cease for intra-EC traffic as part of the dismantling of fiscal frontiers at the end of 1992. The Government feel that there is no case for indefinite retention of duty-frees once the single market has been established, but that a substantial transition period would be helpful to give affected industries time to reorganise and seek alternative sources of revenue. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will be arguing for such a transition in forthcoming negotiations in Brussels.

Council Tax

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the Inland Revenue will commence the valuation of domestic properties in preparation for the introduction of the council tax; and how their costs will be financed.

Mr. Maples: Subject to the enactment of the Local Government Finance and Valuation Bill the preparatory work on the valuation of domestic properties will begin in August 1991. This preparatory work will be put in hand by the Inland Revenue Valuation Office on behalf of the Department of the Environment and the Welsh Office and will include the direction of the work in Scotland for the Scottish Office.

Parliamentary approval for this new expenditure will be sought in supplementary estimates for the "Revenue support grant, payments of non-domestic rates, Valuation Office rating services etc., England Vote"—class VIII vote 9—the "Revenue support grant, Community charge reduction scheme grant and payments of national non-domestic rates, Wales Vote"—class XVI vote 10—the "Rate rebate grants transitional relief and community charge reduction grants, Scotland Vote"—class XV vote 22—and the "Inland Revenue administration Vote"—class XVIII vote 6.

Pending that approval urgent expenditure by the Inland Revenue estimated at £61 million will be met by repayable advances from the contingencies fund.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is making a separate announcement about the arrangements in Scotland.

Civil Service Pay

Sir John Farr: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on civil service pay.

Mr. Norman Lamont: It is important that pay systems in the public sector should make a regular and direct link between a person's contribution to the standards of service provided and his or her reward. The Government have a direct responsibility as employer for over 550,000 civil servants. I would therefore like to explain how I see the pay systems in the civil service developing. Pay has an important part to play in raising the quality and improving the responsiveness of public services—a key theme in the citizens charter.

For most staff in the civil service other than those covered by the Top Salaries Review Body, pay is negotiated between the Treasurey and the recognised trade unions, mainly on the basis of pay agreements concluded over the past few years. The existence of such pay agreements, and their provision for negotiation of annual settlements on the basis of the interquartile range of private sector pay settlements, has provided useful stability in settling civil service pay. The agreements have also provided an important assurance to staff that pay will be determined fairly and within a clear and transparent framework, linked to their performance and career development. The Government continue to attach importance to these principles.

But any organisation must be able to adapt to changing needs. The Government now want to introduce more flexible pay regimes for the civil service, both nationally and locally.

The new pay system must meet the needs and objectives of departments and agencies; they must be demonstrably beneficial to the citizen, fair to the employee and linked to the delivery of high-quality public services; and they must be affordable. This means developing pay structures which reward good performance and penalise bad.

Progress has already been made in providing for pay flexibility, and further progress can be made in pursuing greater delegation, within the existing agreements. But the Government have concluded that the agreements as they

stand do not provide a framework that is fully capable of meeting the needs of the 1990s. It has informed the unions that it wishes to negotiate changes to them.

I therefore propose to introduce three new elements into civil service pay structures. The first is to put in place a range of forms of performance-related pay in order to achieve a closer link between performance and reward both for individuals and for groups of staff. This will be an important means of securing the objective of improving the quality of public services, which is at the heart of the citizens charter programme. Over time, performance will come to determine a larger proportion of the pay bill without performance pay becoming a disguised way of providing unacceptably high increases in the pay bill.

The second is further to enable responsibility for pay bargaining to be delegated to civil service departments or agencies, to allow them wider discretion in relation to their pay and grading regimes. Alternative pay and grading structures will be approved where they are expected to produce value-for-money benefits greater than through centrally controlled negotiation.

The third is to give an option to those departments and agencies for which such extensive discretion is not appropriate to negotiate for themselves flexibilities of their own within the total of the overall central pay settlement agreed by the Treasury.

The Government believe that in appropriate cases greater delegation of pay and grading arrangements can secure better value for money from the pay bill, increasing productivity and providing better services to the citizen as taxpayer. This will be a key consideration when the Treasury approves delegated pay and grading systems and increased flexibilities. The Government also believe that in the public sector, as in the private sector, there should be transparency about pay costs, including the effects of delegation. Those departments and agencies which do not at present do so will in future publish figures for the pay bill and for employment in the latest financial year in departmental reports or in agency accounts as companies are already obliged to do by the 1985 Companies Act.

The work which the Civil Service does is of the highest importance for the prosperity of the nation and the welfare of its citizens. The proposals I have announced today will secure for the civil service future pay arrangements which suit the widely differing nature of its work, while enabling links to be maintained where these are useful. They will establish a proper relationship between pay and performance throughout the service. They will continue to allow informed collective bargaining; secure the confidence of the public in the system and of staff that their pay will be determined fairly; and enable the Government to ensure that a higher standard of service is delivered to the citizen while reconciling their responsibilities for the control of public expenditure with their responsibilities as an employer.

Tax Reliefs

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) of 7 February, *Official Report*, columns *203-4*, if he will publish a table taking account of the changes announced in the 1991 Budget showing the revised costs in 1991-92 of *(a)* personal allowance, *(b)* married couples allowance, *(c)* age allowance, *(d)* mortgage interest relief, *(e)* relief on contributions to personal pensions, *(f)* relief on employees' contributions to occupational pension schemes and *(g)* relief on contributions to health insurance schemes, and where applicable, the direct revenue yields in a full year at 1991-92 levels of income from restricting income tax allowances and reliefs to the basic rate.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 22 July 1991]:* The latest estimates of the direct revenue costs for 1991-92 are as follows. Each relief has been costed separately; the combined cost of more than one cannot, therefore, be calculated by summing the figures.

	£ million
Personal allowance	26,500
Married couple's allowance	5,300
Age-related allowances[1]	700
Mortgage interest relief[2]	6,250
Relief on contributions to personal pensions[3]	1,300
Relief on employee's contributions to occupational pension schemes	2,300
Relief on contributions to health insurance schemes	60

The estimated direct revenue yields in a full year at 1991-92 levels of income from restricting the following income tax allowances and reliefs to the basic rate are:

	£ million
Personal allowance	970
Married couple's allowance	340
Age-related allowances[1]	Nil
Mortgage interest relief[2]	n.a.
Relief on contributions to personal pensions[3]	[4]150
Relief on employee's contributions to occupational pension schemes	250
Relief on contributions to health insurance schemes	10

[1] The higher levels of the age-related personal and married couple's allowances given to those aged 65 and over subject to the income limit.

[2] Based on the assumption that currently announced interest rates remain at these levels for the remainder of 1991-92.

[3] Including relief for retirement annuity premia and free standing additional voluntary contributions.

[4] This estimate is subject to a wide margin of error.

n.a.—Not applicable.

The direct revenue yield from restricting all reliefs and allowances to the basic rate is likely to be of the order of £2,200 million, somewhat more than the sums of the yields from restricting the reliefs and allowances separately; this is due to the cumulative effect of bringing more people into higher rate tax. No account has been taken of possible behavioural change resulting from such a restriction.

Taxation

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update the answer given to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 29 July 1988, *Official Report*, columns *735-36*, giving figures for 1989-90, 1990-91 and his latest forecast for the current financial year as a full year basis; and if he will show the amount raised by value added tax, separately, for each financial year since 1978-79 and his latest forecast for the current financial year as a full year basis.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 22 July 1991]:* The information is as follows. The forecasts are consistent with the 1991 "Financial Statement and Budget Report". All figures are on an accruals basis as in the national income and expenditure accounts.

	Personal income taxes	*National insurance contributions*	*Capital taxes*	*Corporate taxes*[1]	*Rates and community charge*	*Value added tax*	*Other central Government expenditure taxes*
	£ billion	*£ billion*	*£ billion*	*£ billion*	*£ billion*	*£ billion*	*£ billion*
1978-79	19·1	10·2	0·8	4·4	5·8	5·2	13·0
1979-80	21·1	12·0	1·0	6·7	6·8	9·7	15·6
1980-81	24·9	14·4	1·2	7·9	8·7	11·5	17·4
1981-82	29·2	16·5	1·7	10·5	10·7	12·6	21·1
1982-83	30·5	18·7	1·5	12·8	12·1	13·9	21·2
1983-84	31·7	21·3	1·7	13·8	12·3	15·7	22·4
1984-85	33·3	22·7	1·9	17·7	12·9	17·6	23·0
1985-86	35·8	24·7	2·2	18·6	13·9	19·8	24·1
1986-87	38·1	26·7	2·6	15·1	15·7	22·2	26·6
1987-88	41·4	29·5	2·9	18·8	17·1	24·8	28·4
1988-89	43·7	32·8	4·1	20·0	19·2	28·2	29·9
1989-90	49·5	33·4	4·0	22·4	20·8	30·2	31·3
1990-91	56·2	35·4	4·2	22·3	24·0	31·7	32·4
[2]1991-92	60·1	37·2	3·6	19·1	21·3	37·6	35·2

[1] Corporation tax (including advance corporation tax but excluding corporation tax on capital gains), petroleum revenue tax, oil royalties, IBA levy and supplementary petroleum duty.
[2] Forecast.

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update the answer given to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) of 29 July 1988, *Official Report*, column *736*, and give figures for 1989-90 and 1990-91 and forecast 1991-92, taking account of the changes announced in the 1991 Budget, with poll tax and uniform business rate shown separately as appropriate.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 22 July 1991]:* The figures requested are set out in the table. Reliable estimates of indirect tax payments cannot be made outside the range of three quarters to one and a half times average earnings. As in the answer given to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, local authority taxes are excluded.

Taxes as a percentage of gross earnings for a one earner couple with two children:

Proportion of average male earnings *Per cent.*	*£ per week*	*Income tax and NICs, less child benefit* *Per cent.*	*Indirect taxes* *Per cent.*
1988-89			
300	768·90	30·3	—
100	256·30	20·7	12·7
60	153·78	11·8	—
45	115·34	4·4	—
1989-90			
300	839·70	30·5	—
100	279·90	20·8	12·2
60	167·94	11·9	—
45	125·96	4·6	—
1990-91			
300	921·30	31·1	—
100	307·10	20·8	11·9
60	184·26	12·1	—
45	138·20	4·7	—
1991-92			
300	999·60	30·8	—
100	333·20	20·8	12·6
60	199·92	12·1	—
45	149·94	4·7	—

ECU Bonds

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total value of bonds denominated in European currency units which have been issued during 1991 by *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* the rest of the European Community; and what were the figures for the whole of 1990.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 23 July 1991]:* No bonds were issued in European currency units by the United Kingdom in 1990. The amount issued to date in 1991 is 2·75 billion ecu. Corresponding figures for sovereign country bonds denominated in ecu and issued via the international Eurobond market for the rest of the European Community are approximately 3·3 billion ecu and 4·15 billion ecu respectively.

Young People (Incomes)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table ensuring his best estimate of the number of young people aged under 25 years with gross weekly incomes *(a)* up to £30, *(b)* £30 to £40, *(c)* £40 to £50, *(d)* £50 to £60, *(e)* £60 to £70, *(f)* £70 to £80, *(g)* £80 to £90, *(h)* £90 to £100, *(i)* £100 to £120, *(j)* £120 to £140, *(k)* £140 to £160, *(l)* £160 to £180, *(m)* £180 to £200, *(n)* £200 to £250, *(o)* £250 to £300, *(p)* £300 to £350, *(q)* £350 to £400, *(r)* £400 to £450 and *(s)* over £450 distinguishing between single people and couples.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 22 July 1991]:* Available estimates from the survey of personal incomes are shown in the table. It covers those with earned income over £2,600 in 1988-89 and is confined to men and single women. The sample available is too small to permit a distinction to be made by marital status, or subdivision by income range of those with earned income over £15,600. Some of the men and women included in the table would have been earning for only part of the year.

Total earned income for 1988-89 (lower limit) £	*Numbers of men and single women under 25* *Thousands*
2,600	270
3,120	320
3,640	270
4.160	300
4,680	300
5,200	630
6,240	440
7,280	390
8,320	360
9,360	250
10,400	330
13,000	90
[1]15,600	70

[1] And over.

The precise age of one in eight of those under 65 and with earned income over £2,600 in 1988-89 is not known. It has been assumed that the proportion under 25 in each earned income band is the same as that where age is known.

Business Expansion Scheme

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what amount of business expansion scheme expenditure has been allocated or is programmed for each year from 1988-89 to 1992-93.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 23 July 1991]:* The latest estimates of the cost of income tax relief for the business expansion scheme are as follows:

	£ million
1988-89	150
1989-90	[1]75
1990-91	[1]120

[1] Provisional estimates.

Costs in 1991-92 and 1992-93 will depend on amounts raised in those years.

Banks

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy in respect of current discussions within the European Community as to whether branches of banks whose head office is in another country should be subject to control by the host country or the home country.

Mr. Maples *[holding answer 23 July 1991]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) on 17 July, *Official Report*, column *190*.

Foundation for Sport and the Arts

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer further to his answer of 15 July, *Official Report*, column *44*, if he will make it his policy to place in the Library a copy of the trust deed setting up the Foundation for Sport and the Arts, schedules of decisions taken at each meeting of the Sport and Arts Foundation, and a copy of the auditor's annual report on the foundation, once each is published.

Mr. Mellor: As my answer of 15 July at column *44* made clear, the auditors' annual report on the foundation will be submitted to the Minister for Sport, not to the Treasury. I understand, however, from my hon. Friend, that he does intend to place a copy in the Library. Whether of not the trust deed should be deposited in the Library and the exact form in which the trustees' decisions will be recorded and made public are, of course, matters which can be decided only once the foundation is formally established.

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on progress towards establishing the Foundation for Sport and the Arts.

Mr. Mellor: Good progress has been achieved in establishing the Foundation for Sport and the Arts. All three members of the Pools Promoters Association—Littlewoods, Vernons and Zetters—have announced their participation; clauses have been adopted in the Finance Bill to give effect to the reduction in pool betting duty proposed in the Chancellor's Budget speech; the promoters will soon be announcing the names of the chairman and trustees; and the foundation will begin to receive an income next month, following the start of the 1991-92 football season.

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) of 17 June, *Official Report*, column *9*, whether the trustees to the Foundation for Sport and the Arts have been appointed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I understand that the members of the Pools Promoters Association are close to completing the task of selecting trustees for the Foundation for Sport and the Arts and that they will be making an announcement shortly.

Project Funding

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what guidelines he has given to the United Kingdom representative to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development as to what environmental impact criteria should be applied when considering applications for project funding.

Mrs. Chalker: I have been asked to reply.

The agreement establishing the bank stipulated that it would adopt environmentally sound operational procedures and environmental assessment is intended to be an integral part of the project cycle and decision making progress. We have urged the bank to adopt EC standards wherever possible and the bank will promote adoption of the environmental principles of the European Community delineated in the Treaty of Rome as amended by the Single European Act in 1987. For regional projects, the principles of the UN/ECE convention on environmental impact assessment will apply where they are appropriate. The United Kingdom representative will be guided also by the Overseas Development Administration (ODA) manual on environmental assessment.

EMPLOYMENT

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the accountability of TECs to Parliament.

Mr. Jackson: Training and enterprise councils are accountable to the Department through a contract which provides a framework for their activities and provides a clear statement of the management information which they must supply to enable their performance to be monitored against the agreed targets in their corporate and business plans.

TECs are, in addition, obliged to prepare summaries of their corporate and business plans and annual reports and I have arranged for copies of these documents to be deposited in the House of Commons Library as they become available.

I have also written to all Members of Parliament to encourage them to take an interest in and support their local training and enterprise council; and to take up directly matters which are within the day-to-day responsibility of TECs.

Health and Safety

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the published and unpublished research reports that have been completed on behalf of his Department concerning the subject of health and safety hazards in the non-ferrous metals industry.

Mr. Forth: The Department does not hold a consolidated list of research reports completed on its behalf. However, 45 such reports, issued since 1985, have been identified from various sources as relevant to the health and safety hazards in the non-ferrous metals industry and I am sending the hon. Member the list of titles of those reports.

Earnings

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table showing the number and percentage of full-time workers earning less than £120 per week, giving the information for *(a)* women and *(b)* men for (i) manual, (ii) non-manual and (iii) all workers, including overtime pay and excluding overtime pay, in *(a)* Wales, *(b)* each Welsh county and *(c)* Great Britain as a whole.

Mr. Jackson: The information available from the 1990 New Earnings Survey is shown in the following tables. The results from the April 1991 survey will be published this November.

April 1990

Full time manual employees on adult rates with weekly earnings excluding overtime less than £120—pay for the survey pay period not affected by absence

	Number in the sample		Percentage of total	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Wales	182	182	38·6	8·7
Clwyd-West	[1]—	8	[1]—	10·0
Clwyd-East	30	17	46·9	6·6
Clwyd	42	25	47·2	7·4
Dyfed[2]	[1]—	16	[1]—	13·0
Gwent	38	32	45·8	8·0
Gwynedd	[1]—	22	[1]—	14·2
Mid Glamorgan	28	22	28·6	6·5
Powys	[1]—	5	[1]—	6·4
South Glamorgan	17	26	27·4	9·0
West Glamorgan[3]	20	34	34·5	9·0
Great Britain	3,372	2,815	37·1	6·8

Source: New Earnings Survey.

[1] —denotes sampling error too large or numbers too small for reliable estimate.

[2] Excluding Llanelli.

[3] Including Llanelli.

April 1990

Full-time non-manual employees on adult rates with weekly earnings excluding overtime less than £120—pay for the survey pay period not affected by absence

	Number in the sample		Percentage of total	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Wales	230	50	16·9	3·3
Clwyd-West	[1]—	3	[1]—	5·3
Clwyd-East	16	2	15·7	1·4
Clwyd	31	5	17·9	2·5
Dyfed[2]	29	3	23·8	2·7
Gwent	28	12	16·1	5·7
Gwynedd	18	7	18·9	6·2
Mid Glamorgan	36	5	15·5	2·6
Powys	[1]—	1	[1]—	2·3
South Glamorgan	41	8	13·6	2·0
West Glamorgan[3]	40	9	18·3	3·8
Great Britain	3,850	1,025	11·1	2·5

Source: New Earnings Survey.

[1]— denotes sampling error too large or numbers too small for reliable estimate.

[2] Excluding Llanelli.

[3] Including Llanelli.

April 1990

Full time employees on adult rates with weekly earnings excluding overtime less than £120—pay for the survey pay period not affected by absence

	Number in the sample		Percentage of total	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Wales	412	232	22·5	6·5
Clwyd-West	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
Clwyd-East	46	19	27·7	4·8
Clwyd	73	30	27·9	5·6
Dyfed[2]	46	19	30·7	8·2
Gwent	66	44	25·7	7·2
Gwynedd	26	29	21·1	10·9
Mid Glamorgan	64	27	19·4	5·1
Powys	19	6	26·0	5·0
South Glamorgan	58	34	15·9	5·0
West Glamorgan[3]	60	43	21·7	7·0
Great Britain	7,222	3,840	16·5	4·6

Source: New Earnings Survey.

[1] —denotes sampling error too large or numbers too small for reliable estimate.

[2] Excluding Llanelli.

[3] Including Llanelli.

April 1990

Full time manual employees on adult rates with weekly earnings including overtime less than £120—pay for the survey pay period not affected by absence

	Number in the sample		Percentage of total	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Wales	162	129	34·3	6·2
Clwyd—West	[1]—	6	[1]—	7·5
Clwyd—East	26	15	40·6	5·9
Clwyd	38	21	42·7	6·2
Dyfed[2]	[1]—	11	[1]—	8·9

	Number in the sample		Percentage of total	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Gwent	34	22	41·0	5·5
Gwynedd	[1]—	19	[1]—	12·3
Mid Glamorgan	26	14	26·5	4·1
Powys	[1]—	5	[1]—	6·4
South Glamorgan	17	17	27·4	5·9
West Glamorgan[3]	15	20	25·9	5·3
Great Britain	3,002	1,900	33·0	4·6

Source: New Earnings Survey.

[1] — denotes sampling error too large or numbers too small for reliable estimate.

[2] Excluding Llanelli.

[3] Including Llanelli.

April 1990

Full time non-manual employees on adult rates with weekly earnings including overtime less than £120—pay for the survey pay period not affected by absence

	Number in the sample		Percentage of total	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Wales	216	45	15·8	3·0
Clwyd-West	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
Clwyd-East	16	2	15·7	1·4
Clwyd	29	5	16·8	2·5
Dyfed[2]	28	2	23·0	1·8
Gwent	26	11	14·9	5·2
Gwynedd	18	6	18·9	5·4
Mid Glamorgan	34	5	14·7	2·6
Powys	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
South Glamorgan	37	7	12·3	1·8
West Glamorgan[3]	37	8	17·0	3·4
Great Britain	3,548	879	10·3	2·1

Source: New Earnings Survey.

[1] — denotes sampling error too large or numbers too small for reliable estimate.

[2] Excluding Llanelli.

[3] Including Llanelli.

April 1990

Full time employees on adult rates with weekly earnings including overtime less than £120—pay for the survey pay period not affected by absence

	Number in the sample		Percentage of total	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Wales	378	174	20·6	4·8
Clwyd-West	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
Clwyd-East	42	17	25·3	4·3
Clwyd	67	26	25·6	4·9
Dyfed[2]	43	13	28·7	5·6
Gwent	60	33	23·3	5·4
Gwynedd	26	25	21·1	9·4
Mid Glamorgan	60	19	18·2	3·6
Powys	16	6	21·9	5·0
South Glamorgan	54	24	14·8	3·5
West Glamorgan[3]	52	28	18·8	4·6
Great Britain	6,550	2,779	15·0	3·4

Source: New Earnings Survey.

[1] — denotes sampling error too large or numbers too small for reliable estimate.

[2] Excluding Llanelli.

[3] Including Llanelli.

Offshore Safety Inspectorate

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what the Health and Safety Executive is doing to make up for the loss in other divisions of staff transferred to the Offshore Safety Division; and what is the consequential loss of staff years of experience among those inspectorates that have had staff seconded.

Mr. Forth: Since 1 April 1991, 10 staff with a total of 128 years experience in the Health and Safety Executive have been seconded to the offshore safety division from other parts of HSE. Staff movements on this limited scale are normal in an organisation with nearly 4,000 staff and any resulting vacancies will be filled using standard HSE recruitment methods.

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many workers in each wages council industry in England, Wales and in each Welsh county have had their individual pay and conditions checked by the wages councils in each of the last three years; and in how many cases underpayments were discovered.

Mr. Forth: The figures for England and Wales are given in the following tables. Statistics are not kept for counties.

Workers checked and found underpaid
1988 to 1990
Wales

	1988		1989		1990	
	Checked	Underpaid	Checked	Underpaid	Checked	Underpaid
Aerated waters	0	0	11	0	0	0
Clothing manufacture	461	71	255	2	29	2
Boot and shoe repairing	0	0	2	1	0	0
Button manufacturing	0	0	36	0	0	0
Coffin furniture and cerement making	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cotton waste reclamation	11	1	0	0	0	0
Flax and hemp	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fur	0	0	0	0	0	0
General waste materials reclamation	10	1	5	0	29	1
Hairdressing undertakings	263	18	240	29	466	30
Hat, cap and millinery	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lace finishing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Laundry	21	0	56	1	1	1
Linen and cotten handkerchief	66	41	0	0	0	0
Made-up textiles	0	0	0	0	7	0
Ostrich and fancy feather	0	0	0	0	0	0
Perambulator and invalid carriage	0	0	162	0	0	0

	1988		1989		1990	
	Checked	Underpaid	Checked	Underpaid	Checked	Underpaid
Retail bespoke tailoring	1	1	1	0	5	0
Rope, twine and net	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sack and bag	0	0	5	0	2	0
Toy manufacturing	144	0	0	0	76	0
Retail non-food trades	2,598	239	1,130	123	2,705	205
Retail food and allied trades	1,311	248	1,749	260	2068	379
Licensed non-residential	1,355	156	1,165	112	957	79
Licensed residential and licensed restaurant	1,813	63	1,112	112	1,768	162
Unlicensed place of refreshment	304	58	586	69	634	127
Totals	8,358	897	6,515	709	8,747	986

Workers checked and found underpaid
1988 to 1990
England

	1988		1989		1990	
	Checked	Underpaid	Checked	Underpaid	Checked	Underpaid
Aerated waters	2,719	12	338	1	278	0
Clothing manufacture	11,615	381	7,870	348	8,747	282
Boot and shoe repairing	733	19	467	11	79	12
Button manufacturing	163	0	97	1	33	1
Coffin furniture and cerement making	42	0	11	0	38	1
Cotton waste reclamation	43	0	25	0	0	0
Flax and hemp	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fur	216	2	42	2	13	0
General waste materials reclamation	1,350	9	682	7	648	5
Hairdressing undertakings	6,551	363	7,331	338	6,902	322
Hat, cap and millinery	651	0	320	0	301	2
Lace finishing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Laundry	3,876	37	2,977	29	591	13
Linen and cotten handkerchief	338	8	707	8	64	2
Made-up textiles	448	1	249	17	418	19
Ostrich and fancy feather	33	0	123	0	23	0
Perambulator and invalid carriage	139	0	101	0	0	0
Retail bespoke tailoring	144	6	121	6	34	3
Rope, twine and net	299	0	1,190	0	148	0
Sack and bag	150	0	43	0	107	1
Toy manufacturing	439	4	606	14	568	2
Retail non-food trades	86,977	1,363	64,208	1,524	49,245	1,434
Retail food and allied trades	117,567	3,473	105,267	3,797	47,368	4,133
Licensed non-residential	25,839	1,918	37,235	1,656	35,686	1,227
Licensed residential and licensed restaurant	24,574	618	36,069	835	37,049	650
Unlicensed place of refreshment	7,455	653	24,016	510	44,730	572
Totals	292,361	8,867	290,095	9,104	233,070	8,681

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the closure of the Health and Safety Executive office in Cambridge and the relocation of its staff to Luton; if he will list *(a)* those areas that the office was responsible for, *(b)* the industrial sectors that the inspectors there were predominately concerned with, and *(c)* indicate the impact on inspector travelling time and the rate and ability of inspectors to respond to incidents in these areas from relocation to Luton.

Mr. Forth: The Health and Safety Executive decided to close its local office in Cambridge to streamline its activities and enable the best use to be made of available resources. In making this decision, full account was taken of the need to maintain an efficient and effective service in Cambridgeshire.

For some years, inspection work in the area has been shared between staff located in the HSE area office in Luton and those based in the local office in Cambridge. Inspectors based in the Cambridge office had specific inspection responsibility for the print industry and Ministry of Defence premises in Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire and for general manufacturing industries, agriculture, forestry and fishing industries and local and national government premises in Cambridgeshire.

Inspection work in other industries in Cambridgeshire —including for example construction, ceramics, wood-working, motor vehicle manufacture and chemical manufacture—has been carried out by inspectors based in Luton.

Inspectors already travelling from Luton to make inspection visits in Cambridgeshire have not experienced any operational difficulties. The closure of the Cambridge

office will provide a greater degree of flexibility both to respond to incidents and enable the targeting of inspection activity where it is most needed.

As there will be no reduction in the numbers of inspectors working in and around Cambridge a drop in inspection levels is not anticipated.

Offshore Safety Inspectors

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many staff years will be taken up by the training of all new Offshore Safety Division inspectors.

Mr. Forth: The amount of training given will depend on the number of inspectors recruited and their background and experience.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what the Health and Safety Executive has done to recruit Offshore Safety Division specialist staff; how many vacancies currently exist; and how many applications have been received.

Mr. Forth: The Health and Safety Executive is currently undertaking a series of recruitment campaigns. The initial competition, which was first advertised on 14 March 1991, had 533 applicants. The second round of the campaign is now under way. Advertisements started on 17 June 1991 and the closing date is 2 August 1991. To date 500 applications have been received.

The intention is to increase the specialist staff in the division over the next three years; the first target set is for 143 specialist staff by 1 April 1992.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many Health and Safety Executive staff have been transferred *(a)* temporarily or *(b)* permanently to the Offshore Safety Division; from which inspectorates these staff were taken; and how long the temporary staff have been seconded for.

Mr. Forth: Ten Health and Safety Executive staff are currently working in the offshore safety division from their parent division:

3 Mines Inspectors
2 Specialist Inspectors from the Technology Division
1 Nuclear Inspector
1 Agricultural Inspector (as Training Manager)
2 Factory Inspectors
1 Senior Employment Nursing Adviser

Each individual's period of attachment is under review and as yet no decision has been made on duration or whether the move will become permanent.

Health and Safety

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the incidences of *(a)* squamous cell cancer and *(b)* emphysema, occurring (i) in the non-ferrous metals industry and (ii) among workers who have been exposed to the fumes produced by degassing tablets used in aluminium gravity die-casting.

Mr. Forth: Cancers of the lung, which may include squamous cell cancer, have been associated to varying degrees of certainty with occupational exposure to several substances present in the non-ferrous foundry industry and it is known that cadmium fume can cause emphysema.

There is no evidence of a specific risk to humans of either condition arising from the fumes produced by degassing tablets used in the aluminium gravity die casting industry.

Earnings

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table showing the number and average gross weekly earnings, excluding overtime, of men and women employed *(a)* for 35 hours, *(b)* between 24 and 34 hours, *(c)* 16 to 23 hours, *(d)* between 8 and 15 hours and *(e)* fewer than 8 hours per week for the categories (i) manual and (ii) non-manual in (1) Wales, (2) each Welsh county and (3) Great Britain as a whole.

Mr. Jackson: The information requested is not available.

Safety Representatives

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what he is doing to promote *(a)* the use of, *(b)* the training of and *(c)* the effectiveness of safety representatives in the workplace.

Mr. Forth: The Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 provide extensive legal rights to safety representatives, including the right to paid time off work to receive training. It is for the safety representatives and the unions to decide whether and how to exercise these rights. The effectiveness of the regulations is kept under review by the Health and Safety Commission. I will consider any proposals that the commission may decide to put to me.

Works Permits

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether a decision has yet been made on a special annual quota for 1991 of work permits for workers from the dependent territories.

Mr. Howard: It has been decided that there should be a quota for 1991 of 170 permits for use by dependent territories, with a maximum of 125 for Hong Kong.

We have also taken the opportunity to review the longer-term position of the special dependent territories work permit quota. Our conclusion is that it is now anomalous and inconsistent with our immigration control, in that it grants permits for jobs with skill levels below those required under the general work permit scheme. With increasing pressures on immigration worldwide, it is important that our rules are consistent.

The quota scheme was never intended to continue indefinitely and has now served its purpose. Accordingly, the Government have decided that the quota should end. However, in order that dependent territories should have time to adjust to this, the quota will be phased out gradually as set out in the table.

Citizens from dependent territories will still be covered by the work permit scheme, which allows non-EC nationals to be employed here if they have high-level skills that are in short supply, are participating in an intra-company move or meet other important labour market needs. They will also be eligible for consideration for permits under my Department's training and work experience scheme.

Dependent territories special work permit quota: phasing out over four years beginning 1991

	Total	Maximum for Hong Kong	Others
1991	170	125	45
1992	140	100	40
1993	110	75	35
1994	80	50	30
1995	Nil	Nil	Nil

EC Directives

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his latest estimate of the cost of the implementation of European Community draft directive document No. 4466/91 on European works council to *(a)* the Exchequer (i) directly and (ii) channelled via the European institutions, and *(b)* industry.

Mr. Forth: It is not possible to make precise estimates, but responses to the Department's consultation document confirm the Government's view that the costs could be considerable and that the European Commission's calculations of the likely costs to industry under-estimate those costs because they do not take account of all the necessary factors.

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his latest estimate of the cost of the implementation of European Community draft directive document Nos. 8073/90, 8792/90, 4112/91 and 8075/90 on community social charter measures to *(a)* the Exchequer (i) directly and (ii) channelled via the European institutions, *(b)* industry and *(c)* the British consumer.

Mr. Forth: It is estimated that the cost to employers, in the private and public sectors, of general application of directive 8073 control of working time would be at least £2·5 billion per annum. It is estimated that the cost to employers of implementing the health and safety, maternity pay and right to return provisions of directives 8792/90 and 4112/91—protection of pregnant women at work—would in total be £500 to £650 million initially. Detailed estimates for directive 8075/90—health and safety on construction sites—are being prepared.

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his latest estimate of the cost of the implementation of European Community draft directive document No. 9908/90 on equal opportunities for men and women to *(a)* the Exchequer (i) directly and (ii) channelled via the European institutions, *(b)* industry and *(c)* the British consumer.

Mr. Forth: European Document No. 9908/90 is not a draft directive but sets out the European Commission's third medium-term action programme on equal opportunities for women and men, which runs from 1991-1995. The programme was endorsed by a resolution of the Council of Ministers on 22 May.

The extent to which employers will be faced with extra costs will depend on the precise nature and timing of measures to be brought forward under the programme.

It is not possible at this stage to make an overall estimate of direct potential costs to the Exchequer. In practice, the actual United Kingdom contribution to the EC budget for individual programmes will depend not only on the level of expenditure, but also on the level and timing of payments, and the relative national shares of the programmes.

EC Social Action Programme

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what is his estimate of the cost of implementation of the European Community social action programme in its present form to *(a)* the Exchequer and *(b)* British industry;

(2) what is his latest estimate of the effect on employment of implementation of the European Community social action programme in its present form;

(3) what is his latest estimate of the effects on jobs of the implementation of the European Community's social charter in its present proposed form.

Mr. Forth: Only half the European Commission's proposals under the social action programme have been published so far. It is not possible, therefore, to estimate the effect of the programme as a whole on industrial or Exchequer costs.

However, it is already estimated that the implementation of the proposed directives on working time, part-time work and pregnant women would alone add £3·5 billion initially to United Kingdom employers' costs.

The Commission's proposals would damage the international competitiveness of British and Community industry, would have a substantial adverse effect on employment and would reduce the adaptability of the labour market.

The social charter, signed by the other 11 member states, was a political declaration and has no legally binding effect. The charter has, however, had the undesirable effect, predicted at the time by the Government, of encouraging the Commission to produce damaging proposals under its social action programme.

Special Needs

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether TEC-funded projects for young people with learning disabilities are subject to the NVQ level 1 output tests.

Mr. Jackson: Where the careers service endorsement specifies that training aimed at national vocational qualification level 2 is not appropriate for a young person with special needs, and an individual training plan leading to NVQ level 1 is agreed, the TEC may claim appropriate output-related funding for the achievement of that NVQ.

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish figures showing how many employees have gross weekly earnings, including and excluding overtime payments, below £185 per week and between £125 and £184·99; and if he will give the information for *(a)* women and *(b)* men and for (1) manual and (2) non-manual workers in (i) Wales, (ii) Scotland and (ii) England.

Mr. Jackson: The information available from the April 1990 New Earnings Survey is shown in the following tables. The results from the April 1991 survey will be published in November.

Full-time employees on adult rates—pay not affected by absence during the survey pay period April 1990

	Earning below £180 per week		*Earning below £190 per week*		*Earning between £120 and £180 per week*	
	Numbers in sample	*per cent.*	*Numbers in sample*	*per cent.*	*Numbers in sample*	*per cent.*
EXCLUDING OVERTIME						
Scotland						
Manual men	1,978	50·1	2,250	57·0	1,655	41·9
Non-manual men	563	16·3	656	19·0	435	12·6
Manual women	855	89·7	890	93·4	427	44·8
Non-manual women	1,791	55·1	1,921	59·1	1,281	39·4
Wales						
Manual men	1,017	48·5	1,167	55·7	835	39·8
Non-manual men	276	18·5	318	21·3	226	15·1
Manual women	416	88·1	426	90·3	234	49·6
Non-manual women	767	56·3	829	60·8	537	39·4
England						
Manual men	15,084	42·4	17,553	49·4	12,774	35·9
Non-manual men	4,705	13·0	5,520	15·3	3,858	10·7
Manual women	6,473	84·4	6,718	87·6	3,711	48·4
Non-manual women	13,423	44·8	14,817	49·5	10,313	34·5
INCLUDING OVERTIME						
Scotland						
Manual men	1,302	33·0	1,514	38·3	1,079	27·3
Non-manual men	494	14·3	579	16·8	388	11·2
Manual women	785	82·4	825	86·6	411	43·1
Non-manual women	1,706	52·4	1,845	56·7	1,228	37·7
Wales						
Manual men	692	33·0	802	38·2	563	26·8
Non-manual men	245	16·4	282	18·9	200	13·4
Manual women	384	81·4	405	85·8	222	47·0
Non-manual women	739	54·2	800	58·7	523	38·4
England						
Manual men	9,560	26·9	11,379	32·0	8,012	22·5
Non-manual men	4,097	11·4	4,844	13·4	3,369	9·3
Manual women	6,008	78·3	6,293	82·1	3,542	46·2
Non-manual women	12,819	42·8	14,207	47·5	9,965	33·3

Source: New Earnings Survey.

Employment Service

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when the annual report of the Employment Service for 1990-91 will be published.

Mr. Jackson: The chief executive of the Employment Service has submitted his annual report for 1990-91 to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and copies have been lodged in the Libraries of the House today.

Picketing

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he plans to publish a revised statutory code of practice on picketing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Having consulted the independent Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, I have prepared a draft revised code of practice on picketing. I have published the draft revised code today, for public consultation over the next three months.

CIVIL SERVICE

Civil Service Management

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will make a statement on delegation of responsibilities for management in the civil service.

Mr. Renton: Much has already been achieved through the next steps initiative and in other ways to delegate responsibility for management in the civil service. The Government are continuing to encourage and develop this process within the existing legal framework regulating the terms and conditions of employment of civil servants.

Past transfers of functions relating to the management of the civil service have, however, had the effect of artificially inhibiting the ability of the Treasury and the Minister for the Civil Service to delegate their current responsibilities as fully and flexibly as they would wish. The Government therefore propose, at a convenient opportunity, to introduce legislation to facilitate such delegation by administrative action under the Order in Council.

THE ARTS

Items in Lieu of Tax

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Minister for the Arts if there have been any items accepted in lieu of tax or allocated since an announcement was last made on the subject to the House.

Mr. Renton: Since my announcement on 29 April 1991, at column *7*, I am pleased to inform the House that a portrait by Augustus John of Lady Ottoline Morrell has been accepted in lieu of £105,000 tax. I am also pleased to announce the formal acceptance of the Stathemberg dinner service and a Louis XV bas d'armoire, the acceptance in principle for which I announced to the House on 19 December 1990, at column *175*. This offer was made possible by a call on the reserve and satisfied £1,393,610 tax. No decision has yet been taken on the allocation of the Augustus John portrait, the dinner service or the bas d'armoire.

I have also decided to allocate a collection of private and Post Office stamps of Great Britain, accepted in 1990-91, to the British Library. Finally, I would like to inform the House of a further payment of £13,763·72 which has been made to the Inland Revenue. This is in relation to a painting by Rubens, accepted in 1989-90 and announced to the House on 9 May 1989 at column *357*. The total tax satisfied by the acceptance of this painting was therefore £183,616·20.

Arts in London

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he has any plans to hold discussions with the leaders of the London borough councils concerning the promotion of the arts in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton *[holding answer 22 July 1991]:* I shall be meeting representatives of the Association of London Authorities on 25 July. I have extended a similar invitation to the London Boroughs' Association.

Foundation for Sport and the Arts

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Minister for the Arts, further to his answer of 18 April, *Official Report*, column *232*, if he will list in full the organisations with which ministers or officials in his Department have held meetings since 18 April with regard to establishing the Foundation for Sport and the Arts and the further meetings that are planned, together with the dates on which such meetings have taken, or will take, place.

Mr. Renton: I have held a number of meetings at which the subject of the foundation has been discussed. At this stage I have no specific plans for any future meetings.

WALES

Furnished Rented Accommodation

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of furnished rented accommodation is occupied by people under the age of 25 years in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Information from the Welsh inter-censal survey 1986 shows that 60 per cent. of people in furnished rented accommodation were aged under 25; the corresponding figure for partly furnished rented accommodation was 47 per cent.

Housing Renovation Grants

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total home renovation grant budget in each district and city council in Wales; and what proportion is met by the Welsh Office in each instance.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: For 1991-92 no budgetary allocations apply or have been made by the Department for mandatory home renovation grants at the level of individual districts. At the all-Wales level £77 million has been earmarked for mandatory grants and grant-related assistance, including grants approved under the House Act 1985 prior to June 1990, further resources will be made available if necessary. A further £10 million has been made available for expenditure on discretionary grants and allocated as detailed in the table. Support is provided in major part by direct capital grant: the remainder is funded from borrowing sanctioned by credit approval.

Discretionary renovation grant SCA allocation

District	*£000*
Aberconwy	158
Alyn and Deeside	157
Arfon	233
Blaenau Gwent	433
Brecknock	166
Cardiff	949
Carmarthen	202
Ceredigion	248
Colwyn	137
Cynon Valley	522
Delyn	143
Dinefwr	189
Dwyfor	186
Glyndwr	125
Islwyn	180
Llanelli	335
Lliw Valley	263
Meirionnydd	108
Merthyr	210
Monmouth	290
Montgomeryshire	242
Neath	181
Newport	312
Ogwr	351
Port Talbot	204
Preseli	327
Radnor	119
Rhondda	548
Rhuddlan	164
Rhymney Valley	373
South Pembrokeshire	116
Swansea	571
Taff Ely	229
Torfaen	213
Vale of Glamorgan	314
Wrexham Maelor	298
Ynys Mon	203

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many applications were made to each district and city council in Wales for housing renovation grants; how many applications were given financial assistance; and what percentage of applications made were successful in each council area between 1985 and 1990.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The numbers of applications, approvals and completions are given in the table.

Calculations of the percentage of applications that were successful cannot be made from aggregated data provided by local authorities because of inherent time lags between application, approval and completion stage.

Renovation grants activity by district 1985-1990

	Applications[1]	*Approvals*	*Completions*[2]
Aberconwy	1,231	1,204	1,108
Alyn and Deeside	1,165	1,262	1,012
Arfon	2,542	3,142	2,614
Blaenau Gwent	4,033	3,708	3,690
Brecknock	1,230	1,600	1,624
Cardiff	20,114	18,347	17,003
Carmarthen	2,940	3,076	2,640
Ceredigion	1,840	1,956	1,877
Colwyn	1,998	2,092	1,606
Cynon Valley	8,317	7,569	6,032
Delyn	840	1,099	1,062
Dinefwr	901	1,212	1,063
Dwyfor	861	1,117	994
Glyndwr	1,210	1,199	1,090
Islwyn	6,886	8,292	7,810
Llanelli	4,909	5,260	4,296
Lliw Valley	3,836	4,122	3,071
Meirionnydd	535	715	1,267
Merthyr Tydfil	2,169	4,008	3,679
Monmouth	2,172	1,396	1,563
Montgomeryshire	1,006	1,372	1,134
Neath	2,405	3,707	3,504
Newport	4,956	3,892	3,712
Ogwr	4,842	6,014	5,687
Port Talbot	2,814	2,913	2,595
Preseli Pembrokeshire	4,682	3,648	2,712
Radnorshire	646	887	814
Rhondda	9,687	8,313	10,365
Rhuddlan	543	430	358
Rhymney Valley	4,451	5,547	5,103
South Pembrokeshire	2,891	2,561	2,390
Swansea	9,446	7,686	7,918
Taff-Ely	3,451	3,832	3,183
Torfaen	2,230	2,291	2,216
Vale of Glamorgan	2,597	3,255	2,918
Wrexham Maelor	592	499	501
Ynys Mon	1,004	1,388	1,491
Wales	127,972	130,611	121,702

[1]This figure does not contain the number of applications for the last two quarters of 1990 as this information is not collected centrally under the new grants system.

[2]A completion is defined as on application which has been approved and on which a final payment of grant has been made.

Children

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the percentages of dependent children in Wales living in households with incomes below 50 per cent. of the average in 1979, 1981, 1983, 1985, 1987 and 1989; and if he will publish the percentage figures according to children in households of *(a)* full-time workers, *(b)* single parents, *(c)* the unemployed, *(d)* sick or disabled households and *(e)* all categories.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Reliable information in the form requested is not centrally available for Wales. Some details of dependent children living in households with incomes below 50 per cent. of the average, based on several years' results from the family expenditure survey, were published for Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and regions of England in April 1990 in a study commissioned by the House of Commons Social Services Committee. This study was carried out by the Institute for Fiscal Studies and titled "Households and families below average income: a regional analysis 1980-85": a copy is in the Library of the House.

Dentistry

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he has any plans to increase the number of dentists employed in the community dental service in Wales;

(2) if he will make it his policy to ensure that there will be no reductions in the number of dental practitioners employed in the community dental service in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Manpower levels in the community dental service are for local district health authorities to determine, taking into account the advice issued by the Department in its circular WHC(89)28 "The Future Development of the Community Dental Services".

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on which dates he met representatives of the community dental service in Wales in the last 12 months; and what items were on the agenda.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: My right hon. Friend has not met representatives of the community dental service in Wales in the last 12 months. I met the Welsh dental sub-committee of the British Dental Association in May.

The Department's chief dental officer regularly meets health authority directors of dental public health/chief administrative dental officers and agreement has been reached on the contents of their annual reports for assessment of need. Consideration is currently being given to health gain indicators and performance indicators for community clinical dental services.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many health authorities in Wales include a community dental service that currently provides domiciliary treatment for elderly people employing state-of-the-art dental equipment.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: All health authorities in Wales provide a community dental service which is able to provide domiciliary treatment for elderly people employing state of the art dental equipment. A total of £126,000 was made available earlier this year by the Welsh Office to district health authorities for the purchase of equipment for the treatment of patients with special needs including age-related infirmity.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will initiate a scheme for free dental examinations for all elderly people in Wales to screen for oral cancer.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: We are awaiting the report of a Welsh dental committee working party of oro-facial cancer which was set up in the spring of this year and is due to report in the autumn. Its recommendations will be considered in due course.

We are also making £60,000 of supplementary funding available to the Health Promotion Authority for Wales over two years to carry out a project intended to raise knowledge and awareness among primary health care professionals concerning early detection of oral cancers and encouraging the general public to take preventive measures.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will limit the provision of domiciliary dental services for the elderly to the community dental service.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: No. To do so would infringe a patient's right to seek treatment with the clinician of their choice.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what studies have been undertaken to examine the possible existence of a casual link between malnutrition in the elderly population of Wales and badly fitting dentures.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Details of studies such as this are not maintained centrally by Health Departments.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* for the latest available date for each health authority area in Wales the percentage of residents of private registered nursing homes who have an annual dental screening visit from the community dental service.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: These figures are not held centrally.

Treasury Allocation Formula

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing how much new money was made available to the Welsh Office in each of the past five years on the basis of the allocation formula used by the Treasury; what was that formula; and what effect the formula had against the calculation on the basis of the latest estimate of the population of Wales to that of England; and what is his estimate of the effect on the difference between these formulae for allocation.

Mr. David Hunt: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Unfit Accommodation

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total number of young people under 25 years of age in Wales living in bedsit accommodation which is considered substandard or unfit for habitation.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: This information is not available.

Electricity Supply

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of the United Kingdom electricity supply originates in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: It is estimated that, in 1989, 8 per cent. of the electricity generated in the United Kingdom and supplied to the public distribution system—less amounts used on works—originated in Wales.

Air Pollution

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by county area how many tonnes of *(a)* sulphur dioxide, *(b)* nitrogen oxides and *(c)* particulate carbon, were discharged into the atmosphere in Wales during the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to him on 23 July by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment.

Household Sizes

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of households in Wales contained *(a)* people living alone, *(b)* a couple with no children, *(c)* a couple with dependent children, *(d)* a couple with non-dependent children and *(e)* other households in the years 1961, 1971, 1981 and 1989.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Available data from the 10 per cent. analyses in the 1961, 1971 and 1981 census reports are given in the following table, together with that from the 1986 Welsh inter-censal survey. There are no equivalent data for 1989. Care should be taken in interpretation as the definition of households and the classification in respect of children—dependent and non-dependent—has varied.

Percentage of all households

	1961	1971	1981	1986
(a) One person household	8·8	16·6	20·4	21·1
(b) Married couple without children or others	20·9	23·4	23·6	[1]24·1
(c) and *(d)* Married couple only with children	48·4	40·3	37·7	n/a
Of which:				
dependent children only	n/a	32·6	24·4	26·2
dependent and non-dependent children	n/a	n/a	5·6	
non-dependent children only	n/a	n/a	7·7	n/a
(e) Other households	21·9	27·4	18·2	27·8

[1] For 1986 a two adult household i.e. not necessarily a married couple.

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, if he will list the 10 largest ethnic minority groupings in Wales and the estimated numbers within each grouping.

Mr. David Hunt: Estimates of the numbers in selected ethnic groups, based on the labour force sample survey, have been published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys at page 26 of "Population Trends No. 63, Spring 1991", a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. More definite counts will, over the course of the next year, be published, county by county, as part of the 1991 census results.

Lone-Parent Families

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the proportion of lone-parent families to all families with dependent children in Wales in 1971, 1987 and 1990.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Information from the labour force survey, which samples some 3,000 households in Wales, is given in the table for 1987 and 1990; equivalent data for 1971 are not available.

Percentage of families with children under 16 headed by a lone parent

	Per cent.
1987	14·6
1990	14·9

Family Incomes

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish figures for *(a)* the average resources of families in general, *(b)* the average resources of a family with a disabled child, in Wales broken down into averages for (i) single parent families, (ii) parents married with one child, (iii) parents married with other dependent children and (iv) all families.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Information at a Great Britain level is given in report 5 of OPCS surveys of disability in Great Britain, entitled "The financial circumstances of families with disabled children living in private households", which is available from the Library of the House.

The sample of children in Wales identified in the survey as having a disability was too small to allow reliable estimates.

Birth Statistics

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish figures showing *(a)* the latest available total of live births in Wales, *(b)* the percentage of mothers between the ages of 15 and 19 years, *(c)* the latest available figures of births outside marriage, *(d)* the rate of births per 1,000 population and *(e)* the latest fertility rates, and corresponding figures for 1961, 1971, 1981, and 1989.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Available data in respect of live births to residents of Wales are shown in the table:

	1961	1971	1981	1989	1990
(a) All live births	44,923	43,056	35,842	38,019	38,866
(b) Percentage of live births to females 16-19[1]	n/a	12·1	9·4	9·6	9·6
(c) Number of live births outside marriage	1,834	3,068	4,022	10,718	11,400
(d) Live births per 1,000 population	17·0	15·7	12·7	13·2	13·5
(e) Live births per 1,000 females aged 15-44	89·3	85·1	63·1	62·4	63·8

Source: OPCS and Welsh Office.

[1] Equivalent figure for 15 to 19-year-olds not available for each year.

Cardiff Bay Barrage

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his best estimate of the length of time required for the additional investigatory work into the groundwater consequences of the proposed Cardiff Bay barrage, referred to in his letter dated 8 July to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West.

Mr. David Hunt: I understand that the report of Hydrotechnica's work on groundwater will be available close to the original deadline of the end of July. As I mentioned in my letter of 8 July, some further monitoring work is under way but I would not want to take a firm view on the length of time for this before having seen the Hydrotechnica report.

Bishop of Llandaff High School

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to announce his conclusions on the Bishop of Llandaff high school appeal.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend's decision was conveyed in a letter to the school governors dated 18 July. A copy of the letter was sent to the hon. Gentleman on the same day.

Trawsfynydd Lake

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether his Ministry's investigations into the radioactive content of the sediment properties of Trawsfynydd lake will include an assessment of the radiological consequences to groups of members of the public; and when he expects the results of the investigations will be published.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The results of the additional monitoring of sediments of Trawsfynydd lake, which the fisheries radiological inspectorate—FRI—is carrying out on behalf of my right hon. Friend, are expected to be published later this year, and will include a radiological assessment. Meanwhile, the results of FRI's routine monitoring include sediment data and are published, together with a radiological assessment of the current situation, in FRI's annual reports, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

History Teaching

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends to publish the statutory amendment order for history in the national curriculum.

Mr. David Hunt: I have today laid before the House, a statutory amendment order to revise study units 18 and 27 in the programme of study for key stage 3 contained in the Education (National Curriculum) (Attainment Targets and Programmes of Study in History) (Wales) Order 1991 —SI 1991/752. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table, otherwise comparable to that provided for England in the answer to the hon. Member for Birkenhead, (Mr. Field), *Official Report*, 17 April, columns *184-85*, showing *(a)* reductions in 1991-92 in community charge in Wales by successive increments of £10 from £0 to £140, for (i) chargepayers and (ii) pensioners and *(b)* average community charge less community charge reduction scheme less community charge benefit, both before and after the £140 budget reduction in gross community charge, on a basis consistent with his answer of 3 June, *Official Report*, columns *19-20*.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 11 July 1991]:* It is estimated that in 1991-92 the average community charge in Wales, after the community charge reduction scheme and community charge benefit, would have been £192 before the Community Charges (General Reduction) Act 1991 and will in the event be £78. Beyond this, I am unable to add to the reply I gave on 3 June, at columns *19-20*.

British Steel

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with the chairman of British Steel on employment in Welsh plants.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 23 July 1991]:* British Steel keeps me fully informed of developments at its Welsh plants and is in close touch with my officials. I have corresponded with Sir Robert Scholey on this question.

I have today visited the British Steel plant at Port Talbot where I had the opportunity to discuss this issue among many other matters. I am naturally anxious to maximise employment throughout the Welsh economy, including the steel industry, however employment levels in Welsh plants are a matter for the commercial judgment of British Steel.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

UN Arms Export Register

16. **Mr. Day:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made in securing international support for a United Nations arms exports register.

Mr. Hurd: Our initiative for a UN register has received wide support. The European Council on 28-29 June decided that the Twelve should put to the next UN General Assembly a joint resolution proposing a register. Leaders at the London economic summit affirmed their commitment to the early adoption of such a register. At their meeting in Paris on 8-9 July the five permanent members of the Security Council also endorsed this approach. So this is going well.

Tibet

17. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the Government of the Peoples' Republic of China about the situation in Tibet.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We take every opportunity to remind the Chinese authorities of our concern over reports of human rights abuses in Tibet and indeed throughout China. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State emphasised this to the Chinese Foreign Minister and General Secretary on his visit to China in April. The Chinese Government are in no doubt of the strong feelings in Britain about the situation in Tibet.

Turkey

18. **Sir Trevor Skeet:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his recent visit to Turkey.

20. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the Foreign Minister of Turkey; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Hurd: I visited Turkey from 22-23 July at the invitation of the Turkish Government. I wanted to consolidate our bilateral relations with Turkey by establishing a dialogue with my new Turkish colleague, Safa Giray. I also called on President Ozal, and the Prime Minister, Mesut Yilmaz, and had illuminating talks with both.

Yugoslavia

19. **Mr. Rowlands:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's relations with Yugoslavia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom is playing its full part in monitoring the ceasefire agreed on 8 July. Only the peoples of Yugoslavia themselves can decide the future of their country. But we stand ready to do whatever we can to help, co-operating closely with our EC and western partners.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals have been made by the European Community monitoring team to extend their monitoring of the situation in Yugoslavia to the republics of Croatia and Bosnia and Hercegovina; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Under the terms at the ceasefire agreed between the European Community Troika and Yugoslavia representatives at Brioni on 8 July EC monitors are already operating in Croatia. We have no plans at present to extend the remit to include Bosnia-Hercegovina.

European Foreign Policies

21. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next proposes to have discussions with his European Community partners concerning the development of common European foreign policies.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Dutch Presidency has yet to set the agenda for the ministerial meetings of the inter-governmental conference on political union in the second half of this year.

We expect however that Ministers of the Twelve will next consider the question of a common foreign and security policy in the early autumn.

Eastern Europe

22. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what arrangements he is making to increase United Kingdom representation in former Warsaw pact countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Numbers of staff at British embassies in former Warsaw pact countries have been increased slightly in 1991 following the considerable increases in 1990. Staff needs in the Soviet Union will be reviewed later this year.

South Africa

23. **Sir George Gardiner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his visit to South Africa.

Mr. Hurd: I heard, at first hand, from a wide variety of political leaders of South Africa's remarkable progress towards non-racial democracy. I encouraged all parties to move quickly to constitutional talks, to agree measures to tackle the violence in the townships and to address the inequalities which remain in South African society.

32. **Mr. Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on his recent visit to South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. Friend heard, at first hand, from a wide variety of political leaders of South Africa's remarkable progress towards non-racial democracy. He encouraged all parties to move quickly to constitutional talks, to agree measures to tackle the violence in the townships and to address the inequalities which remain in South African society.

38. **Mr. Ted Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will seek a report of the visit by the delegation of five parliamentarians from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association to South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association delegation which visited South Africa from 8 to 16 July will present a formal report at the CPA's annual congress in September.

Bophuthatswana

24. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what communications he or any of his Ministers have had with Bophuthatswana over the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: None.

Caribbean

25. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what initiatives he has proposed to increase co-operation between Her Majesty's Government and the Caribbean.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We already co-operate closely with both independent Caribbean countries and our dependent territories in the region, through our aid programme and by assisting in regional security and drug interdiction. Official visits are frequently exchanged. I myself visited several Caribbean countries in December 1990 and April 1991.

Antarctica

26. **Mr Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made in securing international agreement on protecting the environment in Antarctica.

Mr. Dickens: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made in securing international agreement on protecting the environment in Antarctica.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The third session of the XIth special consultative meeting of Antartica treaty parties ended in Madrid on 23 June, with general acceptance of the text of an environmental protocol to the Antarctic treaty and of four annexes dealing with marine pollution, waste disposal, conservation of wildlife and environmental impact assessment.

The way is now clear for the parties to hold a final session in Madrid, before October, to sign the Final Act of

the special consultative meeting and to open the protocol for signature. We warmly welcome this outcome and look forward to increased environmental protection in Antarctica.

Saudi Arabia

27. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government have made any representations to the Saudi authorities about human rights violations in Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We discuss human rights issues regularly with the Saudi Arabian authorities. They have consistently denied allegations of human rights violations in Saudi Arabia.

Burma

28. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards relations with Burma.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We maintain diplomatic relations with Burma. But we deplore the failure of the Burmese military authorities to respond to the people's clearly expressed wish for democratic government, and are appalled by reports of their continuing disregard for human rights.

29. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have taken place between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of Vietnam on the question of Vietnamese asylum seekers in Hong Kong.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: To ease the pressure on Hong Kong, we are urgently pursuing with Vietnam, UNHCR and the International Organisation for Migration the establishment of an internationally managed centre on territory provided by Vietnam for those asylum seekers who are determined not to be refugees and have not taken advantage of the existing voluntary return programme.

30. **Sir Peter Blaker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest position regarding the problem of Vietnamese migrants in Hong Kong.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The number of Vietnamese migrants in Hong Kong continues to increase. The population in camps now stands at over 61,000; the highest level since 1979. We are urgently pursuing with Vietnam, UNHCR and IOM the establishment of an internationally managed centre on territory provided by Vietnam for those asylum seekers who are determined not to be refugees and have not taken advantage of the existing voluntary return programme.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British dependent territories citizens from Hong Kong have *(a)* applied for and *(b)* been granted the status of British national (overseas) in each year since 1985.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The status of British National (overseas) came into being on 1 July 1987. Statistics (provided by the Hong Kong Government) are as follows:

Year	*Applications Received*	*Completed*
[1]1987	18,336	16,275
1988	31,916	30,222
1989	53,222	49,519
1990	80,213	78,265
[2]1991	51,903	51,123

[1](From 1 July).
[2](Up to 13 July).

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many applications for naturalisation as British dependent territories citizens on the basis of a connection with Hong Kong have been *(a)* received, *(b)* granted and *(c)* refused for each year since 1989 and to the nearest available date.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: According to Hong Kong Government statistics, the number of applications for naturalisation as British dependent territories citizens on the basis of a connection with Hong Kong were:

Period	*Received*	*Approved*	*Refused*
1989	3,098	1,098	73
1990	12,543	1,699	95
[1]1991	5,995	4,330	129

[1](Up to 30 June).

Cambodia

31. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last discussed Cambodia with the American Secretary of State.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary discussed Cambodia with the American Secretary of State during the G7 economic summit on 15 to 17 July.

34. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government has made to governments of other countries on the situation in Cambodia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We regularly discuss the situation in Cambodia at both ministerial and senior official level with the other permanent members of the UN Security Council, participants in the Paris conference on Cambodia, and other interested Governments including our EC partners.

Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe

33. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the progress in expanding the CSCE process to include guarantees of democratic political rights.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Copenhagen meeting of the CSCE conference on the human dimension, held in June 1990, agreed a wide-ranging set of commitments to democratic political rights including free and fair elections and respect for the rule of law. The next meeting of the conference, to be held in Moscow in September will review the implementation of those commitments and seek to take the process forward.

Israel

35. **Sir Robert Rhodes James:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek to make an official visit to Israel.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I visited Israel in May. My right hon. Friend has no plans at present to go himself. He met the Israeli Foreign Minister in London on 18 July.

Lebanon

36. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the hostages in Lebanon.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We continue to make every effort to secure the release of the hostages. My recent visit to Lebanon and Syria was a further opportunity to work for this objective. We remain in close touch with all parties we believe may be able to help achieve the hostages' release and will continue to do so.

G7 Summit

37. **Mr. Moate:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the outcome of the G7 summit in London last week.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made to the House on Friday 19 July.

Indonesia

39. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions Her Majesty's Government has had with the Government of Indonesia on human rights; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have repeatedly drawn our concerns about human rights to the attention of the Indonesian Government. My noble Friend, the Minister of State, raised the issue during his recent visit to Indonesia in April; and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State did so with his Indonesian counterpart in Luxembourg in May.

Exit Visas

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Soviet Government about the failure to grant exit visas to Mikhail and Yeugenia Leviant and Lev Kunin of Moscow, and Alexander Kreyman and Ella and Vladimir Kodess of Leningrad, to join their children in Israel.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have made representations several times about the cases of Lev Kunin and Ella and Vladimir Kodess. Their details were included on a list of refusenik cases brought to the attention of the Soviet authorities during President Gorbachev's visit last week.

We can certainly raise the cases of Mikhail and Yeugenia Leviant and Alexander Kreyman, but in order to make our representations most effective we shall need further details.

Sri Lanka

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what other action apart from freezing aid of £13 million Her Majesty's Government is taking over the continued violations of human rights in Sri Lanka.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As stated by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development in her written reply on 9 July to my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden), a £3 million offer of programme aid has been withdrawn because of Sri Lanka's poor human rights record. There is no freeze of £13 million aid.

We believe that the Sri Lankan Government's decision to expel our high commissioner in Colombo was motivated by a desire to stifle our criticism of Sri Lanka's human rights record. In response to this action we have cancelled high level visits, further restricted arms sales and delayed consideration of major new aid commitments. We will review these policies once a new high commissioner is in place.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what estimates he has of the number of Tamils killed in the north and east of the country through bombing by the Sri Lankans; and what sources of information he has on the rate of deaths caused by military action in Sri Lanka.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There are no reliable estimates of deaths caused by bombing. The latest official Sri Lankan figures for numbers killed in action between June 1990 and May 1991 are as follows:

	Number
Civilians	877
Armed forces, police	1,295
LTTE	3,933

The figure for civilian casualties does not distinguish between those caused by the armed forces and those by the terrorists. There are no reliable figures from alternative sources.

Croatia

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action is being taken by the European Community to negotiate the withdrawal of military forces from the republic of Croatia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We and our EC partners have restated our readiness, if asked, to assist in negotiations towards a peaceful settlement of the Yugoslav crisis. However, it is for all Yugoslav parties to decide on future military arrangements for their country.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek a meeting between the European Community leaders or their representatives with the leaders of the republic of Croatia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The European Community Presidency has now sent a senior ambassador to Yugoslavia to discuss with the federal authorities and the leaders of all republics the prospects for negotiations and the role which the Twelve might play in them.

Entry Clearance

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how long a person applying for entry clearance for settlement at the British post in *(a)* Manila, *(b)* Accra, *(c)* Lagos, *(d)* Kingston, *(d)* Nicosia, *(f)* Cairo, *(g)* Ankara, *(h)* Istanbul, *(i)* Rabat, *(j)* Tunis and *(k)* Algiers on 31 March or the latest convenient date could expect to wait for (i) interview, (ii) referral of the case to the Home Office and the requested information being received by the post, (iii) decisions, and (iv) an explanatory statement prepared by the post in the event of an appeal against a refusal to be despatched to the immigration appellate authorities in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As at 18 July the information required at (i), (ii) and (iv) is as follows.

The information at (iii) is not available. Times vary according to the circumstances of individul cases. Many decisions are made on the same day as interview.

Post	(i)	(ii)	(iv)
Manila	10 weeks	3 months	3 months
Accra	5 days	2 months	3 months
Lagos	1 day	3 months	3 months
Kingston	6 weeks	2-4 months	3 months
Nicosia	1 day	Depends on complexity of case	3 months
Cairo	1 day	3 months	1 month
Ankara	1-3 days	3 months	3 months
Istanbul	3-5 days	3 months	3 months
Rabat	10 days	Depends on complexity of case	3 months
Tunis	2 days	Depends on complexity of case	3 months
Algiers	1 day	3 months	3 months

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many explanatory statements related to entry clearance appeals were awaiting typing at each post in the Indian sub-continent in Manila, Lagos and Accra on the latest available date; how many staff are employed, both full-time and part-time, to type statements; and when he expects any backlogs to be cleared.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The information requested is given in the following table (as at 18 July):

(a) Number of explanatory statements awaiting typing.
(b) Staff whose duties include typing explanatory statements (staff also employed on other typing duties shown in brackets).

Post	*(a)*	*(b)*
Islamabad	23	12
Karachi	20	(2)
Dhaka	39	5
New Delhi	21	4
Bombay	70	1 and (7)
Madras	3	1
Calcutta	12	(1)
Manila	14	2
Lagos	38	3
Accra	25	1

The preparation and processing of appeal statements is a rolling process and the figures in column (a) do not represent backlogs.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how long a person applying for entry clearance on 31 March or the latest convenient date at each post in the Indian sub-continent could expect to wait, in each queue, for *(a)* first interview, *(b)* referral of the case to the Home Office and the requested information being received by the post, *(c)* decision after first interview and *(d)* for the explanatory statement prepared by the post in the case of appeal against any refusal to be dispatched to the immigration appellate authorities in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: *(a)* As at 18 July 1991 the estimated waiting times for interviews (in months) were:

	Settlement—Post			
	Q1	*Q2*	*Q3*	*Q4*
Islamabad	3	4	6	10
Karachi	3	3	4	6
Dhaka	3	5	6	11
New Delhi	1	4	7	10
Bombay	0	5	10	11
Madras	1·5	1·5	1·5	1·5
Calcutta (days)	10	10	10	10

Settlement queues are organised as follows:
Q1. Persons with a claim to the right of abode, dependent relatives over 70 years, special compassionate cases.
Q2. All spouses and all children under 18 years.
Q3. Fiance(e)s and others applying for the first time.
Q4. Re-applicants.

Visitors

(a) Due to seasonal high demand, applicants for visit visas in Islamabad requiring a full interview can expect to wait up to 5-7 days. Elsewhere they are dealt with within 24 hours.

(b) If referred to the Home Office, enquiries concerning applications from any of the posts in the Indian Sub-Continent may take from 1-12 months depending on individual circumstances.

(c) Decisions after first interview are taken within 24 hours in the majority of cases in Indian Sub-Continent posts.

(d) Despatch times of explanatory statements are (at 18 July):

	Settlement weeks	*Non-Settlement weeks*
Islamabad	12	4
Karachi	12	4
Dhaka	12	11
New Delhi	12	4
Bombay	8	8
Madras	12	8
Calcutta	4-8	4

Immigration Applicants

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the present waiting times to first interview for all categories of applicant in each country and at each post in the Indian sub-continent.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The estimated present waiting times to first interview (in months) are:

Settlement	*Q1*	*Q2*	*Q3*	*Q4*
Islamabad	3	4	6	10
Karachi	3	3	4	6
Dhaka	3	5	6	11
New Delhi	1	4	7	10
Bombay	0	5	10	11
Madras	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5
Calcutta (days)	10	10	10	10

Visitors

Due to seasonal high demand applicants for visit visas in Islamabad requiring a full interview can expect to wait for between 5 to 7 days. Elsewhere they are dealt with on day of application.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many *(a)* men, *(b)* women and *(c)* children were waiting in each queue at each post in the Indian sub-continent on 31 March.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Information on the estimated number of applicants in each queue is given in the table. Separate information on men, women and children in all queues is not available centrally.

Estimated numbers of applicants in the Indian Sub-Continent on 31 March 1991 awaiting their first interview for entry to the United Kingdom

Number of Persons

Post	*Category*[1] *Q1*	*Q2*	*Q3*	*Q4*
Dhaka	618	937	124	628
New Delhi	Nil	88	234	63
Bombay	76	175	390	141
Calcutta	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Madras	Nil	Nil	Nil	38
Islamabad	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Karachi	22	97	30	4
Total ISC	716	1,297	778	874

n/a not available.

[1] Queue 1. Persons with a claim to the right of abode. Dependent relatives over 70-years-old. Special compassionate cases.
Queue 2. All spouses and all children over 18 years.
Queue 3. Fiance(é)s and others applying for the first time for settlement.
Queue 4. Reapplicants.

Human Rights

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the areas on which Her Majesty's Government are currently disbursing funds in support of its foreign policy on human rights.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Human rights are taken into account when allocating aid to developing countries. Certain of the positive measures on good government in the aid programme are designed to increase respect for human rights and the rule of law. Specific measures from this and other programmes include legal assistance, electoral assistance, inward visits, assistance to the media and seminars both abroad and in the United Kingdom.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether seismic surveys are currently being conducted in international waters beyond the 12-mile territorial limit of the Falkland Islands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Garel-Jones: I am not aware of any seismic surveys currently being conducted in Falkland Islands territorial waters, in waters lying above the continental shelf or in adjacent international waters.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to implement his Department's current proposals relating to the Falkland Islands and off-shore minerals and hydrocarbon extraction.

Mr. Garel-Jones: This Department has not itself drawn up such proposals. However various Government Departments have been considering draft minerals legislation submitted for approval by the Falkland Islands Government. This process is continuing and we hope to conclude it before long.

Mr. Ramesh Kumar

Mr. Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to write to the hon. Member for Hendon, North with the reply he undertook to give in his written answer given on 10 June, *Official Report*, column *416*.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I wrote to my hon. Friend on 23 July.

Central America

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contribution the United Kingdom is making towards United Nations peacekeeping operations in central America.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Kingdom's assessed contribution towards the United Nations human rights verification unit in El Salvador (ONUSAL) is estimated to be £800,000. Parliamentary approval for this new service will be sought in the winter supplementary estimate for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Other external relations vote (class II, vote 2). Pending that approval urgent expenditure will be met by a repayable advance estimated at £500,000 from the contingencies fund.

Nigeria

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations with the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Mrs. Chalker: We enjoy close and cordial relations with Nigeria.

SCOTLAND

Manufacturing Employment

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were employed in manufacturing in Scotland in June 1979 and at the latest available date.

Mr Allan Stewart: In June 1979 there were 604,000 employees in employment in manufacturing industries in Scotland. In March 1991, the latest date for which information is available, there were an estimated 388,000 employees in employment in manufacturing industries in Scotland. In the same period, the number of employees in employment in other industries increased by 69,000, and the number self employed is estimated to have increased by 75,000 in the 11 years since June 1979.

Education (Placing Requests)

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what powers are available to a regional council education authority to enable it to refuse to make available to

councillors the names of persons who have had placing requests for their children rejected by the council under regulation 13 of the Education (Appeal Committee Procedures) (Scotland) Regulations 1982.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The 1982 regulations lay down how the procedures of an appeal committee are to be determined by an education authority. In more general terms, section 50F of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, prescribes the rights of access to documents for members of local authorities. Schedule 7A to the 1973 Act as inserted by the 1985 Act specifies the type of information which is exempt and therefore not required to be open to inspection by members. This includes information relating to the education of any particular child and information relating to any particular applicant for, or recipient of, any service provided by the authority. Interpretation of all of these provisions is, of course, a matter for the authority concerned.

Glasgow Eastern Area Renewal

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the performance of the public and private sector management structures set up to replace the GEAR project in the east end of Glasgow; and what plans he has to alter the structure.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The post-GEAR management arrangements established that the co-ordination of social, residential and community related initiatives would be the responsibility of Glasgow district council and Strathclyde regional council through the east area management committee—a joint committee of both councils—supported by the east area support unit and that private and public sector support for the continuing economic development of the area would be organised through the east end executive.

It is these bodies who should monitor performance, and consider any need for structural change.

Coal Mines

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the names and addresses of coal mines operating in Scotland, noting the number of miners employed in each; and whether they are in the public or private sector.

Mr. Allan Stewart: This is a matter for the British Coal Corporation which is responsible for its own operational mines. The corporation is the licensing authority for private sector mines under the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946.

Income Distribution

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what statistical data are available concerning income distribution in Scotland by decile groups and changes in their net income over the last 10 years.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Analyses for Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and regions of England, by decile group below median household incomes, for the periods 1980-82 and 1983-85, are given in the publication "Households and Families Below Average Income: A Regional Analysis 1980-85". This study was commissioned from the Institute for Fiscal Studies by the House of Commons Social Services Committee. The publication is available from the Library.

It is not possible to provide further analyses of income distributions in Scotland by decile groups, except at disproportionate cost.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Tony Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many men in March were calculated to be in part-time work and included in the work force in employment in Scotland figures;

(2) what were the numbers in full-time work in Scotland, male and female, included in the work force in employment figures for every March since 1983.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The table gives the available information on the number of men and women employees in employment in Scotland at March of each year since 1983. There are no estimates available of the number of self-employed in Scotland who work part-time.

(Thousands)

	Men[1]	*Women Full-time*	*Women Part-time*
At March			
1983	1,054·9	495·2	329·1
1984	1,040·2	499·2	340·5
1985	1,038·7	502·1	349·1
1986	1,018·8	497·4	351·4
1987	996·1	495·4	358·3
1988	1,012·8	514·1	369·7
1989	1,015·7	535·2	395·8
1990	1,026·7	534·4	395·1
1991	1,020·9	523·3	411·9

Source: Employment Department quarterly estimates of employees in employment.

[1]Separate figures for male employees in employment working full-time and part-time are available only from the Census of Employment. Available figures are:

(Thousands)

	September 1984	*September 1987*	*September 1989*
Male full-time	992·0	939·4	957·9
Male part-time	60·7	70·2	76·1

Source: Censuses of Employment.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the calculation of the number of people who had two jobs as employees included in the work force in employment in Scotland figures in March.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Precise information on the number of people who had two jobs as employees, included in the civilian work force in employment estimates is not available.

It is estimated from the labour force survey in spring 1990 that 50,000 people in Scotland held a second job as an employee at that time. This is the latest date for which an estimate is available.

Railways

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what additional funding has been sought by ScotRail towards the cost of reopening the railway stations at St. Andrews and Tayport; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has received no request from ScotRail for funding for the reopening of the railway stations at St. Andrews and Tayport. This would, however, be a matter for British Rail and the Department of Transport in the first instance.

Mental Hospitals

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if the commitment to close all major psychiatric and mental handicap hospitals by the year 2000 applies to Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There is no such commitment in Scotland. The Government's broad policy aim is to develop services which enable the mentally disordered to live in the community as far as possible. It is recognised, however, that there will be people who will still require continuous care and treatment in hospital and that there is a need to retain the mental hospital, albeit in a slimmed-down form, for the foreseeable future.

Foresterhill Hospital

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with Grampian health board, and with the sponsors of the Foresterhill hospital's trust application regarding future management of the medical unit at the National Hyperbaric Centre.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No discussions have taken place about this. Any change to the arrangements for medical services at the national hyperbaric centre has no connection with the issue of trust status for Foresterhill. The review of arrangements was instigated well before trust status was first mooted for the Foresterhill site, and had been handled by officials at Grampian health board's headquarters, not by managers at Foresterhill.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with Grampian health board, with the sponsors of the Foreserhill hospital's trust application, and with the university of Aberdeen, regarding the future disposition of the lands on the Foreserhill site which are jointly owned by the health board and the university; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The disposition of land is in the first instance a matter for discussion and agreement amongst those directly involved, in this case Grampian health board, the university of Aberdeen, and the trust applicants, the Foresterhill hospital's unit. These discussions are ongoing. To date, therefore, my officials have had no material discussions with any of the interested parties about the disposition of that land on the Foresterhill site that is jointly owned with the university of Aberdeen.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with the sponsors of the Foresterhill hospital's unit trust application and with Grampian health board regarding the detailed financial plans and projections for the proposed national health service trust.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My officials have discussed the relevant financial details with the sponsors of the Foresterhill Hospitals Unit Trust and with Grampian health board. These discussions are still continuing and will cover all financial aspects of the proposal.

National Health Service Finance

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what provisions he has made for capital investment in the national health service in Scotland in each of the financial years 1991-92, 1992-93, 1993-94 and 1994-95; and what funds will be allocated to each health board area.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The table lists the capital allocations for each health board for 1991-92 and the provisional allocations for 1992-93 and 1993-94. No allocations have yet been made for 1994-95.

£000s

	1991-92	*1992-93*	*1993-94*
Argyll and Clyde	11,385	15,000	10,550
Ayr and Arran	13,480	4,500	9,200
Borders	1,299	1,300	1,300
Dumfries and Galloway	3,231	2,150	4,000
Fife	32,616	21,515	11,315
Forth Valley	4,813	3,353	3,353
Grampian	17,752	17,872	16,872
Greater Glasgow	26,489	14,350	19,750
Highland	4,662	4,100	5,000
Lanarkshire	17,565	4,100	5,000
Lothian	21,321	18,500	18,100
Orkney	444	235	285
Shetland	1,632	1,750	850
Tayside	15,643	9,930	18,030
Western Isles	13,446	6,345	1,395

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the projected external financing limit for Grampian health board for each of the financial years 1992-93, 1993-94 and 1994-95.

Mr Michael Forsyth: Health board's resources and expenditure are not governed by external financing limits. Provision for capital expenditure by boards is made via annual capital allocations based on board's forecast expenditure plans.

Football

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list each Scottish League club together with the total season's attendance at *(A)* matches played in the Football League and *(B)* matches played in the Scottish cup and Skol cup competitions, with the total numbers of (a) arrests and (b) ejections at each category of such matches and the numbers of (i) arrests, (ii) ejections and (iii) arrests plus ejections as a percentage of the total attendance at each category of such matches, accurate to four decimal places for each of the seasons 1987-88, 1989-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91; and if he will make a statement on attendance rates and arrest rates at each category of such matches.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Local Authorities

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the number of people employed by regional and district and islands authority councils in Scotland; and if he will break figures down by authority, department and grade, for the last five years available.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Quarterly figures for local authority staffing have been published jointly by the Scottish Office and the Covention of Scottish Local Authorities since 1976 and are available in the Library. These give numbers of staff by authority and the total number of staff in each service catergory. A detailed breakdown by department and grade is not available centrally.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give details of the staff salary costs incurred by regional and district and islands authority councils in Scotland; and if he will break figures down by authority, department and by employee's grade for the last five years available;

(2) if he will give details of the total running costs of regional and district and island authority councils in Scotland, excluding salary costs; and if he will break this figure down by authority and by department in each of the last five years available;

(3) if he will give details of the total running costs of regional and district and islands authority councils in Scotland, including salary costs; and if he will break this figure down by authority and by department in each of the last five years available.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Council Tax

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the valuation of properties in Scotland for the purposes of the council tax.

Mr. Lang: Subject to the enhancement of the Local Government Finance and Valuation Bill, the valuation exercise in Scotland will be carried out by the local assessors acting under the direction of the Commissioners of Inland Revenue. A new grant is to be paid to local authorities in respect of expenses incurred in the financial years 1991-92 and 1992-93 in carrying out this task. Local authorities will be paid grant on the basis of applications submitted to the Department in accordance with arrangements to be agreed between them and the Department. Parliamentary approval of this new expenditure will be sought in a supplementary estimate for the relevant vote—class XV, vote 22. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure, estimated at about £5 million, will be met by repayable advances from the contingencies fund.

Special Environmental Grants

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement concerning the fund being held in reserve under the special grants (environmental) programme to support suitable projects which will further the aims of the Government's White Paper "This Common Inheritance."

Mr. Lang: I am pleased to announce that £34,250 has now been offered to 12 voluntary bodies in Scotland to help them carry out projects designed to enhance the quality of Scotland's environment and to increase popular understanding, awareness and enjoyment of it. Among the projects to be supported include a project to provide safer access for cyclists and pedestrains to the Clyde walkway at Rutherglen bridge, recycling schemes in Edinburgh and the Western Isles, and a project to improve access to the countryside by disabled people in highlands. Full details are contained in the table.

A further £239,250 has already been allocated this year to assist voluntary bodies with their core administrative costs, thus helping them to carry out environmental conservation, improvement or educational work in Scotland. A total of £1,500 remains in reserve. This is the first year that a specific amount has been set aside for small projects under the special grants (environmental) programme, and I look forward to seeing the results.

Organisation	*Project*	*Amount (£)*
Centre for Environmental Interpretation	Training in the presentation of heritage sites in the Western Isles	4,000
Council for Scottish Archaeology	Adopt-a-Monument scheme	2,000
Environment Centre	Establishment of demonstration wildlife garden in Edinburgh school	2,000
Heartland Radio Project	Setting up of Heartland Radio	1,500
Keep Scotland Beautiful	Establishment of Clyde Pryde river project	1,500
Lothian and Edinburgh Environmental Partnership	Small Business Paper Recycling	3,000
Scottish Association of Agriculture	Scottish Schools Challenge competition	3,000
Scottish Wildlife Trust	Full-time volunteering project	5,000
Sustrans	Providing safer access to Clyde Walkway at Rutherglen Bridge	5,000
Touchstone	Touchstone Project: environmental maze accessible to disabled	4,750
Uist/Barra Amenity Group	Western Isles/Shetland recycling project	2,000
Woodland Trust	Natural woodland regeneration programme, Uig Woods, Isle of Skye	500

Disability Manifesto

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy towards the recommendations of the "Disability Manifesto: An Agenda for the 1990s", a copy of which has been sent to him, which relate to his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 3 July 1991]:* The Government's policies for people in Scotland with disabilities accord with the aims set out by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 4 July at column *184*.

The new arrangements for community care which will be fully implemented in 1993 seek to improve the quality of life for disabled people. Local authorities will be required to assess their needs and produce individual care packages, taking account of the views of the disabled

people concerned and their carers. Our guidance to authorities suggests that they should provide information on their services and on the assessment procedures in braille. Voluntary organisations representing disabled people and their carers will be consulted on the preparation of community care plans.

The recent introduction of a complaints procedure to users of social work services is part of the progress being made to make the services more responsive to users' needs.

The Government acknowledge the relatively low level of existing provision in the community for people with mental health problems and have introduced the mental illness specific grant scheme to assist local authorities to develop new community-based services. Grant of £2·1 million will support local authorities expenditure of £3 million. In addition over £250,000 will be made available for capital expenditure to voluntary organisations in this field. We are also giving grants of around £1 million toward the running costs of voluntary organisations for disabled people.

We agree with the authors of the manifesto that dissemination of information is important to disabled people and are actively involved with Disability Scotland in establishing a base for "Handynet" as part of the European Community's HELIOS programme.

The recently announced community care bridging finance scheme is designed to benefit people who need long-term care and support. A total of £15 million has been made available to health boards to help them meet the double-running costs incurred where building up community support facilities and continuing to provide adequate levels of institutional care.

A total of £500,000 per annum has been allocated towards a service for the rehabilitation of the traumatic brain injured and funding of £200,000 per annum for three years to establish a cochlear implant programme.

We have set up a working group of the National Medical Advisory Committee to evaluate the present and future provision of rehabilitation services in Scotland.

Substantial resources continue to be made available to local authorities and other housing agencies for special needs housing along with appropriate guidance on the level of provision. The range of housing suitable for people with disabilities rose from 3,139 in 1979 to 19,560 in 1990. We recognise that access to buildings is vital for the quality of life of disabled people and local authorities must employ an access officer. Extended access for disabled people to the upper floors of all new buildings except dwellings will be the subject of public consultation later this year.

Government support for sport is mainly channelled through the Scottish Sports Council which is committed to a philosophy of sport for all. Developing opportunities for people with disabilities to take part in sport will be central to a conference being held by the council later this year.

We remain committed to reviewing and improving services for people with disabilities throughout Scotland.

Caledonian Pine Forest

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 22 May, *Official Report*, column *524*, if the Forestry Commission offered the 250 acres of Caledonian pine forest in the Affric-Cannich Hills, site of special scientific interest, to a nature conservation or heritage organisation prior to disposal.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This area is still under Forestry Commission management and is likely to remain so for the time being.

Student Support

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what measures he is now taking in order to provide financial support to students, following the ending of their entitlement to welfare benefits.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[pursuant to his reply 15 July 1991]:* I very much regret that my earlier reply to the hon. Member was inaccurate in one respect. For eligible students who still wish to take out a student loan for session 1990-91, it is their completed loan agreement form which must reach the Student Loans Company Ltd by 31 July.

The full test of the reply should have read as follows:

We are already providing such support through student loans and access funds. Loans and grants together provided an increase of 25 per cent. in the resources available to students in session 1990-91 and the loan element more than compensated the average student claimant for the loss of benefits. The average student's likely entitlement to benefits was estimated to be about £327, whereas the average full year loan rate for session 1990-91 is £420. Eligible students who have not already done so can still apply for a loan for 1990-91 provided their completed loan agreement reaches the Student Loans Company Ltd by 31 July.

For session 1991-92 the overall provision for student maintenance has been increased by a further 6 per cent. on average, giving a loan facility of £580 for students living away from the parental home.

In addition to student loans, discretionary assistance may be available in cases of need through the access funds which are administered by the individual academic institutions.

ENVIRONMENT

Construction Training

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many construction trainees from Poplar baths went on to be employed by Olympia and York;

(2) how many construction trainees from the Tower Hamlets construction training centre went on to be employed by Olympia and York.

Mr. Key: I understand that so far 248 trainees at the centre have successfuly completed courses and 277 trainees have gained employment. A total of 141 went to work at Olympia and York's Canary Wharf site.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list any amounts allocated on programmes to the London Dockalnds development corporation for housing purposes or supporting infrastructures in the form of grants or subsidies for each of the years 1984-85 to 1992-93;

(2) if he will list any amounts allocated on programmes to the London Docklands development corporation for housing purposes or supporting infrastructures in the form of grants or subsidies for each of the years 1984-85 to 1992-93 have not yet been determined.

Mr. Key: The table lists the grant allocation to corporations for direct expenditure on housing and provision of infrastructure. The allocations for 1992-93 have not yet been determined.

Grant in aid spent by UDCs (excluding receipts)

(£ million)

	Housing	*Provision of services (gas, electricity, etc.)*	*Roads and transport (including Docklands light railway)*
1984-85[1]	—	5	20
1985-86	—	10	21
1986-87	—	16	24
1987-88	—	18	39
1988-89	45	38	72
1989-90	69	34	121
1990-91	33	23	261
1991-92	14	8	278

[1]LDDC only.

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will indicate in the case of each urban development corporation and the London Docklands development corporation when they are expected to have fully completed their programmes expenditure on work of physical development or redevelopment.

Mr. Key: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 10 July, *Official Report*, column *935*, and the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minster for Local Government and Inner Cities on 11 March, *Offical Report*, column *368*.

Landscape Conservation

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what specific steps the Government have taken to encourage landscape conservation and improvement and to encourage the provision of opportunities for recreation since September 1990.

Mr. Heseltine: Last month, the Government announced the designation of the Blackdown Hills as the 39th Area of outstanding natural beauty—*Official Report*, column 494—and the Countryside Commission launched its countryside stewardship scheme under which farmers and landowners will be offered payments to conserve traditional English landscapes, enhance wildlife habitats and provide additional public access. In addition, five new groundwork trusts have been established to undertake environmental improvements.

Pollution Control

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what contributions the Government have made to the scientific study of man-made chemicals which deplete the ozone layer and to the evaluation of alternative chemicals, since September 1990; and what progress has been made.

Mr. Heseltine: The fourth report of the stratospheric ozone review group, which provides advice to the Government on the science of ozone depletion, was published this month. I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library, and am sending the hon. Member a copy. The Government actively participate in the Montreal protocol's scientific assessment, co-chairs its technology and economics assessment, and has provided $100,000 for developing country participation. This process is expected to lead to a further strengthening of the protocol in 1992.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in the development of an integrated EC system of pollution control based on the model provided within the Environmental Protection Bill.

Mr. Hesseltine: I am pleased to say that a first meeting of national experts was held in Brussels in May to discuss Commission proposals for an EC system of integrated pollution control which would largely mirror the system introduced in part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and implemented with effect from 1 April this year. Further discussion, on the basis of a draft directive, is expected to take place in early autumn.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what new measures the Government have proposed to ensure the stronger monitoring of member states' compliance with, and proper implementaion of, EC environmental obligations.

Mr. Heseltine: The Government attach great importance to these matters and have consistently encouraged the European Commission to take an active role in ensuring that member states fully comply with their environmental obligations. We have pressed the Commission to publish regular statistics on member states' compliance records. We have advocated new proposals to set up a standardised system of reporting by member states on the implementation of existing directives. We have stongly supported other measures which should help to make available more information on compliance with EC legislation, including a directive on public access to environmental information and the creation of the European Environment Agency.

More generally, the Government have called on both the Commission and the European Parliament to produce regular reports on the implementation of EC legislation in all areas, and have submitted proposals to the intergovernmental conference of political union for the European Court of Justice to impose financial sanctions on member states who persistently fail to meet their obligations.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps have been taken since September 1990 to extend and improve monitoring arrangements of emissions to air outdoors; and what has been done to make the results widely available.

Mr. Heseltine: Under part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, a wide range of industrial processes in England and Wales will require authorisation either by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, under the new system of integrated pollution control, or by local authorities, under new air pollution control arrangements. Operators will be required as a condition of authorisation to monitor their releases in order to demonstrate compliance with specified numerical limits; HMIP will be establishing monitoring programmes to check on operators' measurements. Information obtained from these monitoring arrangements will be placed on public registers held by HMIP and local authorities.

Business (Environmental Considerations)

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in what specific ways the Government have encouraged business to take environmental considerations into account when operating since September 1990.

Mr. Heseltine: Since the publication of the White Paper "This Common Inheritance" in September 1990, the Government have taken a wide range of specific measures to encourge business to take environmental considerations into account, most notably the introduction of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, which provides a strong regulatory framework for industry to play its part in protecting and enhancing the environment.

Air Quality

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions the Government have had within the European Community on improving standards of air quality monitoring; and what progress has been made.

Mr. Heseltine: My Department takes part in regular discussions with the European Commission and our Community partners on progress in implementing existing air quality directives and prospects for further Community initiatives in this area, including the further development of air quality monitoring within the Community.

The Commission has recently published a draft directive, owing much to United Kingdom practice, on guidelines and monitoring arrangements for ground level ozone. The first phase of the planned expansion of the United Kingdon air quality monitoring network, announced in the White Paper "This Common Inheritance", will be implemented in January 1992.

Environment Debate

Sir Hugh Rossi: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement in response to those points raised by right hon. and hon. Members in the debate on the United Kingdom environment on 12 July to which he was unable to respond in the course of the debate.

Mr. Trippier: A number of points were raised in the debate, and I welcome this opportunity of responding to them.

Several questions were raised on the proposed environment agency. As I indicated, we shall be issuing a consultation document later this year which will set out our proposals in more detail, but I confirm that it is presently our intention to transfer responsibility for waste regulation from local government to the new agency. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is considering the position in Northern Ireland.

Several points were raised about recent reports from the Environment Select Committee. The Government have accepted almost all of the recommendations of the report on contaminated land. The Law Commission rejected the proposal to overturn caveat emptor, and suggested instead that the buyer should be well informed. The duty placed on local authorities to compile and maintain registers of land which may be contaminated is in line with this decision. The role of the interdepartmental committee on the redevelopment of contaminated land is now restricted to ensuring liaison and facilitating input from other Departments.

Similarly we accepted most of the recommendations of the report on toxic waste. The Government are continuing to seek ways of improving statistics on waste. British Coal has been required to seek alternative means of disposal for colliery waste to enable dumping on beaches to be phased out by 1995, and at sea by 1997. We are considering the implications of the various draft EC directives dealing with the liability for waste producers as they are negotiated within the Community, and will be consulting fully on appropriate United Kingdom stances.

Turning to the report on the pollution of beaches, the Government understand the importance of eutrophication. The evidence, including international studies, shows that there is a problem at a small number of locations, but measures have been taken to reduce nutrient inputs to coastal waters, and research initiated to establish whether nutrient inputs from the United Kingdom contribute to eutrophication.

As for sewage sludge, it is for the water companies to evaluate the technology required to meet their needs, including sewage sludge technology. My Department has instigated a general review of sewage disposal options and the results have been made available to water companies and others. The role of the proposed environment agency in this area is a matter for further consideration.

The Department's spending on environmental research has increased by 46 per cent. since 1987-88.

The Department already includes outside experts in discussions on environmental policy with the EC Commission, and will continue to do so where appropriate.

Energy efficiency is a key part of the Government's strategy to reduce CO2 emissions to combat global warming. There will be a new joint DOE/Energy Efficiency Office campaign to promote energy efficiency in the home in the autumn. The budget for the EEO has been increased substantially this year to over £40 million to provide for the introduction of the home energy efficiency scheme for low-income households.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has chaired two ministerial meetings this year on the implementation of environmental policy and considerable progress has also been made through correspondence and through official discussions. The Prime Minister will chair a further meeting of Ministers later this month.

As the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) explained to the House on 19 June, it is our intention to deliver the White Paper commitment on hedgerows. We shall be making a statement on our proposals shortly.

My staff are actively investigating the situation in Germany with regard to the ban on the import of consumer products containing PCP and the enforcement of that ban. I am also seeking clarification as to any legal action taken or proposed by the European Commission. The ninth amendment to the marketing and use directive —91/173/EEC—is due to be implemented from 1 July 1992 and includes controls on the use of PCP.

In April 1988 sales of unleaded petrol accounted for 0·4 per cent. of the United Kingdom market. Since then consumption of unleaded has increased considerably and currently accounts for over 40 per cent. of total petrol

sales. A comparison of provisional unleaded petrol sales figures for 1990 in EC countries shows that United Kingdom sales of 34 per cent. were greater than Belgium —33 per cent., France—30 per cent., Luxembourg—30 per cent., Eire—20 per cent. and substantially higher than Italy—5 per cent., Spain—1 per cent., Greece—2 per cent. and Portugal where sales were negligible. Only in the former West Germany—80 per cent., Denmark—60 per cent. and the Netherlands—48 per cent. were unleaded market shares greater.

The Government have acted quickly over the problem of dioxins in milk in Bolsover. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has already started a programme of research into this problem and, in addition, Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, this Department and MAAF are discussing joint monitoring arrangements. The results of this monitoring will be published, and a public inquiry would add nothing to the present response.

All of the duties and powers relating to litter in the Environmental Protection Act 1990 are now in force. The provisions enabling local authorities to introduce fixed penalty schemes were brought into force in February. Private citizens have had the right to apply for "litter abatement orders" from a magistrates court since April. This power has already been invoked successfully against Liverpool city council.

The Government recognise that diesel car emissions are becoming cleaner, but further improvements are desirable for both diesel and petrol cars. There are already financial attractions in running a diesel car, particularly for high mileage users.

Emission levels from petrol-engined vehicles will be checked at the compulsory annual tests from 1 November this year. Vehicles will fail the test if they emit more than the prescribed levels of carbon monoxide and hydrocarbons in the case of vehicles registered after 1 August 1975; and if they emit avoidable smoke in the case of other vehicles. This new in service check will help to reduce the emission of gases which contribute to global warming, and it should also help to improve local air quality. In due course the prescribed emission standards will be made more severe so as to cater for modern engines which are designed to emit much lower levels of pollutants: these stricter standards will have been introduced by the beginning of 1996, which is when large numbers of catalyst-equipped vehicles will be old enough to come into the compulsory testing regime.

The Government received a letter from the EC Commission in March about environmental assessment on the proposed Compton to Bar End section of the M3, and a response was sent in May. There has been no correspondence with the Commission on the east London river crossing since October 1989.

Planning Guidance

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress the Government have made since September 1990 in their review of national planning policy guidance.

Mr. Heseltine: Since September 1990 we have issued planning policy guidance on archaeology and on affordable housing, and draft guidance on sport and recreation, advertisement control, redundant hospital sites in the green belts, sites of special scientific interest and travelling showpeople. We are finalising guidance on land for housing and on the countryside. We are about to issue draft guidance on enforcement, and are preparing consultation drafts of revised or new guidance on general policy and principles; industrial and commercial development and small firms; simplified planning zones; telecommunications; development plans and regional planning guidance; coastal policy; listed buildings and conservation areas; nature conservation; noise; planning, pollution control and waste management; renewable energy; and tourism. We will be pressing ahead with this work now the Planning Compensation Bill has completed its passage through Parliament.

We are about to issue draft minerals planning guidance on interim development orders. We are preparing consultation drafts on cement and on the treatment of disused mine openings.

We issued regional planning guidance for East Anglia this month. We are preparing a consultation draft of revised guidance for the south-east. In most other regions groups of local authorities are making good progress in preparing advice for the Secretary of State as a basis for draft guidance.

Council Houses, Tower Hamlets

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the total number of council housing units in Tower Hamlets for each year since 1979.

Mr. Yeo: Local authorities report the numbers of their own dwellings, and estimates of those owned by other public sector landlords, in their annual housing investment programme returns (HIPI). The available information is as follows:

Year	*Tower Hamlets borough council*[1]	*Other public sector*[2]	*Total public sector*[2]
1979	18,194	29,579	47,773
1980	18,200	30,700	48,900
1981	18,394	31,460	49,854
1982	19,446	31,600	51,046
1983	19,241	31,075	50,316
1984	19,044	30,926	49,970
1985	18,671	31,021	49,692
1986	48,700	667	49,367
1987	48,611	539	49,150
1988	47,646	529	48,175
1989	46,277	523	46,800
1990	43,583	397	43,980

[1] Excludes a small number of dwellings located outside the borough.
[2] Prior to 1986, GLC-owned dwellings within Tower Hamlets are included under "Other Public Sector". This category also contains a small number of dwellings owned by other boroughs, government departments and other public sector agencies.

Riding Schools

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received regarding the impact of the national non-domestic rate on riding schools in Essex.

Mr. Key: We have received a number of representations on the impact of non-domestic rates on riding schools. As far as I am aware, however, there have been none on the impact in Essex.

Integrated Pollution Control

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the guidance notes on integrated pollution control issued since the Environmental Protection Act 1990 came into force.

Mr. Baldry: Comprehensive guidance was published on 28 February 1991 in "Integrated Pollution Control: A Practical Guide" which included a timetable for the issuing of chief inspector's guidance notes. Five industry sector guidance notes have been prepared: IPR 1: Fuel and Power, IPR 2: Metal, IPR 3: Mineral, IPR 4: Chemical IPR 5: Waste Disposal. Four have been published recently and IPR 4 is at the HMSO printers. The first process note IPR 1/1 "Combustion Processes for Large Boilers and Furnaces" has already been published and preparations are well advanced on the notes for the next tranche of processes coming under integrated pollution control.

Food Labelling

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he intends to give to examination of the health effects of product use when evaluating the packaging of a product for qualification for an eco-label.

Mr. Baldry: Eco-labels will primarily be awarded on environmental grounds. There are well established health and safety regulations in place which ensure that consumers are informed about products and their packaging that are potentially damaging to health. If a product had a demonstrably detrimental effect on human health, it is unlikely that it would meet the criteria for the award of the eco-label.

Housing Management Grants

Mr. Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the amount of grant paid and the number of organisations grant-aided under section 16 of the Housing and Planning Act 1986 for each financial year since enactment, including the amount available in the current financial year.

Mr. Yeo: The information requested is shown in the following table. Figures for all the recipients of grant in 1991-92 are not yet available.

Section 16 Grants 1986-92: Total paid and number of recipients

Financial Year	*Grants paid £'000*	*Voted Provision £'000*	*Recipients*
1986-87	427	—	5
1987-88	1,624	—	27
1988-89	3,030	—	33
1989-90	3,826	—	39
1990-91	4,967	—	63
1991-92	—	7,100	—

Community Charge

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many times, since the original introduction of the community charge, senior officials of his Department have refused to meet senior officials of county councils, following their request for such a meeting.

Mr. Portillo: Ministers have made it clear that we are willing to receive delegations from local authorities to discuss their representations and in particular any new evidence which they may wish to bring forward. Officials meet the local authority associations on a regular basis to discuss all aspects of local government finance. They do not generally meet representatives of individual authorities other than to clarify points of technical detail.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give consideration to an immediate extension of borrowing limits for expenditure for those local authorities involved in losses through the BCCI closure.

Mr. Key: If a local authority makes an application to my Department for a direction to increase its aggregate credit limit, we will consider it.

Right to Buy

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how long it takes on average for his Department to decide whether a particular house is exempt from the right to buy because it was built for occupation by people of pensionable age; and what steps are being taken to speed up procedures.

Mr. Yeo: Decisions taken so far have averaged about eight months. More staff have been allocated to this work in order to speed up decisions.

Gypsy Sites

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many fixed sites for gipsy encampments have been agreed with county councils; and what discussions he has had with Berkshire about designating such a site.

Mr. George Young: The Caravan Sites Act 1968 places a duty on county councils, metropolitan districts and London boroughs to provide sites. At 1 January 1991, a total of 221 local authority sites providing 3,644 pitches were in place in shire counties in England. I understand that Berkshire county council is investigating a number of possible sites and that a meeting between county officers and officials of my Department has been arranged for September.

EC Directives

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the cost of the implementation of European Community draft directive document Nos. 4084/91 and 4548/91 to the Exchequer (i) directly and (ii) channelled via the European institutions.

Mr. Baldry: These documents contain proposed regulations to establish new Community funds for supporting actions relating to respectively the protection of northern coastal waters—NORSPA—and the protection of the environment generally—LIFE. For the former, we expect the council to decide that the amounts of money necessary for the funds would be 6·5 million ecu, approximately £4·5 million, for 1991 and 10 million ecu, approximately £7 million, for 1992. For the latter, the

Community's 1991 budget allocated 30 million ecu, approximately £21 million, although in the absence of an agreed regulation this is now unlikely to be spent in the current year.

The United Kingdom's contribution through the Community's budget would be around 17 per cent. before abatement. It is not possible to estimate at this stage what proportion of these funds would be likely to be received by United Kingdom projects or interests.

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the cost of the implementation of European Community draft directive document Nos. 8149/88, 9204/89, 5807/90 and 4684/91 on habitats of wild flora and fauna to *(a)* the Exchequer (i) directly and (ii) channelled via the European institutions, *(b)* industry and *(c)* the British consumer.

Mr. Baldry: The extent of designations likely to be required under the proposed habitats directive is currently being assessed. However, special areas of conservation will be identified from our network of sites of special scientific interest. In certain circumstances assistance towards the costs of conservation projects could be obtained under the ACNAT regulation which has a budget of 25 mecu—£17·4 million—for each of the next two years. The United Kingdom contribution to ACNAT will depend on both the level and timing of payments and the relative shares of the programme. No significant additional cost to British industry and the consumer has been identified.

Sleeping Rough

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for providing accommodation for single homeless people sleeping rough outside London, in response to the preliminary findings of the 1991 census.

Mr. Yeo: My Department's single homelessness initiative has made a very encouraging start in dealing with the problems of rough sleepers in central London. Taking this and the census figures into account, we are considering the possibility of extending the initiative outside central London.

Property Services Agency

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applications from the two recent schemes for voluntary early retirement or severance within the Property Services Agency have been turned down.

Mr. Yeo: The total number of non-industrial staff VER applications that have been turned down to date is 385.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many staff, excluding natural wastage, the Property Services Agency has declared surplus for the financial year 1991-92.

Mr. Yeo: In order to achieve its business planning projections, PSA Services currently has a target reduction of 2,500 posts in 1991-92. We expect some 700 of these to be achieved by natural wastage.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many staff the Property Services Agency anticipates transferring to other Government Departments in the financial year 1991-92.

Mr. Yeo: PSA Services hopes to transfer some 800 staff to other Government Departments in the financial year 1991-92.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy on supporting the principle of staff within the Property Services Agency being subjected to compulsory redundancies where volunteers exist.

Mr. Yeo: The policy of PSA Services is to achieve as many as possible of the necessary staff reductions through voluntary means and to keep compulsory redundancies to the minimum. Some compulsory redundancies will be inevitable however even where volunteers exist; for example if any of the volunteers are key personnel who cannot be released or are in a grade and discipline for which PSA Services has a long-term need.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many private sector agency staff are employed within the Property Services Agency.

Mr. Yeo: PSA Services currently employes 304 private sector agency staff.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) pursuant to his oral answer of 10 July, *Official Report*, column 950, if it is his intention to give the redundancy pay dowry to which he referred to the purchasers of PSA Services;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 10 July, *Official Report*, column 949, whether he has any plans to use dowries other than the ones linked to redundancy payments, in cash or in kind, to enable the sale of any part of the PSA.

Sir George Young: When the PSA Services businesses are privatised, the new owners will take over assets, particularly in the form of the expertise of staff and the contracts on which they are engaged, and liabilities, particularly in the form of contractual obligations to those staff. If the value of the contingent redundancy liabilities taken on by the purchaser exceeds the value of the assets acquired, the purchaser will require a "dowry". A trust-fund is unlikely to be the most appropriate mechanism for providing such a dowry.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the future of Property Services Agency Services.

Mr. Heseltine: We remain committed to transferring the activities currently carried out by the PSA Services —PSAS—businesses to the private sector. Following consideration of the reports from my Department's advisers, Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte, we have reached the following conclusions on the options for the different PSAS businesses.

PSA International—PSAI—is not saleable as a separate organisation. We will therefore consult its clients, in particular the Ministry of Defence, about how best to phase out their reliance on PSAI and to complete the work currently underway.

Building Management is being reorganised into five regional businesses. We plan to appoint a contractor manager to carry through the restructuring and preparations necessary to make the businesses ready for sale. Providing satisfactory progress is made and the subject to market sentiment, we aim to offer the regional businesses for sale towards the end of next year.

Again subject to progress and market sentiment, we propose to offer PSA Projects for sale early next year. The necessary financial information is being drawn together to determine the best form of sale or sales.

Eco-labelling

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the cost of the implementation of European Community draft directive document No. 4717/91 on eco-labelling to *(a)* the Exchequer *(i)* directly and *(ii)* channelled via the European institutions, *(b)* industry and *(c)* the British consumer.

Mr Baldry: The precise cost of administering a European Community scheme of eco-labelling in the United Kingdom cannot be calculated until the final form of the scheme is agreed. Provisionally, we estimate that expenditure might initially be in the order of £1 million per year, which over time would be increasingly offset by income.

It is not possible to identify separately the costs channeled via the European institutions of implementing the scheme. In practice the actual United Kingdom contribution to the EC budget for individual programmes will depend not only on the level of expenditure, but also on the level and timing of payments, and the relative share of the programme.

It is not practicable to estimate the direct costs, if any, of an eco-labelling scheme to industry or consumers. The scheme will be voluntary and it will, therefore, be a commercial and market judgment for industry whether to apply for labels.

Green Belt

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the number of inquiries held in each of the last five years to determine planning applications for use of leisure plots created within green belt zoning; how many inquiries reported in favour of the local authority; and how many in favour of the appellant.

Mr. Yeo: The Secretary of State may call in planning applications for his own decision and arrange inquiries. No applications concerning the use of leisure plots within green belts have been called in within the last five years.

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to introduce legislation to curtail the practice of selling green belt land as leisure plots, thus creating opportunity for the settlement of temporary homes in the green belt; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: No. There is already judicial authority that the creation of leisure plots from former agricultural land is a "material" change of use, requiring planning permission. Local planning authorities have adequate enforcement powers to remedy such uses in breach of planning control.

The provisions in part I of the Planning and Compensation Bill will strengthen authorities' ability to take effective enforcement action. The maximum penalty, on summary conviction of an enforcement notice or stop notice offence is to be increased from £2,000 to £20,000. This should help to make the enforcement provisions even more effective in preventing the use of Green Belt land for leisure purposes.

We announced on 11 June, *Official Report*, columns *482-85*, that we would be withdrawing all agricultural permitted development rights from all farm holdings of less than 5 hectares, and from agricultural areas of less than 1 hectare on larger holdings, and introducing new controls over the siting of farm buildings. This should provide more effective control over development associated with the fragmentation of holdings.

Sir Peter Morrison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 18 July, *Official Report*, column *241*, if he will list the sources of the information on approved green belts in 1979 and 1989 published in "This Common Inheritance"; and if he will send copies of this information to the right hon. Member for the City of Chester.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 23 July 1991]:* The 1989 information was derived from surveys of development plans, which show green belt boundaries. I am sending my right hon. Friend a copy of the compilation, which includes the area of green belt by county. We believe that the 1979 information was compiled in a similar way.

Housing Associations

Mr Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations took place between his Department and the Bank of England prior to the directive by the Bank to banks in the United Kingdom to increase the risk factor attributed to secured loans to housing associations to 50 per cent.; and how much the directive will add to the borrowing costs of housing associations.

Mr. Yeo: I understand that no such directive has been issued.

Capital adequacy requirements were issued by the Bank of England in a notice sent to all banks in October 1988. The notice identified certain lending to housing associations as an activity attracting a concessionary weighting of 50 per cent in the ratio of capital against assets. A further notice was issued in December 1990 clarifying and slightly widening the circumstances in which lending to housing associations could qualify for this concessionary weighting.

Waste Carriers

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress he has made on plans to require the registration of waste carriers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: On 13 December 1990, the Government issued for consultation a draft of the regulations necessary to implement the Control of Pollution (Amendment) Act 1989. We have considered the responses to that consultation exercise and have now laid before Parliament the Controlled Waste (Registration of Carriers and Seizure of Vehicles) Regulations 1991, which will take effect from 14 October.

The regulations are a vital step in the Government's programme of action to deter fly-tipping, to ensure that those responsible for this crime are called to account, and to improve standards in the management and disposal of

waste. The registration of waste carriers is also the first step in the implementation of the duty of care which we intend to bring fully into force by April 1992. Guidance on the 1989 Act and the regulations is provided in DOE circular 11/91.

The main effect of the regulations is to require anyone who transports waste in the course of his business, or in any other way for profit, to be registered. It will be an offence to do so without being registered. The police will have powers to stop and search vehicles carrying waste on the road and to require the carrier to produce his certificate of registration. Steps are being taken to ensure that carriers are aware of the need to register.

Waste regulation authorities will have power to refuse or revoke registration where the carrier, or someone connected with his business, has been convicted of a "prescribed offence" and the authority consider it is undesirable that he should be registered. There will be a right of appeal to the Secretary of State. Each waste regulation authority will be required to maintain a register of carriers. The register will be open to inspection free of charge by members of the public.

The regulations also set out the procedures under which a waste regulation authority can apply to the court for a warrant to seize a vehicle believed to have been used for fly-tipping where the identity of the owner has proven to be a problem.

Planning Applications

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table indicating the percentage of planning applications decided within eight weeks by each local planning authority.

Mr. Yeo: I have arranged for the required information to be placed in the Library.

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will announce the arrangements for bringing into force the provisions of clause 10 of the Planning and Compensation Bill, enabling local planning authorities to grant certificates of lawful use or development.

Mr. Yeo: We have now considered the response to the consultation paper of 8 January about the proposed certificate of lawful use or development.

We intend to bring the provisions of clause 10 into force one year after the Planning and Compensation Bill receives Royal Assent. This will enable local planning authorities to prepare thoroughly for the introduction of the new system of lawful development certificates. They will also be able to consider possible enforcement action against currently unauthorised development which will become lawful when the new "immunity" rules, in clause 4 of the Bill, are simultaneously brought into force.

My right hon. Friend proposes to enable local planning authorities to charge a fee for their administration costs of processing and deciding lawful development certificate applications. He intends to prescribe a national fee scale, linked to the planning application fees for which the Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications and Deemed Applications) Regulations 1989—(SI 1989/193, as amended)—provide, as follows:

(1) *applications under new section 191 of the 1990 Act for existing use or development*

Fee payable: an equivalent amount to the planning application fee for the development to which the application under section 191 relates.

(2) *applications under new section 192 of the 1990 Act for proposed use or development*

Fee payable: 50 per cent. of the equivalent planning application fee for the use of land to which the application relates.

We propose to bring the other main enforcement provisions in part I of the Bill into force approximately four months after Royal Assent.

Building Regulations

Sir Hugh Rossi: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to complete his review of part B of the Building Regulations 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The review of part B of the Building Regulations 1985 relating to the fire safety of buildings has now been completed. The purpose has been to review and where necessary enhance the current provisions in the light of changes in building form and fire protection technology without compromising existing levels of fire safety. I would like to thank all those who commented on the consultation proposals issed in March of last year, and these comments have been fully and carefully considered.

There is clearly a broad measure of agreement on many of the proposals on which we consulted including those relating to part B1—means of escape—and B5—access and facilities for the fire service. Most of the modifications that we are now making to the original proposals are of a detailed technical nature although additional provisions have been included in part B5 relating to smoke and heat venting from basements.

The proposals relating to part B3—Internal Fire Spread—have proved more controversial. It remains our view that the existing provisions are insufficiently flexible to provided satisfactory solutions to the fire safety problems posed by some new building types. We consider that in certain situations developers should be encouraged to make use of active fire protection measures such as sprinkler and smoke management systems to complement the traditional forms of structural fire precautions. One of the concerns expressed has been about ongoing maintenance, and my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is considering how the problem of achieving continuing control and maintenance of active fire protection measures can best be achieved.

We have also concluded that it would be appropriate to permit some reduction in existing levels of passive fire resistance, particularly in situations where sprinklers are used. Some of those levels have historically related more to property protection than to the life safety considerations which are the primary concern of the Building Regulations. At the same time, we recognise that some of the fire resistance levels proposed in the consultation paper may not have taken sufficient account of possible risks to firefighters, and these have now been increased. However, it remains our view that fire resistance requirements in excess of two hours cannot be justified on life safety grounds.

The approved documents are now being edited together with those relating to the other parts of the regulations currently under review. They should be ready for publication by the end of October. The intention is that the

changes to the regulations themselves will be laid before Parliament at the same time, and the new requirements and guidance are likely to come into operation next spring.

The changes which are now being made have the support of the Building Regulations Advisory Committee, and of its fire advisory panel, both of which include a wide range of relevant expertise among their membership. They have been discussed with a number of those who submitted comments, particularly the fire service representative bodies, and they also have the support of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. Both my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Northern Ireland are in broad support of our proposals and will move in the same direction when the opportunity arises. On the basis of the expert advice that I have received, I am satisfied that standards of life safety are being maintained. Indeed, in certain respects, they are being significantly enhanced.

Unauthorised Development

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue policy guidance to local planning authorities about the taking of effective enforcement action against unauthorised development.

Sir George Young: During debates on the enforcement provisions of the Planning and Compensation Bill, we promised to give local planning authorities new policy guidance about effective use of their powers to enforce planning control when those provisions are enacted. My Department and the Welsh Office are today sending to consultees a draft planning policy guidance note—PPG —about enforcement.

The draft PPG emphasises the importance of using the new and improved enforcement powers provided by the Bill. It points out the significance of the greatly increased maximum summary penalties for enforcement offences. It suggests the criteria which planning authorities should bear in mind when considering whether to take formal enforcement action against a breach of planning control, and it discusses some of the circumstances in which difficult decisions about enforcement action will need to be taken, for example where the future of a small business could be put at risk by requiring it to re-locate or substantially change existing working practices.

We are consulting about the draft guidance now so that the finalised PPG can be ready for issue when the enforcement provisions in the Bill have been approved by Parliament and are brought into force, later this year. We shall welcome comments on it.

House Improvement Grants

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will review the provisions of part VIII of the local Government and Housing Act 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The new renovation grant system introduced by part VIII of the 1989 Act has been in operation for just over a year. I have therefore decided that it would be timely to review how well it is working.

The review will have three main objectives:

1. To review the operation of all aspects of the house renovation grant system (and the test of resources in particular) provided by part VIII of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, to assess how far it is meeting its objectives and to identify possible obstacles (for example lack of availability of resources) to achieving them.

2. To consider what changes are desirable to address problems and anomalies identified, and to facilitate the effective operation of the grant system having regard to resource implications.

3. To make recommendations for amendments to secondary legislation and Departmental guidance to implement proposed changes, and to identify where changes to primary legislation may be desirable.

Written comments on the operation of the new grants system should be submitted to the Department (Room N12/05, 2 Marsham street) by 30 September 1991.

Structure Plans

Sir Peter Morrison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 18 July, *Official Report*, col. *241*, when he decided, when reviewing structure plans, not to take into account necessary development in villages and rural areas.

Mr. Yeo: *[holding answer 23 July 1991]*. There has been no such decision, nor could there be under planning law. The Secretary of State's policy remains as currently set out in planning policy guidance note 15. Structure plans must ensure that the scale of provision for development is realistic for the county as a whole, and in terms of its distribution within the county, and be consistent with national and regional policy.

Sir Peter Morrison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment pursuant to his answer of 18 July, *Official Report*, column *241*, (1) if he will publish the statistics which are available on his decisions on panel recommendations in connection with structure plans proposals;

(2) if he will make it his practice to collect comprehensive statistics on his decisions on panel recommendations in connection with structure plans proposals.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 23 July 1991]:* In each case, the panel report and a statement of the Secretary of State's proposed modifications, with reasons, are published. We keep the degree of modification under scrutiny. The proposed modifications vary in importance and in whether they can be presented quantitatively. For these reasons, no statistical analysis is available, and it would be difficult to draw sound conclusions from any statistical survey.

Departmental Documents

Sir Peter Morrison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what documents were given to Cheshire county council in March, April and May by his Department; and what they contained.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 23 July 1991]:* In connection with the Cheshire replacement structure plan the following documents were shown to officers of Cheshire county council on 10 May 1991:

1. the draft list of proposed modifications and policies;
2. the draft supporting Statement of reasons;
3. the Panel Report.

These were provided on an "in confidence" basis in order to obtain their comments on the drafting of the proposed modifications to avoid factual errors or inconsistencies.

Local Plans

Sir Peter Morrison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 18 July, *Official Report*, column *241*, (1) when he decided to remove prime responsibility from local authorities for the formulation of detailed proposals in local plans for their areas;

(2) if he will list the factors on which he based his decision to change his policy in relation to development plans from that of giving priority to district and county councils.

Mr. Yeo: There has been no such change in policy. Under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, local planning authorities have the primary responsibility for the preparation of development plans; but that Act also sets out the powers through which the Secretary of State may intervene in that process. In particular, until the Planning and Compensation Bill provisions on development plans are commenced, the Secretary of State has the final responsibility for approving structure plans. Our policy is to use these powers of intervention only when necessary, for example to secure consistency with national or regional strategic guidance.

Roads

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what provision there is for *(a)* members of the public and *(b)* local highways authorities to comment on roads promoted by urban development corporations.

Mr. Key: Urban development corporations are local planning authorities for their areas and are subject to the same statutory requirements on consultation as other planning authorities. In London, under the general regulations of 1976, London Docklands development corporation is also required to consult the London boroughs on all its own development proposals.

Long Grass

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what responsibilities local authorities have to relieve the nuisance caused by long grass being cut and left in situ on roadside verges by council employees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I have been asked to reply.

Grass on roadside verges is cut by highway authorities for safety purposes. If the grass has grown very long, particularly in an urban situation, good practice guidance is that the cut grass should be removed.

Urban Development Corporations

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the budget of each urban development corporation to cover the provision for training in each of the years 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Key *[pursuant to his answer, 4 July 1991, c. 180.]*: The information is shown in the table.

UDC	*1989-90 £000*	*1990-91 £000*	*1991-92 £000*
Black Country	150	400	900
Bristol	nil	nil	nil
Central Manchester	7	35	71
Leeds	4	15	15
London Docklands	2,400	3,300	2,200
Merseyside	315	315	260
Sheffield	58	67	100
Teesside	148	100	200
Trafford Park	22	184	446
Tyne and Wear	n/a	n/a	n/a

Food Safety Act 1990

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will reword the guidelines to regulations in the Food Safety Act 1990 so as to remove their existing ambiguity.

Mr. Dorrell: I have been asked to reply. We are currently considering a number of comments on the draft code of practice on food hygiene inspections. It will be published in due course.

Environmental Training

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, what funds have been received by the United Kingdom under the European Community's regional development fund in support of programmes to make environmental improvement and to develop environmental information and training.

Mr. Leigh: I have been asked to reply.

Comprehensive information on receipts from the European regional development fund (ERDF) for these purposes is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, ERDF allocations have been made within the United Kingdom's community support frameworks under objective 1, 2 and 5b of the structural funds as follows, at 1989 prices.

	£ million
Objective 1 (Priority 1—improvement of social and physical environment)	35 (1989-93)
Objective 2 (Priority 4—improving the image of the region)	57 (1989-91)
Objective 5b (Priority 1—diversification of the rural economy)	2 (1989-91)

SOCIAL SECURITY

Elderly Men

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the number of men aged 60 to 64 years who will have paid insufficient national insurance contributions by the age of 65 years to be entitled to a pension; and if he will estimate the average waiting time for men between ceasing to be economically active and becoming entitled to a state retirement pension.

Miss Widdecombe: This information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received on the number of elderly people who qualify for income support following receipt of attendance allowance yet fail to claim.

Mr. Scott: Representations have been received from Notting Hill Housing Association and Hertfordshire county council social services department on a range of issues relating to the backdating of claims for income support where entitlement depends upon attendance allowance being awarded.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposals he has to revise leaflet DS668 in order to inform elderly people that they may qualify for income support when they receive attendance allowance.

Mr Scott: The administration of attendance allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Benefits, London

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the number of people claiming *(a)* income support and *(b)* family credit at each office in London for the last two years.

Miss Widdecombe: The administration of income support and family credit is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Pensions

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the percentage of current gross average earnings that the state pension represents in the United Kingdom; and what comparable information he has for other EC countries.

Miss Widdecombe: In Great Britain the basic rate retirement pension for a single person, at April 1990 rates, represented 17·8 per cent. of average gross weekly earnings[1]. This basic rate retirement pension does not include SERPS, nor does it include the occupational pension that over half all pensioners received in 1988; in addition, nearly three quarters of pensioners received incomes from savings.

It is difficult to make direct comparisons with other EC state pension schemes because they are mostly earnings related. As a result, pensions are a reflection of individual earnings rather than the general level of earnings.

Information on the different EC pension schemes can be found in "Social Protection in The Member States of The Community" published by the European Commission, a copy of which can be found in the Library.

For separate figures on Northern Ireland I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

[1] Based on approximate average gross weekly earnings of all full time employees on adult rates—All industries and services in Great Britain and based on the New Earnings Survey and the Average Earnings Index (April 1990), earnings figures on this basis are not yet available for April 1991.

Welsh Language

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security which leaflets and claim forms for social security benefits are available in the Welsh language; what percentage of social security offices employ Welsh-speaking counter staff and other officials who deal with the public; and what steps are being taken to improve services, information and advice in the Welsh language.

Miss Widdecombe: The service provided for Welsh-speaking customers is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information office.

Bridge House Resettlement Unit

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what were his reasons for the closure of Bridge House resettlement unit; and why it was closed on that particular date.

(2) whether he will make a statement on the Government's policy concerning the provision of alternative direct access accommodation to replace Bridge House resettlement unit.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to the letter of 23 July 1991 from the chief executive of the Resettlement Agency to my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn), a copy of which is available in the Library.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on provision for homeless single people in Kensington and Chelsea *(a)* before and *(b)* after the closure of Bridge House resettlement unit.

Miss Widdecombe: The Resettlement Agency, which is an agency within the Department of Social Security, operates 19 resettlement units nationally which provide temporary board and lodging for single homeless people with an unsettled way of life with a view to helping them resettle. Six of the agency's units are in London. A seventh, Bridge house in Notting Hill, was closed earlier this year on health and safety grounds. At the time of its closure the unit was operating 95 bed spaces. When the unit closed a total of 101 extra bed spaces were created in the remaining London units and Sittingbourne.

General responsibility for homeless people is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the annual cost of extending the lower rate of the mobility component of the disability living allowance to people who become disabled *(a)* aged between 65 and 70 years, *(b)* aged between 70 and 75 years, *(c)* aged between 75 and 80 years and *(d)* to all people who become disabled after the age of 65 years (all people).

Mr. Scott: The estimated costs are: *(a)* £20 million; *(b)* £40 million; *(c)* £60 million; *(d)* £100 million. Costs for *(a)* *(b)* and *(c)* are assumed to be cumlative. All estimates are necessarily subject to large margins of uncertainty.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the cost of extending *(a)* the lower rate and *(b)* the higher rate of mobility component of the disability living allowance to children under five years.

Mr. Scott: The number of potential beneficiaries from a reduction in the lower age limit for the DLA mobility components cannot be predicted with any degree of certainty. Our tentative estimates are *(a)* £10 million; *(b)* £25 million.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what would be the cost of paying the lower rate of the care component of the disability living allowance at *(a)* £10, *(b)* £15 and *(c)* £20 per week;

(2) what would be the cost of paying the lower rate of the mobility component of the disability living allowance at *(a)* £10, *(b)* £15 and *(c)* £20 per week.

Mr. Scott: The approximate cost by 1993-94 of introducing the lower rates of disability living allowance at £10 would be about £120 million for each component, including consequential expenditure on other benefits. Each additional £5 would increase the cost of each DLA component by around £40 million.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the cost of raising the level of the lower rate of mobility component of the disability living allowance to the level of the higher rate.

Mr. Scott: It is estimated that the additional cost would be in the order of £150 million by 1993-94.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the annual cost of making the lower rate care component of the disability living allowance available to people aged *(a)* between 65 and 70 years, *(b)* between 65 and 75 years, *(c)* between 65 and 80 years and *(d)* all people over the age of 65 years.

Mr. Scott: The estimated costs are: *(a)* £25 million; *(b)* £55 million; *(c)* £95 million; *(d)* £165 million. All estimates are necessarily subject to large margins of uncertainty.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the cost of raising the age limit for first claiming mobility allowance by *(a)* one year, *(b)* two years and *(c)* three years.

Mr. Scott: I will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the annual cost of extending the higher rate of the mobility component of the disability living allowance to people who became disabled *(a)* between 65 and 70, *(b)* between 65 and 75, *(c)* between 75 and 80 and *(d)* to all people who become disabled after the age of 65.

Mr. Scott: For an estimate of the cost of *(d)* I refer the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) on 17 December 1990 at columns *86-87*. I will write to the hon. Member on the other points as soon as the information is available.

Severe Disablement Allowance

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the cost of increasing the level of severe disablement allowance to that of invalidity benefit.

Mr. Scott: We estimate that the gross cost of increasing the basic rate of severe disablement allowance to the basic rate of invalidity benefit would be about £270 million a year; the net cost would be about £120 million a year.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment his Department has made of the cost of extending the two-year linking rule to all people coming off invalidity benefit to take up work.

Mr. Scott: It would not be possible to produce a reliable estimate of the number of those coming off invalidity benefit to take up work, but we estimate that the cost of extending the linking rule from eight weeks to two years for all IVB recipients is around £30 million.

Benefits Agency

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what training Benefit Agency strategic planning teams with district management units are to receive before they draw up their strategic plans.

Miss Widdecombe: The training of Benefits Agency management is a matter for Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Sri Lanka

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the freezing of the £13 million aid package to Sri Lanka following the expulsion of the British High Commissioner.

Mrs. Chalker: Her Majesty's Government's position, which has been explained to the Sri Lankan Government, is that we have withdrawn a conditional offer of £3 million of balance of payments assistance as an expression of our concern about the human rights situation in Sri Lanka. The possibility of any major new aid commitments will be considered in the light of Sri Lankan Government policies and practices including the position on human rights. The reference to a £13 million aid freeze in the press was based on a misunderstood briefing.

Certain existing aid financed activities are continuing. These are mainly in the fields of education and training, local government strengthening, relief and rehabilitation programmes through NGOs, forestry and urban road rehabilitation. Their estimated cost to the British aid programme will be about £10 million this year.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what financial, military, cultural and economic aid is given to Sri Lanka, apart from the recently frozen £13 million package.

Mrs. Chalker: British bilateral development aid to Sri Lanka was £23·5 million in 1989 the latest year for which detailed figures are available. This was made up of financial aid totalling £15·331 million, and technical co-operation totalling £8·222 million. No cultural aid or other economic aid is given. The figures are expected to

have been substantially less in 1990, partly because of the security situation. Our aid is focused on natural resources, power, roads, education and relief and rehabilitation.

Specific details of military assistance are normally confidential between the countries concerned. Members of the Sri Lankan armed forces have, however, attended a number of courses in the United Kingdom given by the three services. We hope this training will instil the discipline and high professional and ethical standards of our own forces.

Population Activities

Mrs. Clywd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much and what percentage of the Overseas Development Administration's budget is spent on population activities for the current year and each year since 1979.

Mrs. Chalker: The figures are as follows:

	Population expenditure (£ million)	*Percentage of net aid programme*
1979	9,186	1·1
1980	7,589	1·0
1981	6,468	0·7
1982	9,951	1·1
1983	12,373	1·2
1984	12,333	1·1
1985	15,509	1·4
1986	15,151	1·3
1987	15,899	1·4
1988	16,710	1·1
1989	17,298	1·1

For 1990, though detailed figures are not yet available, it is estimated that we spent about £24 million.

Many other United Kingdom aid activities—especially women's health and education programmes—indirectly influence the rate of population growth in developing countries.

Kenya

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much of the £50 million of direct assistance towards projects promoting good government will be spent in Kenya.

Mrs. Chalker: The £50 million, which I aim to have committed over the next year, has not been broken down on a country basis. We are already supporting such activities in Kenya at a cost this year to the aid programme of about £3 million. I would expect to do more in Kenya as a result of this initiative.

ACP Debt

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his latest estimate of the cost of the implementation of European Community draft directive document No. 4345/91 on debt from African, Caribbean and Pacific countries to the Exchequer (i) directly and (ii) channelled via the European institutions.

Mrs. Chalker: It is estimated that the full cost to the United Kingdom in terms of repayments forgone if the proposals contained in the Commission's draft communication to the Council No. 4345/91 are agreed would be around £48 million over the period of the seventh European development fund (1991 to 1995). This represents the United Kingdom share of repayments made to the European investment bank , which are credited by it to the member states, in respect of risk capital investments and special loans in African, Caribbean and Pacific countries which were financed from the European development funds to which we have contributed.

The proposals are under discussion in the Council of Ministers.

HEALTH

Therapy Services

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the number of *(a)* speech therapists, *(b)* physiotherapists, *(c)* occupational therapists and *(d)* clinical psychologists in post for each health district in London together with the population of the areas covered.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The precise information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Information for the four Thames regions and the special health authorities is given in the table.

NHS Staff in post at 30 September 1990 and population estimates mid-1990
Whole-time equivalents[1]

Thousands

Regions	*Speech Therapists*			*Occupational Therapists*			*Clinical Psychologists*			*Physiotherapists*			*Population estimates mid-1990*
	Qualified	*Helpers*	*Total*	*Qualified*	*Helpers*	*Total*	*Qualified*	*Helpers*	*Total*	*Qualified*	*Helpers*	*Total*	
North West Thames	251	1	253	326	151	477	147	—	147	647	95	743	3,499
North East Thames	257	13	270	390	303	692	201	—	201	760	145	906	3,803
South East Thames	240	9	249	327	130	457	198	—	198	712	151	862	3,658
South West Thames	198	6	203	309	230	539	139	—	139	599	96	695	2,979
London post-graduate special health authorities	25	—	25	61	1	62	26	—	26	125	1	126	—

Source: Department of Health (SM13) annual census of NHS non-medical manpower.
Notes:
[1]All figures are independently rounded to the nearest whole-time equivalent.

Waiting Lists, Tower Hamlets

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the in-patient waiting lists for Tower Hamlets health authority for each year since 1979 together with the percentage of those waiting for longer than 12 months.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Provisional figures for March 1991 indicate that the number of people waiting for in-patient treatment in Tower Hamlets fell by 12 per cent. in the previous six months and by 22 per cent. since March 1979; the number waiting over a year fell by 43 per cent. and 29 per cent. respectively. Between March 1979 and September 1990, the number of in-patients treated in Tower Hamlets increased by about 14 per cent.

Tower Hamlets district health authority
Waiting list showing percentage waiting over 12 months

	Total in-patient waiting list[1]	*Percentage of patients waiting over 12 months*
March 1979	5,930	29·8
September 1979	5,641	31·4
September 1980	5,579	42·1
September 1981	5,226	38·5
September 1982	6,003	32·9
September 1983	5,880	35·5
September 1984	5,771	34·1
September 1985	6,324	36·7
September 1986	7,021	43·4
September 1987	5,764	43·0
September 1988	5,272	42·0
September 1989	5,400	43·0
September 1990	5,251	43·0
March 1991	4,631	[2]28·0

Source: SM12, SBH203, KHO6, KHO7, KHO7A returns, except for March 1991.

[1] Excludes self-deferred cases—those patients who have refused an offer of admission.

[2] Provisional figures.

Social Services Departments

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Manchester, Withington, (Mr. Bradley) *Official Report*, 11 July, columns *419-21*, on payments by social services departments, if he will give the equivalent information for 1986-87, 1987-88 and estimated figures for 1989-90 and the current year.

Mr. Dorrell: The latest year for which this information is available is 1988-89. The information for 1986-87 and 1987-88 is given in the table.

Local authority contributions to voluntary organisations

£000

	1986-87	*1987-88*
Metropolitan Borough Councils		
Bolton	32	74
Bury	134	142
Manchester	0	0
Oldham	31	6
Rochdale	751	542
Salford	0	138
Stockport	162	118
Tameside	199	163
Trafford	0	0
Wigan	162	145
Knowsley	373	379
Liverpool	813	697
St. Helens	0	0
Sefton	40	34
Wirral	757	620
Barnsley	38	9
Doncaster	[1]—	199
Rotherham	[1]—	[1]—
Sheffield	1,325	[1]—
Gateshead	358	284
Newcastle	1,335	1,353
North Tyneside	123	52
South Tyneside	0	15
Sunderland	61	278
Birmingham	4,409	4,320
Coventry	443	1,071
Dudley	289	346
Sandwell	43	142
Solihull	109	161
Walsall	109	112
Wolverhampton	649	1,008
Bradford	392	542
Calderdale	88	135
Kirklees	211	341
Leeds	914	966
Wakefield	157	0
Inner London Boroughs		
City of London	164	[1]—
Camden	0	575
Greenwich	[1]—	0
Hackney	[1]—	[1]—
Hammersmith	0	[1]—
Islington	2,760	3,140
Kensington	1,135	1,517
Lambeth	[1]—	0
Lewisham	1,662	1,960
Southwark	1,588	2,851
Tower Hamlets	0	0
Wandsworth	145	157
Westminster	0	2,931
Outer London Boroughs		
Barking	122	0
Barnet	481	649
Bexley	247	0
Brent	2,067	2,130
Bromley	487	511
Croydon	0	0
Ealing	16	[1]—
Enfield	120	63
Haringey	1,904	[1]—
Harrow	34	65
Havering	15	25
Hillingdon	128	235
Hounslow	359	0
Kingston	198	503
Merton	0	6
Newham	[1]—	520
Redbridge	1	1
Richmond	69	0
Sutton	181	230
Waltham Forest	505	0
Shire Counties		
Isle of Scilly	0	1
Avon	1,163	1,144
Bedfordshire	187	207
Berkshire	185	[1]—
Buckinghamshire	1,248	1,500
Cambridgeshire	524	858
Cheshire	558	662
Cleveland	0	0
Cornwall	96	64
Cumbria	278	334
Derbyshire	19	773
Devon	0	522
Dorset	6	0
Durham	113	139
East Sussex	477	694
Essex	853	0

	1986-87	1987-88
Gloucestershire	2	492
Hampshire	1,237	1,375
Hereford and Worcester	84	146
Hertfordshire	0	0
Humberside	283	0
Isle of Wight	49	51
Kent	2,826	0
Lancashire	363	434
Leicestershire	1,532	1,887
Lincolnshire	212	85
Norfolk	985	1,198
Northamptonshire	1,474	1,470
Northumberland	64	21
North Yorkshire	421	417
Nottinghamshire	0	1,838
Oxfordshire	370	427
Shropshire	134	48
Somerset	0	0
Staffordshire	145	144
Suffolk	524	212
Surrey	34	46
Warwickshire	585	668
West Sussex	212	253
Wiltshire	151	1,293

Source: Local authority revenue outturn forms.
[1] Completed forms not received.

Sight Tests

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what would be the cost of abolishing charges for sight tests for persons aged over 60 years both gross and net of the cost of administering collection of charges for national health service sight tests and the cost of administering the low income scheme.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The gross cost of abolishing sight test fees for all people over 60 would be in the order of £25 million. This is calculated using the current general ophthalmic service sight test fee. There is no centrally held information on the cost of administering the sight test element of the low income scheme or on NHS sight tests.

Young Patients

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will issue new guidelines to district health authorities prohibiting the admission of children and adolescent people to adult wards in national health service hospitals, particularly psychiatric wards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: On 22 July 1991 we published a good practice guide "the Welfare of Children and Young People in Hospital," a copy of which is available in the Library. It re-emphasises the need to treat children and adolescents, including those requiring psychiatric care, in discrete accommodation separate from adults.

GPs (Target Payments)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will review the criteria for target payments to general practitioners so that such payments are made only if a deep pelvic examination is carried out at the same time as a cervical smear.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The target payments are intended to maximise the number of women patients of the relevant age groups being screened for cervical cancer. There are no plans to include other examinations, which are a matter of the doctor's clinical judgment, in the target payment arrangements.

Food Poisoning

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the annual incidence of food poisoning directly related to the consumption of fresh meat since the introduction of mandatory meat inspection.

Mr. Dorrell: The figures for the annual incidence of outbreaks of bacterial food poisoning and salmonellosis in England and Wales reported to the PHLS communicable disease surveillance centre for 1984 to 1988 (the most recent years available) are in the table.

Earlier data are not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Vehicle of infection in outbreaks of bacterial food poisoning[1] and salmonellosis reported by laboratories, MOsEH and EHOs in England and Wales to communicable disease surveillance centre 1984 to 1988

	Year				
Food vehicle	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Chicken	24	22	25	28	22
Turkey	21	16	10	17	14
Poultry	—	1	2	2	—
Beef	27	11	11	11	9
Pork/ham	11	9	22	6	13
Lamb/mutton	1	5	2	1	1
Rabbit	—	1	—	—	—
Mixed and other meats, pies, sausages	50	33	29	31	20
Gravy/sauces	3	1	—	1	2
Milk/cream	20	10	7	2	4
Eggs	—	5	4	8	36
Pasta dishes	—	—	6	1	—
Rice	4	3	5	5	4
Shellfish/fish	7	2	2	5	3
Other mixed foods	30	26	11	24	32
Not known	441	322	380	363	381
TOTAL	639	467	516	505	541

[1] Bacillus sp, Clostridium perfringens and Staphylococcus aureus.

Wisdom Teeth Extractions

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received *(a)* over the cost to the national health service and *(b)* alleging discrimination against dentists, as a result of the number of wisdom teeth extractions carried out in hospital; and whether he has any proposals to enable more such operations to be carried out in general practice or in out-patient clinics.

Mr. Dorrell: One such representation has been received. The hospital dental service provides consultant treatment and advice in cases of special difficulty including those referred by general dental practitioners and general medical practitioners. Whether any particular condition should be so referred is a matter for the judgment of the clinicians concerned.

As part of the postgraduate training initiative which the Department funds, a video on the subject of minor oral surgery in general practice has been supplied to all general dental practices during July 1991. The video encourages dentists to undertake the removal of uncomplicated wisdom teeth in their own practices.

Cost Rent Scheme

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his Department's advice on the differential investment under the cost rent scheme for *(a)* health centres and *(b)* general practitioner practices; and if he will make a statement as to what plans he has to bring them both on to an equal footing.

Mr. Dorrell: The purpose of the cost rent scheme is to offer financial assistance to GPs willing to invest in building new surgery premises or substantially altering existing premises to bring them up to an equivalent standard. Health centres are owned by health authorities who are responsible for their maintenance.

GPs occupy health centres under licence and it is a condition of their occupancy that they should not make structural alterations to the premises. The cost rent scheme does not therefore apply to GPs in health centres except that GPs who elect to buy the health centre from the health authority may be eligible for cost rent if the premises need substantial alteration.

In September 1990 regional health authorities became accountable for family health services authorities including the cash limited funds for cost rent schemes and responsibility for taking an integrated approach to improvements in facilities for primary health care.

Arthroplasty

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the relative costs of arthroplasty of hip or knee in *(a)* South Cleveland general hospital and *(b)* Middlesbrough general hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is not collected centrally. Detailed price information for these procedures has been produced as part of the hospitals' tariffs for GP fund holders and the hon. Member may wish to write to Mrs. Audrey Collins the chairman of South Tees health authority, for details.

Health Authority Mergers

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list those district health authorities which have merged since 1 April.

Mr. Dorrell: The mergers that have taken place are listed in the table. These came into effect on 1 April.

District health authorities prior to 1 April 1991	*District health authorities from 1 April 1991*
Central Birmingham South Birmingham	South Birmingham
Leeds Eastern Leeds Western	Leeds
North Warwickshire Rugby	North East Warwickshire

Medical Records (Transfers)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he is undertaking to ensure that the transfer of medical records between practices nationally is carried out as an efficient and speedy service.

Mr. Dorrell: In the guidance issued by the Department (circular HC (FP) (89) 20), a copy of which is available in the Library, family health services authorities (FHSAs) were asked to review the functioning of their registration departments to ensure that all unnecessary delays in the transfer of records were avoided. FHSA's were also asked to encourage GPs to co-operate in arrangements for the transfer of medical records and to monitor their own as well as GPs performance in transferring records.

Prescription Charges

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the annual income from prescription charges in the latest year for which figures are available; and whether he will estimate the extra annual income from extending charges to all over retirement age except for those categories of exemption which currently apply to people under retirement age.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In 1989-90 the income from prescription charges, including pre-payment certificates, in England was £190 million. It is estimated that this charge income would have been broadly double if charges had been paid by people over retirement age who were not otherwise exempt.

Community Health Councils

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will provide an increase in the funding of the Association of Community Health Councils for England and Wales following the autumn review; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Funding for 1991-92 has been finalised, and the amount for subsequent years will be reviewed later this year.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action his Department is taking to introduce into the national health service anti-discrimination and equal opportunities legislation specifically for people with disabilities.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Health authorities, who are equal opportunities employers, accept the same responsibilities as other employers under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Acts. Through endorsement of the employment services code of good practice on the employment of disabled people, and encouragement of direct links between NHS personnel managers and the Department of Employment's employment service, the Department has made clear to health authorities the importance which we attach to equal opportunities in employment for people with disabilities. The introduction of new legislation would be a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

Health Centres

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will increase his Department's investment in national health service health centres.

Mr. Dorrell: Investment in health centres is for decision by individual health authorities taking into account the availability of other sources of finance for GP premises, the views of the local practitioners and other priorities.

Opticians

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will change the relevant regulations so that opticians providing a service under the national health service are obliged to ensure that each patient is offered at least one pair of spectacles at a cost within the value of the NHS voucher.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Buying spectacles is a private transaction between the optician and his patient and it is not appropriate for the Government to intervene. The majority of retailers sell spectacles within the voucher values.

Clinical Waste

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will issue the necessary regulations so that the disposal of clinical waste from patients' homes is not charged to the patient; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Local authorities who are asked to make arrangements to collect clinical waste from patients' homes are entitled to levy a charge for collection on the person requesting the collection. Normally this will be the health authority rather than the patient.

In deciding whether to levy charges, collection authorities have been asked to weigh the benefits of doing so against the public health risks that may result from occupiers making alternative arrangements in order to avoid charges.

Beverley Lewis

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what action has been taken in the last 12 months by the social services inspectorate in pursuance of the recommendations contained in the report of Gloucestershire social services into the death of Beverley Lewis,

(2) what action has been taken by his Department in the last 12 months in pursuance of the recommendations contained in the report of Gloucester health authority into the death of Beverley Lewis.

Mr. Dorrell: In the last 12 months the Department's social services inspectorate has carried out an inspection of services for multiply-disabled people in Gloucestershire. The report on this inspection, which will be published in due course, is intended to link up the lessons to be learned from the death of Beverley Lewis with the Government's proposals for improvements in community care services. The report should provide pointers for further practice and development within the local departments and voluntary agencies. Following consultation between the Department and the Law Commission on the coroners comments, the Commission is now examining the issues involved in the context of its wider investigation into the adequacy of legal and other procedures for decision-making on behalf of mentally incapacitated adults.

Dentists

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received over *(a)* decreasing real incomes to national health service dentists and *(b)* the number of dentists leaving the national health service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department has received a number of representations, including letters and telephone calls, about these issues. In addition, officials have attended meetings with the General Dental Services Committee of the British Dental Association, and several family health services authorities and local dental committees.

Between 1978-79 and 1988-89, dentists' income increased by about 40 per cent. in real terms. In 1991-92 the Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body recommended a higher increase (11 per cent.) for dentists than for most other groups.

Between 1 October 1990 and 30 April 1991 there was a net decrease of 123 (about 0·7 per cent.) in the number of entries of family health services authority dental lists. It is not known how much national health service work the dentists who have left had done previously.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his practice to publish hospital waiting lists; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We currently collect and publish information on waiting lists and times in districts within which treatment is provided, rather than by individual hospitals. Since April 1991 we have also been collecting figures by district of residence. Both sets of figures will be collated within the Department for up to two years to ensure continuity of data.

Thereafter we propose to collect centrally only the residence-based figures, in order to monitor purchasing health authorities' effectiveness in securing early treatment for their residents.

We shall bring forward, in the patients charter, proposals for the publication of waiting time information by hospital and individual consultant, which some regions already do. This will be a considerable step forward for the NHS in providing relevant and up-to-date information for patients and their GPs.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish figures for both the last quarter of the financial year 1990-91 and the first quarter of the current financial year 1991-92, indicating the average length of waiting time for the following hospital operations *(a)* hip replacement, *(b)* cataracts, *(c)* ear, nose and throat, *(d)* knee joints and *(e)* other orthopaedic operations.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Waiting time information on specific operations is not collected centrally. Information at 31 March 1990 and latest published information at 30 September 1990 for those waiting for in-patient treatment in the specialties of ENT, trauma and orthopaedics and ophthalmology is given in the table.

The percentage of patients waiting more than one year is the generally accepted measure of waiting time.

Information at 31 March 1991 will not be available until later in the year.

In-patient waiting lists—31 March 1991 and 30 September 1990—England

	Total waiting[1]		Waiting over 1 year		Percentage over 1 year	
	March 1990	*September 1990*	*March 1990*	*September 1990*	*March 1990*	*September 1990*
ENT	105,941	102,770	22,294	20,678	20	19
Trauma and orthopaedics	135,075	132,276	38,253	37,691	27	27
Ophthalmology	77,571	81,727	13,586	14,310	17	17

Source: KHO6, KHO7, KHO7A.

[1] Excludes self-deferred cases—those patients who have refused an offer of admission.

Community Pharmacists

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will bring forward proposals to amend the terms of service for chemists to include an obligation that medicines dispensed by community pharmacists should be correctly labelled with the name of the medicine and the dosage instructions directed by the prescribing doctor or dentist.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Correct labelling of medicines by community pharmacists is covered by The Medicines (Labelling) Regulations 1976.

Nurseries

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many new health authority nurseries have opened during the past 12 months; and what proportion is currently registered;

(2) what proportion of health authorities and trusts provide subsidies for nursery places for their employees.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not collected centrally at present.

We anticipate that some information will be available by the autumn, and will arrange for details to be placed in the Library.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what extra resources will be made available to local authorities to register and inspect nurseries as required by the Children Act 1989.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) on 20 June at column *300*.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to monitor the effects of the changes in staff-child ratios in nurseries introduced by the Children Act 1989.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Local authority social services departments will monitor the functioning of individual day nurseries as part of their regulatory function under the Children Act 1989.

The Department will review the advice on day care staff: child ratios and space standards issued in volume 2 of the Children Act guidance and regulations series when it has been in operation for two years.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many new nurseries have been established during the past 12 months on Crown property.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information in the form requested is not available centrally. There are currently 17 civil service nurseries, of which 15 have been opened since 1 July 1990.

Provisional statistics on day nurseries collected by the Department on children's day care facilities published annually estimate that in March 1990 there were 60 day nurseries which were exempt from the requirement to register under existing legislation (a net increase of nine over the previous 12 months). The majority of that figure are likely to be on crown premises.

Playgroups

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what extra funds will be made available for those playgroups and out-of-school schemes for school-age children which presently fall short of the criteria for registration, as required by the Children Act 1989, to enable them to meet the criteria.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The funding of playgroups and out-of-school clubs is a matter for those running them. The Department gives a total of £660,000 grant aid to the Pre School Playgroups Association and Kids Clubs Network to help them support local services.

Playgroups are currently registered under the Nurseries and Child-Minders Regulation Act, 1948. They are required to re-register under the Children Act 1989 within 12 months of the Act coming into force on 14 October 1991. Guidance in volume 2 of the Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations series says that local authorities should not refuse to re-register facilities because they fall below the standards recommended, but should allow them a specified time—normally not more than one year to reach them.

It is for local authorities to decide in the light of each out of school scheme what specific requirements to impose and in so doing they must have regard to the general guidance on this issued by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Child Minders

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what decisions he has made regarding fees for registration under part X of the Children Act 1989.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No final decisions have been taken about the level of fees to be charged by local authority social services departments for the registration and inspection of childminders and providers of day care for children under the age of 8.

The Department intends to consult relevant national organisations.

Hospital Buildings

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average age of hospital buildings.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not held centrally.

NHS Spectacle Vouchers

Mr. Nelson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he proposes to increase the values of NHS spectacle vouchers to take account of the recent VAT changes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have made regulations to increase NHS spectacle voucher values to take account of the recent increase in the rate of VAT to 17·5 per cent., which is applicable to the retail margin of finished spectacles. These new values will take effect from 1 August this year.

Voucher Type	*Current value (£)*	*New value (£)*
A	19·30	19·70
B	30·50	31·15
C	48·00	49·00
D	37·00	37·80
E	61·00	62·30
F	102·00	104·20
Hospital Eye Service:		
G	102·00	104·20
H	32·15	32·80
Supplements:		
Prisms:		
Single Vision	4·10	4·20
Bifocal	5·10	5·20
Tints:		
Single Vision	2·05	2·10
Bifocal	2·55	2·60
Complex Lenses:		
Single Vision	3·60	3·70
Bifocal	19·25	19·70
Small Frame Supplement:	35·20	36·00

Abortion

Sir Patrick Duffy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give a breakdown of the total number of abortions under the terms of the Abortion Act 1967, in the Sheffield health authority area *(a)* by the ground on which they were performed, *(b)* according to age groups, *(c)* how many were repeat abortions, and *(d)* how many were notified (i) in the private sector, and (ii) in the public or national health service sector, for each of the last seven years for which figures are available.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested could be provided in the form specified only at disproportionate cost.

The information that is readily available by area of residence is given in the tables.

Information about legal terminations by area of termination is not available due to reasons of confidentiality.

Number of notifications of abortions performed under the Abortion Act 1967 to residents of Sheffield district health authority by the ground on which they were performed for the years 1988 to 1990

	1988	*1989*	*1990*
Statutory grounds			
Total	1,507	1,503	1,513
1 (with any other)	1	3	3
2 (alone)	1,333	1,262	1,333
3 (with or without 2)	158	226	162
4 (alone)	11	11	11
4 (with any other except 1 excluding 4 alone)	4	1	4
5 or 6	0	0	0

Ground 1 the continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk to the life of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated.

Ground 2 the continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk of injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated.

Ground 3 the continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk or inury to the physical or mental health of any existing children in the family of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated.

Ground 4 there is substantial risk that if the child were born it would differ from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped.

Ground 5 to save the life of the pregnant woman, or

Ground 6 to prevent grave permanent injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman.

Number of notifications of abortions performed under the abortion act 1967 to residents of Sheffield district health authority by age group from 1984 to 1990.

Year	*Age Group* *Under 16*	*16–19*	*20–24*	*25–34*	*35–44*	*45+*	*Unknown*
1984	50	368	401	386	186	7	0
1985	48	416	403	386	148	1	0
1986	46	370	486	425	154	3	2
1987	43	363	501	446	129	2	1
1988	42	382	501	450	122	9	1
1989	35	349	485	483	148	3	0
1990	31	338	511	500	131	2	0

Number of notifications of abortions performed under the abortion act 1967 to resident of Sheffield district health authority by category of premises

Year	*Home RHA* *NHS*	*Non NHS*	*Other RHA* *NHS*	*Non NHS*
1984	763	603	1	31
1985	806	570	0	26
1986	832	614	0	40
1987	813	626	1	43
1988	899	560	2	46
1989	886	571	3	43
1990	831	641	6	35

Tobacco

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest estimate of the cost of the implementation of European Community draft directive document No. 10146/90 on labelling of cigars and cigarettes to *(a)* the Exchequer (i) directly and (ii) channelled via the European institutions, *(b)* industry and *(c)* the British consumer.

Mr. Dorrell: The costs to the Exchequer will be small. Implementation will be carried out by existing staff and absorbed within existing resources. The industry estimates the total cost of initial implementation to be of the order of £450,000-£500,000 and further manufacturing costs of

£100,000 each year thereafter. It will be a matter for the industry to determine how much of this cost is passed on to the consumer.

Medical Products

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest estimate of the cost of the implementation of European Community draft directive document No. 6033/90 on medical products to *(a)* the Exchequer (i) directly and (ii) channelled via the European institutions, *(b)* industry and *(c)* the British consumer.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris) on 16 July at column *139*. The net cost would fall on the Exchequer; it would not affect the European Community budget nor the level of patient payments in the NHS. The transfer of sales from generic to research-based companies would be greater than the net cost to the taxpayer.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will update the figures for hospitals wholly or partly closed in the manner of his reply of 6 June 1990, *Official Report*, column *629*.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is no longer routinely collected centrally as changes in the use of buildings is not a good measure of services to patients provided by the NHS.

Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, pursuant to the answer given on 17 July, *Official Report*, column *194*, he will publish the breakdown of the figures upon which his Department has based its estimate for the annual running costs of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority has a range of statutory responsibilities and functions which were placed on it by Parliament. In order for the Human Fertilisation Embryology Authority to carry out these duties it has been estimated that its first full year running costs (1992-93) will be approximately £1·17 million. The major items of cost are expected to be:

	£
Staff costs	456,000
Accommodation	171,000
Meetings of the authority, licensing committee and other committees	136,000
Inspection visits (to infertility treatment and research centres)	158,000
Information register (computer costs)	42,000
Stationery, printing, telephone and postage	57,000
Other costs (legal and accountancy advice, training, equipment, conferences, capital costs, etc.)	150,000

Food Poisoning

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about the changes in the reporting system for food poisoning that have been introduced this year.

Mr. Dorrell: The format of the joint public health laboratory service/state veterinary service publication "Update on Salmonella Infection" was redesigned earlier this year to make it clearer and more informative. The data on human salmonellosis now show annual comparisons as well as indicating the type of outbreak, the place of distribution of suspect foods, and the suspect foods in outbreaks reported to the communicable disease surveillance centre.

Disability Working Allowance

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what would be the cost of extending to disability working allowance claimants entitlements to remission of health, prescription and related charges.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The estimated cost would be about £3 million.

Hearing Therapists

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when a request was made to the national health service training agency to assess the competence and training needs of hearing therapists; when a response was received from the agency or from the NHS management executive; and how long it was between the first approach and the response.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 23 July 1991]:* On 17 April 1989 the National Health Service Training Authority (NHSTA) put a proposal before the British Society of Hearing Therapists (BSHT) for the development of competence-based qualifications. This was rejected by BSHT on the basis that NHSTA's proposal was to extend the existing work with audiology technicians to include hearing therapists rather than treat them as a separate group.

Extensive discussions have taken place between the BSHT and NHS training directorate (as was the NHS Training Agency) during the intervening time.

A request was received by the NHS training directorate in March 1991 for formal consideration of a proposal for the inclusion of training of hearing therapists in the 1991-92 work programme.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Coalite Chemicals (Emissions)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps are being taken to prevent emissions of dioxins and furans from Coalite Chemicals in Derbyshire.

Mr. Baldry: I have been asked to reply.

Coalite Chemicals Ltd., Bolsover, is a registered works under the Alkali Etc. Works Regulation Act 1906 and the Health and Safety at Work Etc. Act 1974. Emissions to air are subject to regulation by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. The inspectorate has initiated a programme to assess potential emission sources of dioxins-furans from the works.

Spirits and Wines

Mr. Raffan: To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much of the United Kingdom's wine imports come from the European Community.

Mr. Curry: A total of 93 per cent. of the value of United Kingdom imports of wine in 1990 came from other EC countries.

Mr. Raffan: To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the relative contributions to the United Kingdom's balance of trade of spirits and wine.

Mr. Curry: In 1990 the United Kingdom's crude trade surplus in spirits was valued at £1,679 million and the crude deficit in wine at £951 million.

Less-favoured Areas

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has any plans to review less-favoured area payments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Headage rates payable uner the hill livestock compensatory allowances scheme will be reviewed in the normal way during the annual autumn review of the economic conditions in the hills and uplands.

Farmers (Early Retirement)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement on proposals by the European Commission for early retirement for farmers; and whether he has any plans to top up the basic EC payments.

Mr. Curry: The Government are examining the European Commission proposals on early retirement for farmers, which are part of a much wider package of proposals for the reform of the common agricultural policy, to assess their appropriateness to United Kingdom circumstances.

Milk, Derbyshire

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the dioxins and furans found in the milk from farms in Derbyshire whose milk was withdrawn.

Mr. Maclean: The milk from the farms in Derbyshire whose milk was withdrawn was analysed for seven dioxins and 10 furans. These are listed in the paper "Surveillance of British Foods for PCDDs and PCDFs" which was placed in the Library in July 1990.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to ensure that the polluter pays in the case of the milk unfit for consumption in Derbyshire due to dioxin contamination.

Mr. Maclean: Civil redress has to be pursued by those who have suffered the losses. We shall however, be publishing in full the results of our detailed research programme in this area.

Oil Seed Rape

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will state the number and content of research projects sponsored by his Department on oil seed rape.

Mr. Curry: The information requested is as follows:

Strategic research relating to	*Number of projects*	*Cost in 1991-92 £'000*
Molecular genetics and propagation	3	126
Plant nutrition	2	191
Crop management and plant physiology	9	1,159
Field diseases	5	398
Field pests	6	591
Weed control	2	43
Safe storage	4	149
Total	31	2,657

Pollution (Harwell)

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on pollution from chlorinated hydrocarbons discharged from the Atomic Energy Research Establisment at Harwell, in regard to threats to agricultural land.

Mr. Curry: The presence of chlorinated hydrocarbons in water abstracted form a borehole near the Atomic Energy Research Establisment at Harwell is being investigated by relevant bodies including the National Rivers Authority. The threat of pollution to agricultural land will be assessed in the light of the results of these investigations.

Blue-ear Disease

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has as yet identified the means whereby blue-ear disease in pigs gained entry to the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: No. Investigations as to the means by which the disease was introduced are continuing.

EC Directives

Mr. Favell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his latest estimate of the cost of the implementation of European Community draft directive document No. 5491/91 on the milk levy to *(a)* the Exchequer (i) directly and (ii) channelled via the European institutions, *(b)* industry and *(c)* the British consumer.

Mr. Curry: Draft document 5491/91 is the proposal on which Council regulation (EEC) 1639/91 of 13 June is based. This provides for the allocation of additional milk quota to producers who received a limited allocation in 1989 having previously taken part in the non-marketing of milk or dairy herd conversion schemes (so-called SLOM producers), and for further former producers to receive new quota allocations on a similar basis. The proposal was that no new quota should be created for this purpose and that member states should be required to meet claims from within their existing quota resources.

As part of the price-fixing agreement, however, the Council agreed that member states should share the balance of the quota held in the Community reserve for SLOM producers in proportion to the amounts already allocated to them under the previous SLOM distribution and that quota which would otherwise have been returned to the Community reserve, for example because of

non-uptake, should be retained in national reserves. The result of these decisions is that almost 98,000 tonnes of quota has been issued for the first time, of which the United Kingdom has received 31,000 tonnes. The amounts retained in national reserves by other member states are not known; the United Kingdom figure is about 28,000 tonnes.

The cost of the disposal of the 59,000 tonnes of additional milk, if it were sold into intervention as butter and skimmed milk powder, would be about £12·5 million in 1992-93. This expenditure would be funded by the EC, and there would, therefore, be an impact on the net contribution to the Community budget. The Exchequer contribution to the EC budget is towards the budget as a whole and not towards any particular element. Neither industry nor consumers will bear additional costs as a result of the measures but United Kingdom producers will have the benefit of an additional 59,000 tonnes of quota with consequent benefit to processors.

Mr. Favell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his latest estimate of the cost of the implementation of European Community draft directive document No. 5518/91 on veterinary checks to *(a)* the Exchequer (i) directly and (ii) channelled via the European institutions, *(b)* industry and *(c)* the British consumer.

Mr. Maclean: A directive concerning veterinary checks on animals entering the European Community from third countries (originally proposed in Commission document 5518/91) was adopted at the July Agriculture Council with an implementation date of 1 July 1992.

Implementation is not expected to involve direct cost to the Exchequer; the directive requires that the costs of the necessary veterinary checks be borne by importers or their agents.

As far as indirect cost to the Exchequer is concerned, the directive enables member states to seek Community funding if, for example, they experience difficulties in providing the necessary inspection facilities. At this stage, in the absence of any indication from member states of the extent to which Community funding might be requested, it is not possible to make any assessment of what the eventual indirect cost might be.

We await proposals from the Commission on the level of the "health tax" to be applied to imports in order to cover the costs of the veterinary checks to be carried out. It is not therefore possible to quantify the likely impact on either industry or the consumer.

Mr. Favell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his latest estimate of the cost of the implementation of European Community draft directive document No. 7214/90 on protection of animals during transport to *(a)* the Exchequer (i) directly and (ii) channelled via the European institutions, *(b)* industry and *(c)* the British consumer.

Mr. Maclean: These proposals are still under negotiation therefore it is not possible to provide an estimate of their cost.

Mr. Favell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his latest estimate of the cost of the implementation of European Community draft directive document No. 8745/90 on sweeteners in food to *(a)* the Exchequer (i) directly and (ii) channelled via the European institutions, *(b)* industry and *(c)* the British consumer.

Mr. Maclean: It is now clear that the draft directive on sweeteners in food will not be implemented on the basis of the proposals in document 8745/90 but on a series of revised proposals on which discussions are continuing. We have therefore made no estimate of what would have been the cost of implementing the proposals in document 8745/90.

Mr. Favell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his latest estimate of the cost of the implementation of European Community draft directive document No. 10541/90 on the common fisheries policy to *(a)* the Exchequer (i) directly and (ii) channelled via the European institutions, *(b)* industry and *(c)* the British consumer.

Mr. Curry: Document No. 10541/90 is a communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament drawn up to stimulate debate before the mid-term review of the common fisheries policy to help the Commission in framing the report it is required to produce by the end of 1991. The communication highlights a number of areas for consideration but contains no specific proposals that can be costed.

Mr. Favell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his latest estimate of the cost of the implementation of European Community draft directive document No. 7057/90 on the research programme in agriculture to *(a)* the Exchequer (i) directly and (ii) channelled via the European institutions and *(b)* industry.

Mr. Curry: When the EC's decision on the agricultural and agro-industrial research programme is implemented later this year it will offer grants of up to 50 per cent. of the cost of a wide range of precompetitive research. Implementing the decision will impose no costs on industry or directly on the Exchequer, although the Department will incur some costs in making the programme known to United Kingdom researchers and in participating in the selection of proposals for grant aid. The Exchequer contribution to the EC budget is towards the budget as a whole and not towards any particular element.

Mr. Favell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his latest estimate of the cost of the implementation of European Community draft directive document Nos. 10749/90 and 10837/90 on origin of foods to *(a)* the Exchequer (i) directly and (ii) channelled via the European institutions, *(b)* industry and *(c)* the British consumer.

Mr. Curry: We oppose the adoption of these proposals in their present form, and are supported in this by a number of other member states. Negotiations are continuing in Brussels, and I am not in a position at this stage to estimate the costs of implementation. The Government's general view is that the costs of such designation schemes should be borne by those producers or manufacturers who benefit from them.

Dioxins

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of United Kingdom milk comes from areas with levels of dioxins above 0·1 nanogrammes/kilogram.

Mr. Maclean: The surveillance data are sufficient for the purpose of assessing the safety of the milk supply but not the provision of any meaningful statistical analysis of the kind envisaged.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the animal foodstuffs which have been tested as part of his Department's food surveillance programme for dioxins.

Mr. Maclean: Assuming that the hon. Member refers to products of animal origin, in addition to milk, a considerable number of animal foodstuffs have been analysed for dioxins including several species of fish, meat and meat products, poultry and eggs. Results of the surveillance programme will be published in a food surveillance paper which is in the course of preparation.

Fowl Infection

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps are usually taken by his Ministry to prohibit a company trading in fowl after the discovery of infection in the trading company's stock.

Mr. Maclean: Under the Government's salmonella control programme laying flocks of domestic fowl infected with Salmonella enteritidis and breeding flocks of domestic fowl infected with Salmonella enteritidis or Salmonella typhimurium are placed under movement restrictions and are compulsorily slaughtered with compensation.

These controls can apply to other species if there is a public health risk from the sale of eggs for human consumption.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Favell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his latest estimate of the additional cost to the average family of four of the CAP.

Mr. Curry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) on 5 December 1990 at column *141*.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development has now updated to 1990 its estimates of transfers from consumers and taxpayers resulting from agricultural policies in the European Community as a whole. On the basis used for the previous answer, these transfers were equivalent to £17·50 per week per family of four in that year. The increase from the figure of £14 for 1989 given in the previous answer is largely due to reductions in world prices. As I have emphasised on a number of occasions, and as the OECD has made clear, the estimate takes no account of the effect that removal of farm support would have on world prices, and other variables, and thus gives no indication of the extent to which taxpayers and consumers might be better off if current policies were removed. A family of four would benefit by considerably less than £17·55 per week if all agricultural support were removed.

Farmers

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the total number of part-time farmers in each country in the EC.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested is given in the table for 1987 (except where stated), which is the latest available year.

Number of part-time farmers

	Total (thousands)
Belgium	32
Denmark	[1]34
FR Germany	386
Greece	863
Spain	1,183
France	388
Ireland	119
Italy	2,399
Luxembourg	2
Netherlands	33
Portugal	440
United Kingdom	86

[1]1985

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the total number of farmers in each country of the EC, giving the proportion of the numbers of farmers within the total population of each country.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested is given for 1987, which is the latest available year.

	Total number of farmers[1] *(thousands)*	*Proportion of farmers within the total civilian working population (Per cent.)*
Belgium	92	2·2
Denmark	85	3·0
FR Germany	690	2·5
Greece	953	24·5
Spain	1,601	11·2
France	921	3·9
Ireland	210	16·2
Italy	2,750	11·7
Luxembourg	4	2·5
Netherlands	129	2·2
Portugal	619	13·6
United Kingdom	220	0·8
EC12	8,272	5·9

[1]Excludes partners and directors.
Source: Eurostat.

Mr. Favell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate of the cost of the implementation of the latest MacSharry proposals for the reform of the CAP to *(a)* the Exchequer (i) directly and (ii) channelled via the European institutions, *(b)* the farming industry and *(c)* the British consumer.

Mr. Curry: The European Commission's proposals for the reform of the common agricultural policy are long and complex and require considerable technical clarification. The Government have not completed their assessment of the costs and benefits of implementing them.

Census Data

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the agricultural census data on a parish basis from each of the last 10 years are accessible by the general public at the Public Records Office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Agricultural census data for England aggregated to parish level are available for public inspection at the Public Records Office for data up to and including 1987. Data for 1988 have been sent to the PRO and will be available for inspection shortly.

Following a technical review which showed that parish aggregates may indirectly disclose detailed data, no further parish level material has been prepared. Research continues, with the aid of specialist consultants, to determine the best alternative methods for aggregation of agricultural census data for small areas, for public dissemination. When available, methods will be applied retrospectively to 1989.

Agricultural Land Losses

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many hectares of agricultural land have been lost to development for each decade since 1960;

(2) how many hectares of agricultural land have been lost to development in each county since 1961.

Mr. Gummer: The agricultural census records show that in the periods 1961-1970, 1971-1980, 1981-1986 the average estimated net area of farmland transferred to urban and industrial development (including mineral workings) each year in England was 14,000, 12,700 and 5,300 hectares respectively. More recent data in this series are not available because the census data on this issue have proved increasingly unreliable. However, since 1985 a new source of information on changes in land use has been developed, using information recorded by the Ordnance Survey in the course of map revision on the new and previous use of land. The Department of the Environment publishes annually, starting in 1986, statistics on land use change in England in its statistical bulletin series, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Information by county is not available in the form requested.

Regional Offices

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the counties which are covered by each of his *(a)* regional and *(b)* divisional offices; and how many farms are within the catchment area of each of these offices.

Mr. Gummer: The counties covered by each of my regional and divisional offices and the number of agricultural holdings within the catchment area of each office are listed in the table:

Regional and divisional office	*Counties*	*Number of holdings*
Bristol (South Western region)		
Exeter	Devon	10,789
Gloucester	Avon, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire	8,624
Taunton	Dorset, Somerset	9,030
Truro	Cornwall	7,091
Cambridge (Eastern region)		
Chelmsford	Essex, Greater London (part), Hertfordshire	5,211
Huntingdon	Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire	6,986
Lincoln	Lincolnshire	5,992
Norwich	Norfolk, Suffolk	8,676
Leeds (Northern Region)		
(Beverley	Humberside, North Yorkshire (part), South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire	9,142
Carlisle	Cumbria	6,382
Newcastle	Cleveland, Durham, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear	5,243
Northallerton	North Yorkshire (part)	7,640
Reading (South East region)		
Guildford	Greater London (part), Isle of Wight, Surrey, West Sussex	8,182
Maidstone	East Sussex, Greater London (part), Kent	6,622
Oxford	Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire	5,005
Wolverhampton (Midlands and Western region)		
Crewe	Cheshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire	13,886
Nottingham	Derbyshire, Humberside, Leicestershire	8,583
Preston	Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Merseyside	7,878
Worcester	Hereford and Worcester, Warwickshire, West Midlands	9,690

Note: Number of holdings from June 1990 census.

DEFENCE

Medical and Welfare Officers

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number of full-time medical officers and full-time trained welfare officers for each regiment in the Army.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are 208 primary care medical officers' posts in the regular Army, and 179 medical officers were in post on 30 June 1991. A further 13 posts are filled by civilian medical practitioners and 16 posts are currently vacant.

The Army does not employ full-time trained welfare officers; but the commanding officer of each unit is responsible for the welfare of the men and women under his command. The unit families officer has particular responsibility for the welfare of families.

Ulster Defence Regiment

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the full-time and part-time strength of the Ulster Defence Regiment; and how many full-time medical officers and full-time trained welfare officers are attached to the regiment.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: On 1 July 1991 there were 2,994 full-time and 3,501 part-time members of the Ulster Defence Regiment. Although each Ulster Defence

Regiment battalion has one part-time medical officer on its establishment, only two of the nine posts are currently filled. Each Ulster Defence Regiment battalion has one part-time welfare officer, although they also have other duties. There is also a regimental welfare officer.

Written Answers

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many parliamentary questions for written answer have been answered by his Department so far in the current Session, and in the comparable period for the last Session; and if he will publish a table of how many answers *(a)* do not give the information requested because of (i) disproportionate cost of (ii) other reasons, *(b)* give an undertaking to write to the hon. Member who asked the question and *(c)* were referred for answer to the chief executive of a next steps agency.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information required is a matter of public record.

Commercial Confidentiality

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what factors he takes into account before deciding that information requested by an hon. Member cannot be provided on the ground of commercial confidentiality.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information is withheld on these grounds if it has been disclosed to my Department by a company on a confidential basis, or is the subject of a confidential agreement between the Ministry of Defence and a company.

Trident

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, (1) further to paragraph 319 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates", how many warheads the United States Trident D5 missile is assumed to have for counting purposes under the terms of the draft START treaty;

(2) further to paragraph 319 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates", how many warheads the United States Trident D5 missile is assumed to have for counting purposes under the terms of the draft START treaty.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The detailed provisions of the proposed START treaty remain under discussion between the United States and Soviet Union.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration has been given to an accident during the loading of warheads onto a missile as a credible scenario for detonation of the third stage propellant of the Trident II missile.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Government are satisfied with the safety of the Trident nuclear missile system. We concur with the assessment of the United States authorities that the detonation of the third stage of the Trident II missile, during the handling of missiles and warheads, is not a credible accident scenario, and that it therefore may properly and safely be disregarded.

Equipment Holdings

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, further to table 6 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates", what reductions in the level of United Kingdom equipment holdings have been announced by his Department subsequent to his statement on "Options for Change"; and if he will list them.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Since my right hon. Friend the Defence Secretary's statement last July, there has been only one announcement affecting CFE-declared equipment numbers—that by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement on 21 June regarding the replacement of Chieftain main battle tanks (*Official Report*, columns *606-08*).

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, further to table 4 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates", what reductions in United Kingdom equipment holdings already announced were required in order to comply with the ceilings imposed by the CFE treaty.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The necessary reductions will be completed within 40 months of the treaty's coming into force, as specified in the treaty.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, further to table 4 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates", what is the percentage reduction in total holdings of the United Kingdom's treaty-limited equipment required under the conventional forces in Europe treaty.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In accordance with the table, the United Kingdom has a liability to reduce its holdings of tanks by 15·3 per cent., and its armoured combat vehicles by 0·5 per cent. The United Kingdom ceiling for artillery pieces matches the declaration. For all other equipments (i.e. combat aircraft and attack helicopters), current holdings are below the ceilings.

Nuclear Missile Launchers

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, further to figure 4 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates", how many of the *(a)* Frog, *(b)* SS-21 and *(c)* Scud, Soviet sub-strategic nuclear missile launchers are deployed in areas from which they can hit targets in western Europe.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The continuing restructuring of Soviet forces and the continuing withdrawal of elements of these from eastern Europe complicate the assessment of the current deployment status of these launchers. However, the mobility of these systems means that large numbers of them could rapidly be brought within range of the NATO area.

Cyprus

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards the continued deployment of two infantry battalions to Cyprus.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no plans to change the current level of our commitment to Cyprus.

British Army of The Rhine

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, (1) further to paragraph 412 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates", which units of the BAOR are to be withdrawn from Germany; and where they are currently deployed;

(2) further to paragraph 412 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates", when the planned reduction in the size of BAOR will begin; and when it will be completed.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the statement which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made to the House yesterday afternoon concerning the restructuring of the Army.

Contracts (German Companies)

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contracts his Department has placed with German companies in the last year, and if he will list the names of the contractors, the amount of the contracts, and the specification of the contracts.

Mr. Alan Clark: It is not our normal policy to give details of the companies with whom we do business; nor to disclose the value or specification of our contracts.

Homosexuality

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, further to paragraph 5, page 57 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates", what procedures are in place to deal with complaints of harassment of homosexuals within the armed forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: All complaints of harassment of any nature would be dealt with under normal administrative or disciplinary procedures and, if substantiated, appropriate action would be taken against the offender. Homosexual behaviour is itself an offence under service law.

Tornados

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of Royal Air Force training for Tornados to deliver 1,000 lb bombs is conducted at medium level.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: RAF Tornado GR1 aircrew conduct about 5 per cent. of their weapons training practising the delivery of 1,000 lb bombs at medium level.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, further to table 6 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates", how many Tornado aircraft deployed in Germany will be removed under his proposal to reduce the number of Tornado squadrons from seven to four.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Table 6 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates" gave a snapshot of, inter alia, the number of Tornado aircraft allotted to units in Germany on 19 November 1990. Fifty-two of the aircraft were Tornado GR1/1a aircraft from the four Tornado squadrons currently at RAF Laarbruch, of which three are to be disbanded and the fourth is to be re-deployed to RAF Marham.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) further to paragraph 406 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates", how many Tornado aircraft will be involved in the reduction of three squadrons;

(2) further to paragraph 406 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates", how many of the Tornados from the disbanded squadrons *(a)* will be re-assigned to other squadrons, *(b)* scrapped and *(c)* held in storage.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As a result of the disbandment of three squadrons currently based in Germany, the total establishment of the RAF Tornado interdiction/strike force, including reserves, will be reduced by 39 aircraft. The surplus aircraft will be either held in storage or re-used as fleet management requirements dictate. There are no plans to scrap any of these aircraft.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to paragraph 216 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates", how many of the five Tornados lost in combat whilst delivering 1,000lb bombs were conducting operations in concert with Tornados delivering JP-233 bombs.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: One.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, further to paragraph 216 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates", what was the level at which the two Tornados were flying that were lost to direct enemy fire.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The two aircraft lost to direct enemy fire were conducting loft-attacks with 1,000lb bombs.

Armed Forces Manpower

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, further to figure 3 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimate", what is the balance of total armed forces manpower between NATO and the USSR in the ATTU —Atlantic to the Urals—region.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: NATO armed forces manpower based in the Atlantic to the Urals region currently totals around 3 million, while the equivalent Soviet figure is estimated at approximately 2·3 million.

Combat Aircraft

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, further to table 4 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates", what plans his Department has to increase the number of Royal Air Force combat aircraft up to the level permitted under the conventional forces in Europe ceilings.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

Nuclear Weapons (Testing)

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the security implications for the United Kingdom of the continued testing of nuclear weapons by other states.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Continued nuclear testing by the nuclear weapons states helps them to maintain and modernise their forces. Where appropriate, relevant technological developments in this and other areas are taken into account in the defence programme.

Nuclear-capable Aircraft

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, further to figure 4 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates", what are the reasons for Fishbed and Flogger aircraft no longer being included in the categories of nuclear-capable aircraft.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Fishbed was excluded because this type was no longer considered to remain in the inventory of Soviet nuclear capable aircraft covered by this figure by the end of 1990.

Flogger is included in the total shown, but the aircraft was inadvertently omitted from the list of Soviet aircraft types in the key.

Nerve Agents

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what quantities of nerve agents of the types GB and GF were imported into the United Kingdom in 1991 to date.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A vapour sample from the United Nations Special commission's first chemical weapons inspection in Iraq was imported for analysis for the commission by the chemical and biological defence establishment, Porton Down, in June 1991. Results of the analysis carried out on the sample were consistent with the United Nations press statement that nerve agents GB and GF were present at the Muthanna establishment in Iraq. We are aware of no further relevant imports.

Aircraft Accidents

Mr. Knowles: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide details of the accidents involving Royal Navy Sea King and Royal Air Force Phantom aircraft which gave rise to the accident rates for those types for 1990 provided in Table 5.8 of volume 2 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1991"; and why these details are not provided in table 5.9 of that volume.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Unfortunately, due to a clerical error, there are three omissions from table 5.9

Date	*Aircraft*	*Parent service*
30 April 1990	Phantom	RAF
8 May 1990	Sea King	RN
7 December 1990	Wessex	RAF

None of the above caused any deaths or serious injuries. These three accidents were also omitted from the figures on "Number of Accidents" in table 5.8

Royal Fleet Auxiliary

Mr. Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has completed his review of the present arrangements for running the Royal Fleet Auxiliary; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) on 15 July, *Official Report*, column *98*.

Low Flying

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the reason for low flights by three aircraft over south Cardiff at 11.45 am on Saturday 13 July.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Military low-flying training is not normally carried out at weekends and public holidays. The aircraft referred to may, however, have been aircraft of the Red Arrows who took off from Cardiff airport in transit to a flying display elsewhere at about the same time mentioned.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the causes of the increase in flights at low level over the urban areas of Cardiff south and Penarth during recent months.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Military aircraft carrying out low-flying training are instructed not to overfly major urban conurbations such as Cardiff at low level although aircraft may transit some areas of the Cardiff, South and Penarth constituency at levels above 1,000 ft and, as elsewhere, the amount of activity may vary from time to time as a result of weather and other considerations.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether there has been any change in regulations governing low-flying aircraft in south Wales in the past four years.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The regulations governing the United Kingdom system, including south Wales, are under continuous review and are updated regularly.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes have been made to the lateral boundaries of the highlands restricted area since its establishment; and whether any further such changes are under consideration.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No changes have been made to the lateral boundaries of the Highlands restricted area since its establishment but all aspects of the United Kingdom low-flying system are kept under continuous review.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any changes to the boundaries of the tactical training areas have been considered by the military low-flying management group since the beginning of 1989.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: There have been no changes to the boundaries of the tactical training areas in the period concerned.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the nature and purpose of the low-flying exercise held in the Forest of Dean/Vale of Berkeley area, commencing on 20 May; how many and what types of aircraft took part; and what measures were applied to ensure that participating pilots did not infringe the Stroud gap transit area, the Nympsfield gliding site, the Slimbridge bird sanctuary, and the avoidance areas around the Oldbury and Berkeley nuclear power stations.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No low-flying training exercises took place in the Forest of Dean/Vale of Berkeley area on the date concerned. An exercise was held by Bristol university air squadron from 20 to 24 May, in the area concerned, which was subject to relevant United Kingdom low-flying regulations and for which an airspace co-ordination notice was issued by the national air traffic services.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence by what lateral and vertical distances military pilots are instructed to avoid the village of Penrhyndeudraeth.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: It is not our practice to release detailed information on flying restrictions in individual areas. Military fast jet aircraft are instructed to avoid flying at low level over the centre of major conurbations

and built up areas but it is not practicable to guarantee to avoid all smaller communities such as Penrhyndeudraeth although aircrew will avoid populated areas wherever possible.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-flying exercises were conducted which involved low flying over north Wales between *(a)* 15 July 1990 to 15 January 1991, *(b)* 16 January to 28 February and *(c)* 1 March to 31 May.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: There were no low-flying training exercises conducted over north Wales between the dates specified, although routine low-flying training would have taken place in the area throughout the period.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-flying exercises *(a)* under 100 ft or *(b)* under 250 ft were conducted by United Kingdom forces in each week of the hostilities in the Gulf.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Low-flying training in the United Kingdom under 250 ft by fixed-wing military aircraft is restricted to the three tactical training areas where aircraft are allowed to fly down to a minimum separation distance of 100 ft. Available central records for usage of the areas concerned in January and February 1991 were given in the written answer to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on 15 July 1991 at column *94*.

Crown Proceedings (Armed Forces) Act

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to what extent the estimate given to the House by the Armed Forces Minister on 18 March 1987, in Standing Committee C, that implementation of the Crown Proceedings (Armed Forces) Act 1987 would give rise, after 10 years, to an annual cost of £13 million, has been borne out by experience; what has been the cost in each year for 1987-88 to date; and what factors account for any differences between the actual figures and the ministerial estimate.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information required to answer the question is not immediately available. My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces will write to the hon. Member.

Royal Naval Reserve

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether decisions have been taken regarding the future of the Royal Navy's reserve forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Now that we have decided on the size of and shape of our regular forces, we have examined more closely our requirements for Naval reserves having taken due account of our experience of Operation Granby.

The key roles of the volunteer reserves will remain unchanged; but detailed consideration of the unit and branch structure of the (RNR) has resulted in a decision to reduce their current manpower level of 5,900 by 1,200; and the Royal Naval Auxiliary Service (RNXS) is similarly to reduce its current manpower level of 2,850 by 150.

As to the future of the RNR and RNXS, a tri-service study team has been established to examine the mix of regular and reserve forces. Its aim will be to develop a defence-wide manpower structure for the period 1995 onwards matched to forecast tasks, reduced readiness requirements and extended warning and preparation time. This will provide a foundation to develop a more streamlined Naval reserves capable of meeting their future objectives in a cost-effective manner.

Redundancies

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for handling redundancy in the services and among Ministry of Defence United Kingdom-based civil servants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to Britain's Army for the 90s (cm 1595) which has been published today. Details of Army redundancies are set out in paragraphs 39 to 42.

As to redundancies in the other two services, the Royal Navy judges that there may be a measure of redundancy among officers and ratings, mainly at more senior levels. Subject to further assessment of the numbers involved, it is hoped to achieve these by voluntary redundancy, some late in 1992-93, with the majority subsequently. Some compulsory redundancies might be necessary to complete the programme.

No decisions have yet been taken about RAF redundancies, but it is considered that redundancies among airmen are unlikely, with the possible exception of a small number of senior non-commissioned officers in a few trades. In the case of RAF officers, some measure of redundancy at squadron leader level and above may be necessary over the period to the mid-1990s, but it is hoped to keep this to a minimum. The terms and conditions of RN and RAF redundancy will be the same as those for the Army.

On current plans about 20,000 United Kingdom-based civil service posts will be reduced over the period 1991-92 to 1996-97. To the greatest extent possible, this reduction will be achieved by natural wastage, early retirement and redeployment. However, there will inevitably be some redundancies, particularly among industrial and non-mobile staff. Numbers will to some extent depend upon which establishments are closed and on the timing. Redundancies will be handled under the MOD redundancy agreement. Redundancy compensation is paid under the principal civil service payment scheme.

Rolls-Royce, Leavesden

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the sale of a site at Leavesden to Rolls-Royce.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[holding answer 22 July 1991]:* I refer the hon. Gentleman to the statement I made on 14 May at column *140*.

Friendly Fire Incidents

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the results of his investigations into friendly fire incidents involving British troops in the Gulf.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There were four incidents during the Gulf conflict in which British soldiers were killed or injured by friendly forces. Nine soldiers were killed and 16

injured in these incidents. The board of inquiry into the incident when nine soldiers were killed and 11 injured in two Warrior vehicles belonging to the 3rd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers Battle Group (3 RRF) has now reported. It has been the practice of successive Governments not to publish reports of this kind, but I wish to give as full an account as possible of the board's findings.

On 26 February 1991, 3 RRF had fought their way through a number of enemy positions in southern Iraq. After a brief but intense sandstorm during the early part of the advance, the weather had improved to give clear skies and good visibility by about 1500 hours local time, when C Company 3RRF, with some 37 Warrior and Engineer vehicles, was reorganising. The terrain in the area was flat and featureless apart from some Iraqi defensive positions and abandoned vehicles and equipment. During the reorganisation, Royal Engineers prepared to destroy nearby Iraqi artillery pieces. When the demolition charges were about to be blown, C Company commander instructed his men to re-enter their vehicles, close hatches and move away from the gun emplacements.

8 Platoon had been stationary and out of their vehicles for about 15 minutes before this order was given. As they started to comply, one Warrior, callsign 22, exploded. Another Warrior, callsign 23, immediately manoeuvred in front of callsign 22, and some crew members had just begun to move the casualties to the first aid post when callsign 23 also exploded. A-10 aircraft were seen in the area at the time of the explosions, but at first mines were suspected.

Earlier during the day, two successive flights of United States Air Force (USAF) aircraft were tasked by Headquarters 1st (British) Armoured Division to attack Iraqi armour at grid reference PT6857. Subsequently, a further flight of two USAF A-10 aircraft reported for tasking to the British assistant divisional air liaison officer (DALO). His intention was that these aircraft should attack the same target as the two previous flights but there is a conflict of evidence over whether a grid reference for the target was passed from the assistant DALO to the A-10s. The target location was over 20 km to the east of C Company 3 RRF's position at 1500 hours.

The A-10 pilots identified what they thought was the target area from a physical description given them by a departing USAF F-16 of the previous flight, and shortly afterwards saw what they thought were about 50 Iraqi T54/55 tanks and support vehicles heading north. The pilots had been told that there were no friendly forces within 10 km of their target, and these vehicles were closer than that to the point they had identified as their target. The lead aircraft made two passes, at 15,000 and 8,000 ft, to observe the vehicles with binoculars, but saw no friendly markings. Both aircraft then fired one infra-red Maverick missile from a height of about 9,000 ft, each destroying one of the vehicles, before reporting the engagement to the assistant DALO and leaving the area.

The pilots' report of 50 Iraqi vehicles differed so dramatically from earlier descriptions of the target that the assistant DALO asked them to confirm the location. The flight leader reported that the attack had taken place at grid reference PT 418518. The assistant DALO immediately realised that this position was more then 20 km from the intended target and corresponded with the location of 3 RRF. He then called up a reconnaissance flight over the area, which reported that fluorescent air recognition panels could be seen from 6,000 ft and the type of vehicles could be identified from 14,000 ft.

The board of inquiry found that 8 Platoon, C Company 3 RRF were on operations as ordered. The board also found that the air planning procedures allowing a distance of more than 15 km between the target for any air attack and friendly forces had been followed and should have been sufficient to ensure the successful and safe conduct of operations. The board further concluded that air control at corps and divisional level which provided tasking information to the A-10s was in accordance with established procedures.

The board found that 8 Platoon's vehicles were displaying correct inverted V recognition symbols and fluorescent panels. The board noted that some of the panels could have been partially obscured by open hatches or equipment, and that while a reconnaissance flight observed the panels at 6,000 ft, this was below the operating height of the A-10s. The board could not make any finding as to whether the pilots should have seen the identification panels at their operating height.

The board concluded that no blame or responsibility for the incident could be attributed to 3 RRF.

The board noted that there was a conflict of evidence between the statements of the witnesses from headquarters 1st (British) Armoured Division and those of the A-10 pilots. The assistant DALO stated that he passed the target grid reference but the A-10 pilots deny receiving this. There was no evidence to suggest that the two previous missions had attacked anything but the correct targets. On the evidence presented, the board found that no blame or responsibility should be attached to the assistant DALO.

The pilots stated that, notwithstanding the absence of a grid reference, they attacked on the basis of information passed to them by the previous flight and of their positive identification of the targets as enemy vehicles. The board noted that a USAF reconnaissance flight shortly after the Warriors were attacked was able to identify the types of vehicles from 14,000 ft. On the basis of the evidence before it, the board was unable to establish why the attacked Warrior vehicles were misidentified by the A-10 pilots as enemy T54/55 tanks, particularly in view of their previous identification runs at 8,000 and 15,000 ft. In forwarding the board's findings, the joint commander has drawn attention to the way in which aspect, weather and light conditions can critically affect a pilot's ability to identify the detail of objects on the ground.

The board did not establish whether the USAF personnel involved were at fault. It was clearly established that the USAF A-10s delivered the missiles, but the board could not establish precisely why they attacked the wrong target.

The board remarked that it was clear that all United Kingdom and USAF personnel involved were striving to achieve their individual tasks to the best of their abilities in a fast-moving battle. The board thought it inevitable that, at some stage, difficulties may arise when individuals are under such pressure. On 26 February 1991 difficulties arose in relation to the location and identification of the target, and the board concluded that only the clearest of standard operating procedures and sophisticated identification systems will help to prevent such tragedies in the future.

The board recommended that a study be initiated to identify a suitable air recognition system for future use,

confirmed the importance of standard operating procedures for the control of aircraft in offensive air support operations and recommended that they must always include instructions that a grid reference or a latitude and longitude is specifically included in mission briefs and that this is always acknowledged by pilots.

The Government—and the United States Administration—wish to express their deepest sympathy and condolences to the relatives of those who died in this tragic incident.

During the conflict there were a further three incidents involving friendly fire in which British service men were injured.

The first of these occurred shortly after 1100 local time on 26 February. An officer attached to 1 Staffords received shrapnel wounds when a Warrior vehicle was attacked by a Challenger tank of the Scots Dragoon Guards. Personnel from 1 Staffords were guarding prisoners of war when a Challenger tank from the Scots Dragoon Guards began to engage nearby Iraqi armoured vehicles, which later turned out to be abandoned. The tank mistakenly fired on the vehicles of 1 Staffords, hitting the Warrior, before moving off. Visibility at the time was reduced by a dust storm to about 400 m. All the Staffords' vehicles were marked with the inverted V device and carried fluorescent orange panels. The four personnel in the Warrior were unharmed, but shrapnel injured an officer who had dismounted from another vehicle. Once the mistake was realised, the Scots Dragoon Guards returned to the scene and evacuated the officer to hospital.

Another incident occurred shortly before 1100 local time on 27 February. Two personnel from the Queen's Royal Irish Hussars (QRIH) were injured when their Scorpion armoured reconnaissance vehicles were fired on by US M1 Abrams tanks. Both Scorpions were carrying the black inverted V device and visibility was good. United Kingdom and US forces had their own areas of operations and the QRIH reconnaissance section was about 2 km within its area. They had stopped to take the surrender of Iraqi troops, when one Scorpion was hit in the front by a round from a US M1 tank, firing from about 1500 m to the north. The driver escaped without injury, but a soldier walking alongside received shrapnel wounds. The other Scorpion came under tank and machine gun fire, and the soldier manning the turret-mounted machine gun also received shrapnel wounds. When the US personnel realised their mistake they assisted with the treatment of the injured British soldiers and their evacuation to hospital.

The third incident also occurred on 27 February. At about 1445 local time, two soldiers from 10 Air Defence Battery, Royal Artillery received burns when two Spartan armoured vehicles from which they had dismounted were engaged by Challenger tanks from 14/20 Hussars with thermal sights beyond the range of unaided visibility (about 1500 m). In these conditions, it was not possible to identify the inverted V device carried by the vehicles. The rearmost vehicle was hit and burst into flames. The other vehicle was also damaged in the ensuing fire. The Spartan destroyed was empty and was being towed after breaking down. The Spartans had become detached from a convoy of 7th Armoured Brigade vehicles which had been delayed in getting clear of the area because of the difficult terrain.

Sea Harrier Accident (Wentwood)

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has now received the report of the board of inquiry following the accident involving a Royal Navy Sea Harrier in the Wentwood area of Gwent on 10 May.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No. Once the board of inquiry's report has been fully completed and considered a summary of its findings will be placed in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Anthony Pordage

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for what reason Mr. Anthony Pordage of 77 Trinity avenue, Mildenhall, has been barred from further entry to RAF Lakenheath, RAF Mildenhall and RAF Feltwell.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend, the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces, will write to my hon. Friend.

Helicopters

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his decision to award prime contractor status for the Merlin helicopter project.

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to announce his decision on the number of launch production EH101 helicopters his Department expects to purchase; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: We are evaluating two bids for the prime contract to complete development of the EH101 Merlin helicopter and to produce the first batch of aircraft for the Royal Navy. We aim to reach a decision as soon as possible.

Defence Export Sales Organisation

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the cost to public funds of the Defence Export Sales Organisation for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Alan Clark: The DESO operates at no net cost to public funds. Over the last five years revenue for chargeable services has exceeded operating costs.

NATO Aircraft

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the range requirement for NATO dual capable aircraft can be met by air-to-air refuelling as well as by a stand-off missile.

Mr. Alan Clark: Both considerations are relevant separately and in combination.

ACE Mobile Force

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on plans to expand NATO's ACE mobile force into an immediate reaction force.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 14 June to the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) at column *735*.

Missiles

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his United States counterpart concerning the acquisition by the United Kingdom of the United States tri-service standoff attack missile for either conventional or nuclear missions or both.

Mr. Alan Clark: None.

Rapid Reaction Corps

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the budget of the NATO Rapid Reaction Corps planning staff.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The detailed arrangements for the multi-national NATO reaction force planning staff, including the level of funding, are still being developed in NATO.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Vehicle Emissions

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether there is a business plan and research outline for the United Kingdom Vehicle Emissions Consortium; how much his Department expects to spend in 1991-92; and what the expected output of results from the consortium is for 1991-92.

Mr. Leigh: The United Kingdom Engine Emissions Consortium comprises a group of United Kingdom vehicle engine and component manufacturers and fuel additive suppliers conducting a three-year programme for pre-competitive, collaborative research into engine emission technologies related, in the main, to petrol and diesel engines. The programme focuses on reducing emissions of hydrocarbons, carbon monoxide, particulates and nitrogen oxides.

Perkins Technology Ltd. of Peterborough acts as central co-ordinator of the administrative and financial arrangements related to the programme. The details of these arrangements are set out in a hub agreement between Perkins Technology Ltd. and the other collaborators. Each project has set objectives and technical targets. My Department expects to pay grant totalling about £773,000 in support of the consortium's work in financial year 1991-92.

The programme is due to end on 31 May 1992. It aims to advance the competitive position of the consortium members by putting them at the forefront of vehicle technologies.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the reasons for the rise in provision for central and miscellaneous services outlined in table A of Cm. 1504; and what part publicity costs play in this rise.

Mr. Lilley: The increase in central and miscellaneous services shown in table A of Cm. 1504 derives from several alterations since 1985-86 in the Department's vote structure and the progressive inclusion within this category of all the Department's gross running costs. Prior to 1990-91 running costs for general industrial research and development, international trade, standards, space and regulation of trade were borne elsewhere on the vote. Central publicity costs did not form part of this programme until 1990-91 and the decrease between voted central publicity provision from that year to this financial year is 28 per cent.

Environmental Schemes

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the approval guidelines and timetables for his Department's environmental schemes ETIS and DEMOS; what is the number of applications so far received and the number of approvals, by location, within the standard regions; and what is the budget allocation for 1991-92 by his Department and the sums so far committed.

Mr. Leigh: The approval guidelines for ETIS and DEMOS are set out in the promotional material published by the Department for each scheme. ETIS, jointly managed by DTI and DOE, is primarily a collaborative research programme aimed at developing environmental technology to improve industry's competitive position or to contribute to the development of higher regulatory standards. Projects are assessed with particular reference to their degree of innovation, their technical feasibility, their pre-competitive nature and the likelihood of them going ahead without support.

Parallel Processor Research Programme

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the sources of the funds for the parallel processor research programme and, in the case of contributions from the Government, from which budget head in the Department's annual plan the funds are drawn; over how many years the research programme is expected to run; and how many institutions of higher education in the north of England sought to participate in the programme.

Mr. Leigh: The parallel applications programme is a four-year collaborative research and development programme with a total value of £34 million. £13 million of Government support will be offered, of which £9 million will come from my Department and £4 million from the Science and Engineering Research Council. My Department's contribution will be drawn from funds allocated to support industrial innovation.

Seventeen academic institutions, or consortia of academic institutions, submitted outline proposals for the programme, of which five were from the north of England. Of nine institutions or consortia shortlisted, there was one from the north of England, although this was not one of the four centres finally selected.

Auditors

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will launch an independent investigation into the impact of non-auditing services on auditor independence.

Mr. Redwood: I see no reason for doing so. Under schedule 11 to the Companies Act 1989, the recognised supervisory bodies must have adequate rules and practices

to ensure that company audit work is conducted with integrity and independence. Moreover, the Government propose to make use of the powers in section 121 of the Companies Act 1989 to require disclosure of fees paid to auditing firms and their associates in respect of non-audit work.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will propose legislation under which each audit report would state the matters for which auditors accept responsibility.

Mr. Redwood: No. The matter on which company auditors are required to report are set out in the Companies Act 1985.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will propose legislation under which auditors would owe a duty of care to all institutionalised investors.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 26 October, *Official Report*, column *329*.

Long-term Care

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what regulatory measures exist, and through which agencies, to safeguard consumers' interests in the benefits provided by, and the marketing measures for, insurance and pension-related policies for long-term care; and whether he has referred any of these matters to the attention of the Director General of Fair Trading for his consideration.

Mr. Redwood: United Kingdom insurance companies underwriting such policies are subject to the normal prudential supervision of the Department of Trade and Industry. The benefits provided are a commercial matter for the companies concerned. Any long-term care contract arranged by an employer on behalf of its employees is separate from any pension arrangements. The marketing of long-term insurance contracts is covered by the rules of LAUTRO, the Life Assurance and Unit Trust Regulatory Organisation.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether the Bank of Credit and Commerce International auditors have been criticised by *(a)* the joint disciplinary scheme or *(b)* Department of Trade and Industry inspectors since 1979.

Mr. Redwood: There have been criticisms of Price Waterhouse in the period since 1979, both by the joint disciplinary scheme and in reports by inspectors appointed under the Companies Act. In neither case were the criticisms in relation to its audit of Bank of Credit and Commerce International.

Arms Exports

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make it his policy to publish the criteria used to assess applications for export licences and information about licences applied for and issued to British arms exporters.

Mr. Sainsbury: The seven criteria used by EC member states in implementing national controls over arms exports were published in a declaration following the European Council meeting at Luxembourg on 28-29 June this year. The Council's communiqué containing the annex about arms control was placed in the Library on 1 July.

Post Office Closures

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many post offices and sub-post offices were closed in each year from 1980 to 1990; and what circumstances are taken as the reasons to close post offices.

Mr. Leigh: The net number of Crown and sub-post office closures in each year from 1980-81 to 1989-90, inclusive, are set out in the table:

Year	*Sub-offices*	*Crown offices*	*Total*
1980-81	162	2	164
1981-82	62	8	70
1982-83	98	6	104
1983-84	235	8	243
1984-85	389	6	395
1985-86	314	44	358
1986-87	88	6	94
1987-88	136	4	140
1988-89	35	6	41
1989-90	5	154	159

Decisions on the type and level of post office provision available in particular areas are an operations matter for the Post Office Board. The Government have made clear on a number of occasions our commitment to the maintenance of a network of offices adequate to enable the Post Office to fulfil its statutory duty to have regard to economy and efficiency, and to the social, commercial and industrial needs of the United Kingdom. We are satisfied that in managing its network of post offices, including those in rural areas, the Post Office is fully meeting these obligations.

Recycling

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much recycled glass, metal, paper and plastic was used in manufacturing industry in each year from 1980 to 1990; and what measures his Department is implementing to encourage the increase of recycling.

Mr. Leigh: The information is as follows:

Amount of scrap used in the manufacturing process (thousands of tonnes):

Year	*Glass*[1]	*Ferrous Metal*[2]	*Aluminium*	*Paper*	*Plastic*
1980	55	n.a.	142	2,009	n.a.
1981	n.a.	8,220	130	1,932	n.a.
1982	110	7,460	133	1,854	n.a.
1983	n.a.	7,700	144	1,827	n.a.
1984	161	7,030	137	2,003	n.a.
1985	215	6,757	122	2,067	n.a.
1986	228	6,410	110	2,147	n.a.
1987	233	6,835	111	2,306	n.a.
1988	264	7,466	100	2,454	n.a.
1989	308	7,669	104	2,578	0·15/0·16
1990	372	7,190	114	2,847	0·20

[1] Used in container glass manufacturing.
[2] Scrap used in steel production.
Source: Warren Spring Laboratory.

High recycling levels can be encouraged by the increased consumption of recyclable and recycled materials by industry and, indeed, by Government. My Department takes the lead on a number of initiatives to aid this process. For example, the purchase of recycled paper and board products currently accounts for some 66 per cent. of my Department's headquarters total stationery spend. We also provide financial assistance to business to develop projects which seek to recycle unavoidable waste, via two schemes: ETIS—environmental technology innovation scheme—a joint Department of Trade and Industry/Department of the Environment scheme aimed at encouraging innovation and improved environmental standards; and DEMOS, the DTI environmental options scheme, which is designed to promote spread of best environmental practice among companies. Both schemes have a particular focus on recycling, including recycling of manufacturing waste.

New Cars (Distribution)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what consideration he is giving to regulation of the United Kingdom distribution system for new cars, in the light of the single market.

Mr. Redwood: On 9 May 1990 the Director General of Fair Trading made references to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the supply of new motor cars and motor car parts. They have been asked to report by 31 October 1991. The Government will consider carefully any recommendations made.

Completion of the single market will not affect directly the distribution system for new cars. European Commission regulation 123/85 on the application of article 85(3) of the EC treaty to certain categories of motor vehicle distribution and servicing agreements applies to the distribution system for new cars in the United Kingdom and other member states of the European Community.

Insolvency

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information is held on the number of cases in which firms in financial difficulties have been considered by administrators under the Insolvency Act 1986; in how many such cases the consideration has resulted in the company concerned carrying on in business; and in how many the company has gone into liquidation.

Mr. Redwood: Administrators under the Insolvency Act 1986 have been appointed to 735 companies in England and Wales during the period 1 January 1987 to 31 March 1991.

Information on the results of those administrations is not available. However, I am aware that academic research is currently under way which, when complete, will show empirical data.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has on the fees charged by administrators considering the cases of companies in financial difficulties, under the Insolvency Act 1986.

Mr. Redwood: My Department collects no such information. The remuneration of an administrator is fixed either by the creditors' committee or by the creditors generally, as a percentage of the value of assets dealt with, or on a time spent basis. If they fail to do so the court may fix the remuneration and adjudicate on any dispute.

Executive Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the quality of service performance indicators adopted by Companies House, the Insolvency Service, the laboratory of the Government chemist, the national engineering laboratory, the national physical laboratory, the national weights and measures laboratory, the Patent Office, the Radiocommunications Agency and the Warren Spring laboratory since their establishment as executive agencies; and if he will identify separately those quality of service performance indicators already operative prior to agency status in each case.

Mr. Lilley: Chief executives and other managers in agencies will set and monitor their own internal management targets for performance, including quality of service measures. However, a distinctive feature of next steps has been the setting by Ministers, and a formal announcement, of targets for agencies, and publication of details of their subsequent performance.

For details of these ministerial targets for individual agencies I refer the hon. Member to the lists of targets in the eighth report of the Treasury and Civil Service Committee in the 1989-90 Session (HC-481). Since then further quality of service targets have been announced for the Insolvency Service, 29 April 1991, *Official Report*, col. *153*; Companies House—9 May, *Official Report*, col. *559*; and the National Weights and Measures Laboratory—16 May, *Official Report*, col. *245*.

The hon. Member may wish to know that a further consolidated list of current targets will be published shortly as part of the evidence given to the Treasury and Civil Service Committee's recent inquiry into next steps.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much was spent on events and publicity surrounding the launch as executive agencies of Companies House, the Insolvency Service, the laboratory of the Government chemist, the national engineering laboratory, the national physical laboratory, the national weights and measures laboratory, the Patent Office, the Radiocommunications Agency and the Warren Spring laboratory; and whether the cost was borne by the parent department or the new agency.

Mr. Lilley: The launch of each agency was an operational matter for the chief executive. I have therefore asked each chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what is the maximum salary payable to the chief executives and the length of time of the chief executives' contracts of Companies House, the Insolvency Service, the laboratory of the Government chemist, the national engineering laboratory, the national physical laboratory, the national weights and measures laboratory, the Patent Office, the Radiocommunications Agency and the Warren Spring laboratory;

(2) if he will list the new forms of alternative working patterns introduced in Companies house, the Insolvency Service, the laboratory of the Government chemist, the national engineering laboratory, the national physical laboratory, the national weights and measures laboratory,

the Patent Office, the Radiocommunications Agency and the Warren Spring laboratory along with a break-down by grade of the numbers of staff taking up each new working pattern.

Mr. Lilley: This is an operational matter for the chief executive. I have therefore asked each chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many staff were in post on the date Companies house, the Insolvency Service, the laboratory of the Government chemist, the national engineering laboratory, the national physical laboratory, the national weights and measures laboratory, the Patent Office, the Radiocommunications Agency and the Warren Spring laboratory were established as executive agencies; and how many staff are in post now.

Mr. Lilley: The numbers of staff in post for each executive agency both in the month of launch and for this month are listed in the table.

Agency	*Staff in post*[1]	*Staff in post*[2]
Companies House	1,042·5	1,070·0
Insolvency Service	1,368·0	1,493·5
Laboratory of the Government Chemist	316·0	348·5
National Engineering Laboratory	426·0	388·5
National Physical Laboratory	820·0	829·5
National Weights and Measures Laboratory	43·0	47·5
Patent Office	1,161·0	1,115·0
Radiocommunications	461·0	509·5
Warren Spring Laboratory	293·0	310·5

These numbers represent permanent staff with part-timers counted as half. Casuals are excluded.
[1]Taken at the start of the month of launch.
[2]1 July 1991.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what group bonus schemes are in operation in Companies house, the insolvency service, the laboratory of the Government chemist, the national engineering laboratory, the national physical laboratory, the national weights and measures laboratory, the Patent Office, the Radiocommunications Agency and the Warren Spring laboratory; and what was the cash amount per person awarded in the last year for which figures are available, and the conditions attached to the awards.

Mr. Lilley: Within DTI group bonus schemes are currently in operation at Companies House, laboratory of the Government chemist and Radiocommunications Agency. The chief executive will write to the hon. Member with the detailed information he is seeking.

Takeovers

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his latest estimate of the cost of the implementation of European Community draft directive document No. 6459/90 on takeovers to *(a)* the Exchequer (i) directly and (ii) channelled via the European institutions and *(b)* industry.

Mr. Redwood: Document No. 6459/90 is a communication from the Commission to the Council dated 10 May 1990 on obstacles to takeovers in the Community, outlining measures which the Commission proposed to bring forward to reduce barriers to takeovers. The Commission has subsequently brought forward proposals to amend the proposed fifth and thirteenth company law directives, and the second company law directive. The Government are keen to see measures to level the EC playing field on takeovers. No EC impact assessment has been received for these proposals which are being discussed in Council workings groups. Their precise economic impact will depend on the timing and form of their implementation in member states.

Consumer Contracts

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his latest estimate of the cost of the implementation of European Community draft directive document No. 8597/90 on unfair terms in consumer contracts to *(a)* the Exchequer (i) directly and (ii) channelled via the European institutions, *(b)* industry and *(c)* the British consumer.

Mr. Leigh: My Department is considering this further in consultation with interested parties and a compliance cost assessment will be published in due course.

EC Standards

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will discuss with the British Standards Institute steps which may be taken to maintain access to hard copy material, rather than microfiche, in respect of material held about EC standards;

(2) if he will take steps to ensure that there is adequate public access to EC standards, following the closure of the British Standards Institute library and their termination of arrangements for the loan of such material.

Mr. Leigh: The charges and conditions for the supply or loan of standards are matters for the British Standards Institution, which is an independent, non-profit distributing body established by royal charter. I am, however, advised that the relevant facts are as follows.

British, European, international and foreign standards may be purchased by post or in person from the BSI sales department at Milton Keynes. Stocks of British standards are also held for over-the-counter sale at other BSI offices and some chambers of commerce, as well as at over 60 regional booksellers.

For many years, BSI has offered to public libraries and others a complete set of British standards documents and an updating service to ensure that these are maintained. When re-examining the cost of providing its various services, BSI established that the subscription for this service was equivalent to about 5 per cent. of the cover price of the British standards provided and was uneconomic. Consequently, BSI announced annual, phased increases in the subscription rate to £2,500 in 1990-91 and £6,000 in 1993-94. Details of the charges for the forward years were given to help public libraries plan their budgets. Even after these admittedly substantial increases, the cost to a library of maintaining a complete set of standards will remain only a small fraction of the cover price of the standards supplied, which BSI estimates as being in excess of £35,000.

BSI's purpose in offering this service to public libraries is to make reference sets of British standards available for inspection by local industry, educational establishments and members of the public. However, it came to BSI's attention that a small, but significant minority of libraries had started to lend their copies of standards, a practice which had never been BSI's intention or policy. BSI therefore wrote to libraries pointing out that standards which are supplied on subscription terms may be used only for reference purposes, and must not be loaned to inquirers.

Another aspect of access is photocopying. BSI has assembled statistical evidence, which, in its view, demonstrates that sales of British standards have been substantially reduced by photocopying without BSI's written permission. BSI has not sanctioned photocopying of standards beyond the "fair dealing" exceptions of the Copyright, Design and Patents Act 1988. Public libraries have therefore been asked to adhere to the provisions of that Act and to ensure that photocopying is allowed only where it is genuinely for research purposes.

BSI also offers a loan service for a range of non-British standards, for a minimal charge. BSI curtailed a part of this service from 1 January 1991 since it was operating at a considerable loss. However, BSI has since had discussions with the Library Association, ASLIB and LINC, and I understand that a full service may be reinstated in the near future, but at an increased price to cover BSI's costs.

The BSI library at Milton Keynes has not closed.

Internal Market Council

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the outcome of the Internal Market Council on 22 July.

Mr. Leigh: I attended the Internal Market Council on 22 July, the first of the Dutch presidency. In the absence of texts being available in all the official languages, political agreement was reached on three directives covering medicinal products for human use and a fourth on pharmaceutical advertising. Major progress was made on a proposed sweeteners directive. The second phase of a Community programme to promote the development of trade electronic data interchange systems—TEDIS—was agreed, as was the size and duration of a budget for a separate programme—IMPACT 2—covering the information services market.

On medicinal products political agreement was reached on three proposals covering labelling and leaflets, legal status and wholesale distribution of medicines. The labelling and leaflet directive will improve the information given to patients about medicinal products by harmonising requirements in all member states. By now setting the compliance date to 1 January 1994, industry will be able to meet the new requirements within a reasonable timescale. The wholesale distribution directive safeguards the fundamental interests both of United Kingdom wholesalers and their customers by allowing sensible procedures for tracing product sales. On pharmaceutical advertising to both the general public and professionals, political agreement was reached which met all outstanding United Kingdom concerns.

Significant progress was made on the proposed sweeteners directive. The United Kingdom achieved a successful outcome on cyclamates with agreement that scientific evidence must be available before the directive is implemented. We also achieved agreement on 30 per cent. as the definition of reduced energy level products. The proposed directive also ensures that the more exotic flavoured crisps can continue to be produced and consumed. The Council was not, however, able to resolve how best to provide for the continued practice of traditional manufacture of German beers while at the same time ensuring free circulation of goods and right of establishment. Further consideration will be needed before the proposal returns to the Council.

The TEDIS programme was agreed with a three-year budget of 25 million ecu; and there was agreement that the IMPACT 2 programme should extend for four years at a funding level of 16 million ecu per year. Failure to resolve some other outstanding, mainly technical, issues meant that final agreement was not, however, possible at the Council on IMPACT 2.

Regional Assistance

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish a table showing expenditure on regional preferential assistance to industry in each standard region in England for each year from 1974 to the latest year for which figures are available in cash and constant prices.

Mr. Leigh: Information on regional preferential assistance has been collated only since 1978-79. Following are tables showing the amounts of regional preferential assistance in each standard region in England from 1978-79 to 1989-90—the latest year available—expressed in current prices and 1989-90 prices.

£ million

Region	*1978-79*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
Government expenditure on regional preferential assistance to industry at current prices[1]												
Northern	158·8	147·8	151·6	176·6	158·5	129·0	122·6	94·6	136·4	109·6	134·6	117·3
Yorkshire and Humberside	37·4	32·1	52·7	61·6	52·9	35·6	42·5	35·4	41·4	39·0	50·5	32·5
East Midlands[3]	3·4	4·1	4·7	8·6	13·6	16·9	10·2	8·3	10·5	9·4	8·8	9·5
South West	9·6	10·3	12·6	14·8	16·4	11·9	14·2	12·0	22·7	14·9	14·8	10·7
West Midlands[4]	0·2	0·1	0·1	—	—	—	—	6·4	10·0	19·5	26·6	20·0
North West	*114·1	*89·4	*137·5	*173·8	*123·8	*103·1	103·9	85·9	128·6	79·2	82·6	74·5
England[5]	323·5	283·8	359·2	435·4	365·2	296·5	293·4	242·6	349·6	271·6	317·9	264·5
Government expenditure on regional preferential assistance to industry at 1989-90 prices[1, 5]												
Northern	371·9	296·8	256·9	273·0	228·7	177·9	161·1	117·8	164·1	125·3	143·2	117·3
Yorkshire and Humberside	87·6	64·5	89·3	95·2	76·3	49·1	55·8	44·1	49·8	44·6	53·7	32·5
East Midlands[3]	8·0	8·2	8·0	13·3	19·6	23·3	13·4	10·3	12·6	10·7	9·4	9·5
South West	22·5	20·7	21·4	22·9	23·7	16·4	18·7	14·9	27·3	17·0	15·7	10·7
West Midlands[4]	0·5	0·2	—	—	—	—	—	8·0	12·0	22·3	28·3	20·0

Region	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
North West	[6]267·2	[6]179·5	[6]233·1	[6]268·6	[6]178·6	[6]142·2	136·5	107·0	154·8	90·5	87·9	74·5
England[2]	757·6	569·9	608·8	673·0	527·0	409·0	385·5	302·1	420·7	310·4	338·2	264·5

[1] All figures are gross and include payments to Nationalised Industries.
[2] The totals do not always equal the sum of the component parts because of rounding.
[3] Includes some minor expenditure in West Midlands in respect of Oswestry TTWA which ceased to be an Assisted Area in 1982-83.
[4] Certain TTWAs in the West Midlands were designated as Assisted Areas on 29 November 1984.
[5] Expenditure on a 1989-90 price basis for each year is calculated by applying the appropriate deflator to expenditure at current prices.
[6] Includes expenditure in Cumbria, otherwise shown within the totals for Northern Region.

The items included in the expenditure are Regional Development Grants, Regional Selective Assistance and Regional Enterprise Grants; expenditure on Land and Factories by the English Industrial Estates Corporation.

Package Travel Directive

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to publish the Government's proposals for implementing the EC package travel directive.

Mr. Lilley: I have today issued a consultation document, setting out our proposals for legislation to implement the EC package travel directive. We plan tough new legislation which will give much greater protection to package holidaymakers and should ensure that we never again see holidaymakers stranded abroad when their tour company fails.

Our proposed new legislation would lay down minimum standards for the way that package holidaymakers are to be treated by the travel organiser and travel agent. In particular, the legislation would:

- set out the information to be included in brochures, and other information which must be supplied to the consumer before the start of the holiday;
- define the circumstances in which changes may or may not be made to the particulars in the brochure;
- lay down the matters which must be included in the contract between the holidaymaker and the travel organiser;
- regulate the making of surcharges so that no price increases may be made within 20 days before the departure;
- place the sole liability for the holiday on the organiser and require him and the travel agent to deal promptly with complaints.

These requirements would be backed up by a combination of new criminal offences and civil liabilities.

European Community directive 90/314/EEC on package travel, package holidays and package tours has to be implemented by all member states by 31 December 1992.

Article 7 of the directive requires holiday firms to provide evidence of security to repay money and to repatriate consumers in the event of insolvency. We propose to implement this requirement by setting up a new licensing system for package travel organisers, with a requirement for them to be bonded, and for a national back-up fund to be established.

I am anxious, however, that the proposed new licensing system should not put unnecessary burdens on small businesses or those, such as youth clubs and the Church, who are involved in organising trips, outings and other activities.

If an organiser neither takes prepayments nor offers packages where the question of repatriation would arise, he would not need a licence. People who organise packages only occasionally would also be exempt. Also someone who makes arrangements at the specific request of the members of a club, for instance, would be unlikely to be covered by the directive.

I do not think therefore that these proposals are likely to cause any significant difficulties in practice.

Professionals (Clients' Money)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what regulation exists with regard to the handling of client money by members of the Law Society, estate agents, mortgage brokers, accountants and members of the Investment Brokers Registration Council; and whether he proposes to make changes in such regulations.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 18 July 1991]:* The main provisions affecting the handling of client money by members of the Law Society are those of the Solicitors' Accounts Rules 1986, made by the Law Society under the Solicitors Act 1974. There are no plans to amend these.

The Estate Agents (Accounts) Regulations 1981, made under the Estate Agents Act 1979, regulate the handling of client money by estate agents. No changes are proposed.

Persons authorised to carry on investment business under the Financial Services Act 1986 are subject to regulations made under it by the Securities and Investments Board and/or to the rules of the regulatory bodies recognised under the FSA, in respect of client money for FSA-regulated investment business. I understand the SIB intends to introduce revised regulations later this year.

There are no statutory rules governing the handling of client money by mortgage brokers in their capacity as such. But many mortgage brokers are subject to the FSA regulations because they also conduct regulated investment business.

There are no statutory rules governing the handling of client money by accountants in their capacity as such. However, the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales is introducing rules for its members' general business which will come into force next year. They will be closely modelled on those made under the FSA which already apply, in respect of such business, to accountants carrying on FSA-regulated investment business.

I assume that the hon. Member refers to the Insurance Brokers Registration Council. The council has rules governing the handling of client money by registered brokers. Amendments are in the first instance a matter for the council, although the rules are subject to approval by order under the Insurance Brokers (Registration) Act 1977. Registered brokers authorised by the council to

conduct investment business under the FSA are not permitted to handle client money connected with such business.

Dog and Cat Skins

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will introduce legislation to outlaw trading in dog and cat skins within the United Kingdom;

(b) if he will seek from Yorkshire television, a video of their evidence on dog and cat skin trading within the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 18 July 1991]:* No.

Premium-rate Telephone Services

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is taking to deal with the problem of premium-rate telephone services aimed at children.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 23 July 1991]:* The regulation of premium-rate telephone services is primarily a matter for the Director General of Telecommunications, Sir Bryan Carsberg. He has taken strong action to control these services and has indicated that he will continue to keep their operation under review.

These services are subject to codes of practice, administered by the Independent Committee for the Supervision of Standards of Telephone Information Services, which contain specific provisions designed to protect young people. These have recently been further tightened and include provisions to restrict the content of communications aimed at children and young people, provisions concerning promotional material aimed at or intended to be readily accessible to them, and requirements that such material, and the communications themselves, must include warnings about the high cost of premium-rate services.

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will take steps to give wider publicity for the facility available to bar telephones from dialling premium-rate services.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 23 July 1991]:* This is essentially a matter for BT, which is responsible for making the facility available. The Director General of Telecommunications, Sir Bryan Carsberg, who has responsibility for the regulation of premium-rate services, welcomed the introduction of the facility in a press release on 28 January. He is encouraging BT to take action to make the public aware that call-barring is available free of charge to those of its customers connected to digital local exchanges.

Clothing (Flammability Standards)

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress has been made by the European Commission on the matter of standards relating to the flammability of clothing, other than nightwear.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 23 July 1991]:* There are no proposals by the European Commission for limits on the flammability of clothing.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) whether the Bank of Credit and Commerce International or any of its subsidiaries obtained interim authorisation to continue operating an investment or other business under the terms of the Financial Services Act 1986; whether such businesses were subsequently admitted to membership of any of the self-regulatory organisations; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether the Bank of Credit and Commerce International or any of its subsidiaries were authorised to operate any investment or other business in the United Kingdom under the terms of the Financial Services Act 1986.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 23 July 1991]:* I understand that the Bank of Credit and Commerce SA applied for membership of IMRO under the FSA, but was never granted full membership.

Aberdeen Shipbuilders

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish the report by the company Cork Gully Ltd. on the conduct of the company Aberdeen Shipbuilders Ltd. consequent upon Aberdeen Shipbuilders going into receivership.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 23 July 1991]:* Any report by an insolvency practitioner made pursuant to the Company Director Disqualification Act 1986 is a privileged document as between the person submitting the report and the Secretary of State and therefore cannot be published.

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he received from the company Cork Gully Ltd. a report on the conduct of the company Aberdeen Shipbuilders Ltd. consequent on Aberdeen Shipbuilders Ltd. going into receivership; what action his Department intends to take.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 23 July 1991]:* Aberdeen Shipbuilders Ltd. was the parent company of the Hall Russell Group which comprised Hall Russell Ltd. and Hall Russell Offshore Ltd. Aberdeen Shipbuilders Ltd. did not itself go into receivership, being dormant when the other two group companies failed in November/December 1988. It is not now listed on the Registry at Companies house, Edinburgh.

In the course of administering the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986 the disqualification unit of my Department did receive and investigate reports on the conduct of the directors submitted by the insolvency practitioners dealing with the receiverships of Hall Russell Ltd. and Hall Russell Offshore Ltd. Legal advice was taken, but it was considered that there was no case to answer.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 25 July 1991

NORTHERN IRELAND

Inward Investment

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much investment has been made in Northern Ireland by American-controlled companies in each of the past five years; and to what extent these investments have been made as a result of the support made available from United States public funds.

Mr. Needham: The table shows the investment made in Northern Ireland by American-controlled companies in each of the past five financial years. Two of these investments involved support from United States public funds.

Year	*Total investment (£,000)*	*No. of investments*
1986-87	40,335	6
1987-88	21,541	5
1988-89	103,933	8
1989-90	212,674	12
1990-91	74,659	7

Eastern Health and Social Services Board

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland since the introduction of privatisation into services provided for the Eastern health and social services board, what proportion of financial savings have been allocated to actual patient care and improvement of medical services.

Mr. Hanley: The health and personal social services in Northern Ireland have not been subject to a privatisation policy. There is, however, a requirement on health and social services boards to test the efficiency of their domestic, catering and laundry services through competitive tendering. All financial savings arising from competitive tendering contribute to the overall resources available to each unit of management to deliver its operational plan, the emphasis of which is actual patient care and improvement of medical services.

Stevens Inquiry

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much has been spent on the Stevens inquiry to date; and which Department is meeting the cost.

Dr. Mawhinney: I understand that, up to 3 July, the cost of the Stevens inquiry has been £868,480. As is normal for such inquiries, the Police Authority for Northern Ireland is meeting the cost.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons were arrested as a result of the Stevens inquiry; how many have been charged; how many have been brought to trial; how many of those tried have been found guilty; how many have been released from custody and of them how many are on bail; and how many are still in custody.

Dr. Mawhinney: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Hazardous Waste

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will now seek to have made available to his Department copies of the environmental audits carried out by companies in Northern Ireland which produce *(a)* toxic and *(b)* hazardous and special wastes.

Mr. Needham: Where such audits are carried out by companies in Northern Ireland, it is the Department of Environment for Northern Ireland's intention to seek to have copies made available.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East of 17 July, *Official Report*, column *212*, on information on environmental impact assessments, if he has obtained copies of the published information referred to for his departmental library.

Mr. Needham: Copies of the published information referred to are not held in the departmental library; they are held by the environment service where they are readily available to officials who may require access to them.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East, *Official Report*, 17 July, column *212-13*, what steps were taken by the councils through whose areas the hazardous waste referred to passed to ensure that it is being transported in accordance with current regulations.

Mr. Needham: The transport of hazardous waste by road in Northern Ireland is subject to the provisions of regulations for which the enforcing authority is the Department of Economic Development.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East, *Official Report*, 17 July, column *212*, if he will list the types of hazardous waste imported into Northern Ireland from the Irish Republic in 1988-89 and 1989-90; by what means it was disposed of; and whether those council areas through which it passed monitored its passage within their areas, and its disposal.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is given in the table. In most cases, the substances are chemically treated and sludge wastes which arise as a result of this treatment are landfilled under the close supervision of the relevant district councils. The passage through a district council area is not monitored by district councils.

Substances	*Method of disposal*
Acqueous solution/Suspension of low level pesticides (plant washings).	Treated in plant for disposal to landfill in Northern Ireland.
Ammonia corrosive liquid.	Treated with sulphuric acid in plant.

Substances	*Method of disposal*
Empty plastic containers of Escadulent material containing Esthyl methacrylate, Hydroxypropyl, Polyurethane, Iscoynate, Acrylic acid.	Repacked and sent to England for treatment and disposal.
Cupid acid.	Sent to England for re-cycling.
Printed circuit board effluent sludge.	Treated in plant and precipitate sent for disposal to landfill in Northern Ireland.
Mercury contaminated waste.	Treated in plant—Mercury extracted for re-use.
Copper hydroxide.	Sent to England for re-cycling.
Chlorinated solvents.	Sent to England for re-cycling.
Non-chlorinated solvents.	Sent to England for re-cycling.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will outline the consideration given by any Government Department in Northern Ireland to the EC draft directive on the incineration of hazardous wastes and indicate what consultations there have been between Government officials and the European Commission on the implications of such a directive for any proposals for a hazardous waste incinerator in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: Proposals for a directive on the incineration of hazardous waste have yet to be placed before the European Council, although it is understood that a submission will be made shortly.

Officials in the Department of the Environment in Northern Ireland have been kept informed of the details of discussions on the draft directive. Any proposals for a hazardous waste incinerator in Northern Ireland would have to comply fully with emission standards and controls set out in any such new directive.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether any Northern Ireland Government Department has been briefed or sought information on the study by the small area health statistics unit at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine on possible links between pollution from waste incinerators and ill health in the community.

Mr. Hanley: The Department of Health and Social Services is represented on the steering committee which oversees the work of the small area health statistics unit. It is therefore aware of all studies being undertaken by the unit.

Maydown Incinerator

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will take steps to ensure that the slag to be produced by the proposed incinerator at Maydown, Londonderry, will be harmless to the environment.

Mr. Needham: Details of the slag to be produced by the proposed incinerator and proper safeguards for the handling of such material will become available only if and when Du Pont (UK) Ltd. submits a planning application and accompanying environmental statement.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what types of *(a)* toxic, *(b)* hazardous and *(c)* other special wastes the proposed incinerator at Londonderry will burn; and what is the temperature needed and for what periods to destroy each of those wastes.

Mr. Needham: The specific types of waste which will comprise the feedstock material for the proposed incinerator and the design details of the plant capable of safely handling such waste will have to be contained in any environmental impact assessment. The requirements set by the Government will ensure the degree of burn-out achieved at any such incinerator will be sufficient properly to destroy all material for which the plant is designed.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East, of 17 July, *Official Report*, column *210*, on the expected lifetime of the Maydown incinerator, what is his estimate of the amount of waste which could be burnt in the incinerator over its lifetime.

Mr. Needham: Until the company submits details of the intended plant capacity that may be proposed for any incinerator, it is not possible to estimate the total quantity of material which might be burnt at any such incinerator over its lifetime.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the IDB or the Department of Economic Development have any plans to provide funding for the Du Pont company's proposed hazardous waste incinerator; and what discussions they have had with the company about possible funding for such a project.

Mr. Needham: The company has approached the Industrial Development Board about possible financial assistance for its proposed hazardous waste incinerator. Negotiations have not yet been concluded.

Flood Damage

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table showing the sums of public money expended in (1) Strabane area, (2) Ballycastle area and (3) the rest of Northern Ireland after the floods of 1987 and last year; how many persons received such sums and for what purposes; for Department of Health and Social Security payments what sums were paid in *(a)* grants and *(b)* loans and how much of the loans have been repaid to the latest available date; and whether there are any differences in Government action in the different situations.

Dr. Mawhinney: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Racial Discrimination

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has concluded his consideration of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights' recommendation that racial discrimination be made unlawful in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The recommendation that racial discrimination be made unlawful in Northern Ireland was

contained in the SACHR second report on religious and political discrimination in Northern Ireland. The Secretary of State wrote to the chairman of SACHR on 23 July proposing a meeting between officials and the commission to discuss the Government's response to this and a number of other recommendations contained in the report.

Voluntary Grammar Schools

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the category B expenditure grants paid to each of the voluntary grammar schools and their numbers of fee paying and non-fee paying pupils for each school year since 1988.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is as follows:

School	1988-89 school year: Category B grants paid £	Fee paying pupils	Non-fee paying pupils
Armagh Royal	243,713	43	458
Armagh St. Patrick's Grammar	293,463	51	669
Ballymena Academy	405,227	18	1,113
Ballymena, St. Louis Grammar	282,040	2	912
Ballymoney, Dalriada	294,737	15	771
Ballynahinch Assumption	248,335	9	691
Bangor Grammar	314,472	36	865
Belfast, Bloomfield Collegiate	179,891	22	520
Belfast, Campbell College	440,606	106	478
Belfast, Christian Brothers	426,443	34	1,096
Belfast, Dominican College	275,287	14	782
Belfast High School	272,463	12	730
Belfast, Hunterhouse College	212,320	129	560
Belfast, Methodist College	773,910	138	1,458
Belfast, Our Lady and St. Patrick's	361,991	12	904
Belfast, Royal Academical Institution	489,258	45	858
Belfast, Royal Academy	636,237	46	1,250
Belfast, St. Dominic's High School	349,958	15	900
Belfast, St. Malachy's College	392,487	11	911
Belfast, Strathearn	219,177	6	598
Belfast, Victoria College	262,184	65	600
Coleraine Academical Institution	366,046	134	834
Coleraine, Loreto College	248,859	10	697
Donaghmore, St. Joseph's Grammar	99,981	16	263
Downpatrick, St. Patrick's Grammar	183,965	13	589
Dungannon Royal	303,152	29	549
Dungannon, St. Patrick's Boys'	197,028	11	690
Dungannon, St. Patrick's Girls'	183,699	13	672
Dunmurry, Rathmore Grammar	350,238	23	1,041
Enniskillen Convent	219,193	1	746
Enniskillen, Portora Royal	231,547	27	314
Enniskillen, St. Michael's	240,806	17	664
Garron Tower, St. Macnissi's College	205,749	21	529
Holywood, Sullivan Upper	348,720	18	984
Kilkeel, St. Louis High	128,174	21	266
Larne Grammar	237,915	17	614
Lisburn, Friends' School	301,811	46	820
Lisburn, Wallace High	394,991	20	1,060
Londonderry, Foyle College	289,168	35	757
Londonderry, St. Columb's College	536,879	7	1,537
Londonderry, Thornhill College	429,111	20	1,289
Lurgan, St. Michael's Senior High	167,043	5	403
Magherafelt, Rainey Endowed	211,321	8	536
Magherafelt, St. Mary's Convent	289,582	11	940
Newry, Abbey Grammar	233,459	6	705
Newry, Our Lady's Grammar	184,307	12	755
Newry, Sacred Heart Grammar	226,906	9	769
Newry, St. Colman's College	237,829	26	748
Omagh Christian Brothers'	227,145	9	754
Omagh, Loreto Convent	264,875	9	808
Portstewart Dominican College	150,428	46	317
Strabane Convent Grammar	164,192	12	444

School	1989-90 school year: Category B grants paid £	Fee paying pupils	Non-fee paying pupils
Armagh Royal	258,771	58	442
Armagh St. Patrick's Grammar	309,385	36	667
Ballymena Academy	435,680	22	1,098
Ballymena, St. Louis Grammar	319,190	3	946
Ballymoney, Dalriada	323,114	14	763
Ballynahinch Assumption	266,720	17	704
Bangor Grammar	354,824	37	830
Belfast, Bloomfield Collegiate	202,529	22	570
Belfast, Campbell College	412,396	131	502
Belfast, Christian Brothers	478,402	31	1,084
Belfast, Dominican College	310,162	13	788
Belfast High School	278,303	33	672
Belfast, Hunterhouse College	238,407	94	511
Belfast, Methodist College	833,236	147	1,491
Belfast, Our Lady and St. Patrick's	410,559	21	945
Belfast, Royal Academical Institution	519,440	46	846
Belfast, Royal Academy	699,557	28	1,243
Belfast, St. Dominic's High School	390,899	12	865
Belfast, St. Malachy's College	433,089	15	864
Belfast, Strathearn	248,988	3	636
Belfast, Victoria College	281,805	62	554
Coleraine Academical Institution	402,220	96	764
Coleraine, Loreto College	278,461	9	709
Donaghmore, St. Joseph's Grammar	110,646	14	262
Downpatrick, St. Patrick's Grammar	210,594	8	629
Dungannon Royal	331,810	44	545
Dungannon, St. Patrick's Boys'	222,558	10	691
Dungannon, St. Patrick's Girls'	213,209	11	725
Dunmurry, Rathmore Grammar	396,293	14	1,093
Enniskillen Convent	245,074	6	734
Enniskillen, Portora Royal	252,344	19	308
Enniskillen, St. Michael's	261,543	12	676
Garron Tower, St. Macnissi's College	225,173	23	517
Holywood, Sullivan Upper	388,198	17	990
Kilkeel, St. Louis High	134,699	26	227
Larne Grammar	249,192	26	568
Lisburn, Friends' School	328,602	52	816
Lisburn, Wallace High	429,965	19	1,084
Londonderry, Foyle College	327,808	22	763
Londonderry, St. Columb's College	582,500	25	1,503
Londonderry, Thornhill College	463,990	30	1,245
Lurgan, St. Michael's Senior High	174,205	7	392
Magherafelt, Rainey Endowed	223,617	18	541
Magherafelt, St. Mary's Convent	324,724	10	957
Newry, Abbey Grammar	263,235	10	677
Newry, Our Lady's Grammar	206,559	12	761
Newry, Sacred Heart Grammar	257,504	6	809
Newry, St. Colman's College	261,195	23	754
Omagh Christian Brothers'	258,129	15	758
Omagh, Loreto Convent	303,213	12	840
Portstewart Dominican College	161,779	52	338
Strabane Convent Grammar	181,566	8	451

School	1990-91 school yea (8-month period) Category B grants paid £	Fee paying pupils	Non-fee paying pupils
Armagh Royal	187,701	47	501
Armagh St. Patrick's Grammar	239,073	2	738
Ballymena Academy	332,780	11	1,148
Ballymena, St. Louis Grammar	248,949	0	959
Ballymona, Dalriada	239,696	2	777
Ballyneyhinch Assumption	205,914	0	780
Bangor Grammar	265,360	13	870
Belfast, Bloomfield Collegiate	162,989	8	620
Belfast, Campbell College	302,079	93	597
Belfast, Christian Brothers	351,263	4	1,137
Belfast, Dominican College	240,567	0	867
Belfast High School	214,612	1	706
Belfast, Hunterhouse College	172,623	62	547
Belfast, Methodist College	609,615	100	1,549
Belfast, Our Lady and St. Patrick's	302,409	0	994
Belfast, Royal Academical Institution	379,070	14	911
Belfast, Royal Academy	509,946	15	1,274
Belfast, St. Dominic's High School	279,433	2	871
Belfast, St. Malachy's College	308,918	0	876
Belfast, Strathearn	191,777	3	648
Belfast, Victoria College	207,479	42	609
Coleraine Academical Institution	298,475	58	790
Coleraine, Loreto College	215,095	0	745
Donaghmore, St. Joseph's Grammar	89,104	0	312
Downpatrick, St. Patrick's Grammar	158,743	0	638
Dungannon Royal	238,446	30	569
Dungannon, St. Patrick's Boys'	183,396	1	728
Dungannon, St. Patrick's Girls'	177,033	0	769
Dunmurry, Rathmore Grammar	308,664	2	1,206
Enniskillen Convent	195,484	0	765
Enniskillen, Portora Royal	174,606	12	331
Enniskillen, St. Michael's	204,249	1	688
Garron Tower, St. Macnissi's College	174,779	7	568
Holywood, Sullivan Upper	294,377	1	1,012
Kilkeel, St. Louis High	104,106	11	266
Larne Grammar	187,641	6	622
Lisburn, Friends' School	259,282	37	830
Lisburn, Wallace High	320,445	6	1,133
Londonderry, Foyle College	245,472	13	814
Londonderry, St. Columb's College	440,508	2	1,553
Londonderry, Thornhill College	362,556	7	1,289
Lurgan, St. Michael's Senior High	131,061	0	431
Magherafelt, Rainey Endowed	172,436	1	571
Magherafelt, St. Mary's Convent	252,610	0	990
Newry, Abbey Grammar	196,665	2	664
Newry, Our Lady's Grammar	162,707	3	791
Newry, Sacred Heart Grammar	196,045	3	810
Newry, St. Colman's College	210,270	0	782
Omagh Christian Brothers'	201,664	0	861
Omagh, Loreto Convent	226,334	1	861
Portstewart Dominican College	128,331	23	368
Strabane Convent Grammar	133,922	2	449

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the amount of category A expenditure admitted for each of the voluntary grammar schools in Northern Ireland for each school year since 1989.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is as follows:

	Category A expenditure admitted for grant 1989-90 (School year) £	1990-91 (Eight month period) £
Armagh Royal	751,589	516,078
Armagh St. Patrick's Grammar	937,720	653,788
Ballymena Academy	1,499,902	1,053,189
Ballymena, St. Louis Grammar	1,075,497	782,492
Ballymoney, Dalriada School	1,083,466	773,908
Ballynahinch, Assumption Grammar	868,418	635,563
Bangor Grammar	1,156,739	816,750
Belfast, Bloomfield Collegiate	741,887	542,722
Belfast, Campbell College	839,106	625,730
Belfast, Christian Brothers'	1,399,839	972,402
Belfast, Dominican College	962,192	695,087
Belfast High School	992,910	687,535
Belfast, Hunterhouse College	949,744	642,172
Belfast, Methodist College	2,302,121	1,673,818
Belfast, Our Lady & St. Patrick's	1,138,880	828,994
Belfast, Royal Belfast Academical Institution	1,292,245	910,409
Belfast Royal Academy	1,740,888	1,208,832
Belfast, St. Dominic's High School	1,177,290	791,986
Belfast, St. Malachy's College	1,144,269	796,050
Belfast, Strathearn	869,980	624,987
Belfast, Victoria College	1,038,563	732,448
Coleraine Academical Institution	1,168,740	808,465
Coleraine, Loreto College	889,970	665,440
Donaghmore, St. Joseph's Grammar	385,694	279,930
Downpatrick, St. Patrick's Grammar	704,574	520,821
Dungannon Royal	794,732	563,270
Dungannon, St. Patrick's Boys'	849,395	600,398
Dungannon, St. Patrick's Girls'	773,625	571,787
Dunmurry, Rathmore Grammar	1,291,737	962,553
Enniskillen, Convent Grammar	849,899	606,986
Enniskillen, Portora Royal	472,958	322,231
Enniskillen, St. Michael's College	804,585	554,063
Garron Tower, St. Macnissi's College	650,414	472,663
Holywood, Sullivan Upper	1,271,642	938,112
Kilkeel, St. Louis Grammar	424,290	305,462
Larne Grammar School	866,543	619,832
Lisburn, Friends' School	1,204,948	840,527
Lisburn, Wallace High	1,375,556	1,007,965
Londonderry, Foyle College	1,019,844	736,727
Londonderry, St. Columb's College	1,780,366	1,267,940
Londonderry, Thornhill College	1,550,162	1,107,787
Lurgan, St. Michael's Senior High	655,700	462,716
Magherafelt Rainey Endowed	763,579	542,845
Magherafelt, St. Mary's Convent	1,146,756	828,314
Newry, Abbey Grammar	819,377	593,304
Newry, Our Lady's Grammar	864,763	631,933
Newry, Sacred Heart Grammar	919,539	693,272
Newry, St. Colman's College	861,770	635,856
Omagh, Christian Brothers'	916,202	675,480
Omagh, Loreto Convent	916,969	660,344
Portstewart, Dominican College	517,616	380,137
Strabane, Convent Grammar	547,553	393,677

[1] Prior to 1990-91 the funding of voluntary grammar schools was determined on a school year basis (August to July). In 1990-91 the funding period was reduced to a eight months (August to March) so that, when local management of schools was introduced on 1 April 1991, funding would be on the same basis as for other schools (ie April to March).

Schools (Capital Work)

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the primary and secondary schools which have had tenders for major capital work approved and the amount involved in each case in 1989, 1990 and 1991.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is as follows:

	Tender amount approved £ million
1989	
Primary Schools	
All Saints (Tattysallagh) Omagh	0·437
Grange, Kilkeel	0·223
St. Anne's, Finaghy	1,229
St. Anne's, Strabane	0·691
St. Mary's, Aughnacloy	0·329
St. Patrick's, Dungannon	1·626
Secondary Schools	
Banbridge Academy	4·400
Drumcree High, Portadown	1·800
Dundonald Boys' High	2·400
Friends' School, Lisburn	1·235
Glengormley High	3·100
Loreto College, Coleraine	2·200
Movilla High, Newtownards	4·250
Omagh Academy	3·200
Our Lady's Grammar, Newry	4·299
Victoria College, Belfast	0·378
1990	
Primary Schools	
Hollybush, Londonderry	0·709
Langfield, Drumquin	0·320
Secondary Schools	
Drumcree High, Portadown	0·218
Lagan College, Belfast	2·788
Larne Grammar	3·126
Loreto Convent Grammar, Omagh	1·450
Orangefield High, Belfast	3·443
St. Mark's High, Warrenpoint	2·899
St. Mary's Girls' High, Downpatrick	2·216
St. Michael's Grammar, Enniskillen	3·051
1991	
Primary Schools	
Star of the Sea, Belfast	0·986
St. Joseph's Belfast	0·760
St. McCartan's, Loughinisland	0·370
St. Patrick's Mullinahoe	0·406
St. Tierney's Roslea	0·422
Secondary Schools	
Ballyclare	3·443
Castelderg	2·100
St. Columb's College, Londonderry	3·051
St. Mary's High, Limavady	0·199

Prisoners (Searches)

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number of strip searches made on female persons in Her Majesty's prison Maghaberry monthly since March 1991; what were the numbers of persons involved and the number of times each person was searched; what prison contraband, smuggled item, or illegal correspondence was discovered in any search; in how many cases prisoners refused to be searched and had to be restrained while the search was being conducted; and what were the reasons for each search.

Dr. Mawhinney: Details of the number of, and reasons for, strip searches of female prisoners in Her Majesty's prison Maghaberry from June 1990 to March 1991 have already been provided, *Official Report*, columns *428-29*, 7 May 1991. Details from April 1991 are as follows:

	April 1991	*May 1991*	*June 1991*
Number of Searches			
Total number of searches carried out	35	25	33
Total number of inmates searched	26	19	24
Number of prisoners searched once	17	15	18
Number of prisoners searched twice	9	3	4
Number of prisoners searched more than twice	Nil	1	2
Reasons for search			
First admission on remand/awaiting trial	6	5	5
First admission on sentence/final discharge	16	8	13
Attending remand court	Nil	1	Nil
Attending trial	2	Nil	Nil
Inter-prison visits	4	4	8
Following prison visits	1	Nil	Nil
Pre-release home leave	4	6	7
Compassionate home leave	Nil	Nil	Nil
Visits to outside hospital	Nil	Nil	Nil
Returning from bail application	Nil	Nil	Nil
Attendance at court for bail	Nil	1	Nil
Fines paid	2	Nil	Nil
Working out scheme	Nil	Nil	Nil
Bail granted	Nil	Nil	Nil

No prohibited article was found during these searches. One prisoner refused to be searched.

Written Questions

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many parliamentary questions for written answer have been answered by his Department so far this Session, and in the comparable period for the last Session; and if he will publish a table of how many answers *(a)* do not give the information requested because of (i) disproportionate cost or (ii) other reasons, *(b)* give an undertaking to write to the hon. Member who asked the question and *(c)* were referred for answer to the chief executive of each next steps agency.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is as follows:

	Total	Disproportionate cost	Undertaking to write	Other reasons	Referred to next steps agency
November 1989 to October 1990	1,140	24	23	16	0
November 1990 to 25 July 1991	1,030	21	25	22	7

Teaching Costs

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what were *(a)* the sums allocated to each secondary school in Northern Ireland to fund teaching costs in each school year since 1989, *(b)* the numbers of pupils in each school in each year and *(c)* the numbers of approved teaching posts.

Dr. Mawhinney: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Heart Operations

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many emergency heart operations have been carried out at the Royal Victoria hospital, Belfast in the past six weeks; and if he will break down these by how many operations were performed by each specialist surgeon.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is not held centrally. The hon. Gentleman may wish to contact Mr. Norman Ferguson, the chairman of the Eastern health and social services board.

Roe Valley Hospital

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on proposals for the future of Roe Valley hospital, Limavady.

Mr. Hanley: There are no proposals at present to change the services currently provided at the Roe Valley hospital.

I understand that the Western board is presently undertaking a review of health and social care provisions in the Limavady area. When this is completed any proposals affecting services at the hospital will be the subject of full consultation with all interested parties.

Power Station Sales

Mr. Temple-Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when Her Majesty's Government intend to initiate the sale of the four power stations to trade purchasers; and when he expects the sale to be completed.

Mr. Needham: The first step in the process is being taken today with the issue of the preliminary memorandum. Prospective bidders will be afforded a period of four weeks in which to register an interest. Following the screening of responses, the information memorandum, on which the firm bids will be based, will issue to competing bidders at the beginning of September 1991. On the basis of the present programme all bids will require to be entered by the end of October. Completion of the sale of the power stations will, of course, be subject to Parliament's consideration of the draft Electricity (NI) Order and I hope to bring this before the House before the end of the year.

Advice Agencies

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what measures he is taking to ensure voluntary legal advice-giving agencies in Northern Ireland can continue to provide their services.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 17 July 1991]:* There are no plans to change the funding arrangements of legal advice-giving agencies in Northern Ireland.

UDR Four

Mr. Stanbrook: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about his consideration of the case of the Ulster Defence Regiment Four.

Mr. Brooke: I have decided to use my power under the Criminal Appeal (Northern Ireland) Act 1980 to refer the cases of Winston Allen, Noel Bell, James Hegan and Neil Latimer to the Court of Appeal.

TRANSPORT

Anti-spray Devices

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made in the introduction of anti-spray devices on heavy lorries.

Mr. Chope: There have been regulations requiring spray suppression devices to be fitted to vehicles and trailers in the United Kingdom since 1984. Largely as a result of the United Kingdom's initiative the European Community has now reached an agreement on an EC directive 91/226 EEC for spray suppression based closely on the British standard. There is a commitment written into the directive to develop more effective vehicle tests to reduce spray and research is continuing at the Transport and Road Research Laboratory, which should result in improvements in the future.

Chelsea-Hackney Line

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for the development of the Chelsea-Hackney tube line; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The Government remain of the view that the Chelsea-Hackney line will be needed to cater for current and forecast demand on the rail networks serving central London. It is also very conscious of the benefits which the line would have in terms of improving access to and from Hackney. The alignment is accordingly being protected through the planning system so that it can be taken forward when resources permit.

Noise Prevention

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much money was spent on noise prevention where the M40 motorway is concerned *(a)* before its original opening and *(b)* since its full implementation between Birmingham and London.

Mr. Chope: To date more than £2·7 million has been spent on specific noise mitigation measures on the M40 as a whole. It is not possible to give precise figures as noise amelioration measures are often an integral part of earthworks design and are not separately costed.

MOT Test

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he intends to introduce into the MOT test carbon monoxide emission limits of 3·5 per cent. or within 0·5 per cent. of manufacturer's specifications, for cars made after 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The carbon monoxide limits in the amendment to the Construction and Use Regulations, which were introduced on 4 July, are 4·5 per cent. for a vehicle first used on or after 1 August 1983 and 6 per cent. for a vehicle first used between 1 August 1975 and 31 July 1983. It is expected the exhaust emmission standards will become more stringent in future years, to reflect improved technology and stricter European Community requirements for new vehicles, particularly the introduction of catalytic converters on a large scale.

British Rail Engineering Ltd.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, under the terms of BREL's privatisation, what restrictions were placed on the extent of its liability for defects in design and manufacture; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: These were commercial decisions for British Rail, which negotiated the details of the sale.

Railway Crossings (Scotland)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many open railway crossings there are in Scotland; and if he will list all those which are still to be fitted with barriers in accordance with the Stott recommendations.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Health and Safety Executive's railway inspectorate has records of 24 open crossings in Scotland. The only crossing to be dealt with under Professor Stott's recommendations is the automatic open crossing at Rosarie, in the Grampian region, which is to be converted to an automatic half barrier crossing. No other changes, including reductions to the speed of trains over crossings, were required in Scotland.

Northern Ireland (Rail Links)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans there are for improving Northern Ireland's rail links with the rest of Britain and Europe through routes in Scotland.

Mr. McLoughlin: It is for British Rail to come forward with any proposals.

M12

Sir Robert McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if it remains his intention that the proposed M12 should be a toll motorway.

Mr. Chope: Yes. My right hon. and learned Friend intends to hold a competition once he has identified a preferred route. Privately financed proposals will be invited and, if such a proposal proves to be the best option, the successful tenderer will be awarded a concession under the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991.

Sir Robert McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has re-examined the justification for the proposed M12 between Chelmsford and the M25 in the light of recent traffic forecasts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The justification for each motorway and trunk road scheme is kept under review throughout its development in the light of economic, environmental, traffic and other factors. That will happen in this case. As part of that process, roadside traffic interviews were held in June. They will also assist decisions about the capacity of the proposed motorway.

Railway Rolling Stock

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much the late delivery by British Rail Engineering Ltd. of the new class 158 diesel trains has cost ScotRail in *(a)* lost revenue and *(b)* additional running costs in having to use old stock longer than planned for.

Mr. Freeman: This is a matter for the British Railways Board.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how much faults of design and construction on the class 158 diesel trains have cost ScotRail in *(a)* lost revenue and *(b)* extra maintenance costs;

(2) if he will instruct British Rail to take legal action against Birmingham Rail Engineering Ltd. to recover its financial losses caused by faults on, and the late delivery of, the new class 158 diesel trains.

Mr. Freeman: This is a contractual and commercial matter for British Rail.

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the British Rail Board will announce its decision on the tenders it has received for building a further 47 class 465 electrical multiple unit four-car sets.

Mr. Rifkind: I will write to the hon. Member.

Seafarers

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps his Department is taking to ascertain *(a)* the total number of British seafarers, *(b)* the number of British seafarers employed on United Kingdom-registered ships and *(c)* the total number of seafarers of all nationalities employed on United Kingdom-registered ships.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department of Transport last year commissioned a study into the demand for, and supply of United Kingdom and Irish seafarers worldwide.

This includes detailed information about manning levels, of United Kingdom, Irish, and foreign seafarers, both on United Kingdom-registered vessels and on those registered abroad. I announced receipt of the report of that study on 11 June this year, in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson-Smith). Summaries of the report are available in the Library.

Virgin Airlines (Narita Airport, Tokyo)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received concerning Virgin's application for British Airways slots at Narita airport, Tokyo.

Mr. McLoughlin: None. Virgin Atlantic has made an application to the Civil Aviation Authority to vary British Airways' licence to serve Tokyo. In accordance with usual procedures the CAA has published the application, on 16 July, and has invited objections within 21 days.

"A Bus Strategy for London"

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) of 22 July, on the responses received to the document, "A Bus Strategy for London"; how many respondents commented unfavourably on the Government's policy to deregulate and privatise the London bus services; and how many favourably.

Mr. Freeman: Approximately 60 per cent. of respondents, including the hon. Lady, commented unfavourably on the Government's plans to deregulate bus services in London. Although a number of respondents commented on the timing and method of implementing privatisation, few expressed a view on the merits or demerits of the policy.

Duty-Free Goods

Sir Barney Hayhoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the benefit derived from the duty free concession to transport operators of air and sea routes during each of the last five years; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: My Department's estimates of the impact of the abolition of duty-free allowances on air and sea transport have been based on commercially confidential information. My right hon. Friend will understand that in these circumstances I am unable to provide the information he is seeking.

Sir Barney Hayhoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the proportion of the duty forgone by the Treasury on duty-free sales, particularly at ports and on aircraft, which *(a)* subsidise transport operators and *(b)* directly benefit the travellers who purchase such goods.

Mr. McLoughlin: I regret that the information requested cannot be given since there is no reliable detailed information available on duty-free expenditure by travellers entering or leaving the United Kingdom.

North Devon Link Road

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the traffic volume on the Ilminster bypass and on the A361 north Devon link road; and what plans he has to dual these roads.

Mr. Chope: The Ilminster bypass carries an average of 14,000 vehicles per day; the figure for the north Devon link road between Tiverton and Barnstaple varies between 7,500 and 11,500 over the different sections of the route.

I announced on 8 July our intention to add a second carriageway to the Ilminster bypass, in the light of the forecast doubling of traffic volume by early in the next century.

Traffic flows on the single carriageway section of the north Devon link road are not expected to grow to the same extent and the road will continue to have capacity to deal with the forecast flow. I therefore have no plans to dual it.

Rail Electrification (West Yorkshire)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a further statement on the West Yorkshire rail electrification.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have nothing to add to my replies to the hon. Member of 18 June and 1 July.

Channel Tunnel Rail Route

Sir Philip Goodhart: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will make it his policy to make an announcement about his views on the rail route to the channel tunnel at the earliest opportunity after a decision has been made even if Parliament is not sitting.

Mr. Freeman: We shall make an announcement on the rail link project as soon as possible.

Road Traffic (Growth)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the percentages of growth in road traffic for the years 1989, 1990 and 1991 to date in the following regions: *(a)* the Northern region, *(b)* Yorkshire and Humberside, *(c)* the north-west, *(d)* the east midlands, *(e)* the west midlands, *(f)* East Anglia, *(g)* the south-west, *(h)* the south-east and *(i)* Greater London.

Mr. Chope: My Department does not compile estimates of annual traffic growth by region. For Great Britain as a whole the figures are as follows:

	Per cent. change
1988 to 1989	+7
1989 to 1990	0
Q1 1990 to Q1 1991	−3

Written Questions

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many parliamentary questions for written answer have been answered by his Department so far this Session, and in the comparable period for the last Session; and if he will publish a table of how many answers *(a)* do not give

the information requested because of (i) disproportionate cost or (ii) other reasons, *(b)* give an undertaking to write to the hon. Member who asked the question and *(c)* were referred for answer to the chief executive of each next steps agency.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is a matter of public record.

Speedlink

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many jobs will be lost in Scotland due to the closure of Speedlink on 8 July.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail estimates that between 90 and 100 posts will be withdrawn but that there will be no compulsory redundancies in Scotland as a result of the closure of Speedlink.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of Speedlink's Scottish traffic has been lost to road as a result of its closure on 8 July; and how many lorry movements this represents.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail is still in consultation with some customers, but expects to lose around 13 per cent. of Speedlink's Scottish traffic to road. This represents about 20 lorry journeys per working day.

Gibraltar Airport

Mr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the European Commission proposals for the third stage of air liberalisation in Europe are intended to apply to Gibraltar airport; and if he will make it his policy that any agreement based upon the proposals should include Gibraltar.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Commission's proposals have not yet been transmitted to the Council. We understand that they envisage the continued exclusion of Gibraltar until the airport agreement is implemented. We shall consider the terms of the proposals fully in due course and we expect that they will be extensively discussed by the Council of Ministers. We continue to believe that the implementation of the airport agreement represents the best way forward for Gibraltar.

Barnstaple Bypass

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport by what date he expects to have paid all straightforward claims for compensation arising from compulsory acquisition of land for the Barnstaple bypass.

Mr. Chope: Full compensation has been paid in five cases. The remaining 73 cases will be completed and final payments made as soon as negotiations over the amount of compensation, and legal procedures, have been concluded.

At least one advance payment of compensation has been made in over half these cases. Claims attract interest, at statutory rates, from the date of entry on to the land until payment is made.

Double-line Railways

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state the findings of Her Majesty's railway inspectorate, prior to 21 July, on the safety characteristics of single-line junctions between double-line railway routes, stating the operational advantages seen in such arrangements.

Mr. Freeman: The findings of Her Majesty's railway inspectorate on the safety characteristics of single line junctions between double line railway routes were set out in the published report of the chief inspecting officer's inquiry into the collision at Bellgrove junction on 6 March 1989. He said: "We consider that single lead junctions are acceptable in principle on safety grounds and we do not accept that improvements in the efficiency of operation and maintenance are intrinsically at variance with the maintenance of an adequate standard of safety". A copy of the report is in the Library of the House.

Railway Signals

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library a copy of the joint British Rail and Royal Holloway and Bedford New College study into incidents of signals passed at danger.

Mr. Freeman: I am arranging for copies of the executive summary of the report to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what extra training or route familiarisation train drivers receive when the signals and track on routes which they might normally be expected to work, have been significantly repositioned or remodelled.

Mr. Freeman: For most significant resignalling schemes details are given to drivers by special signalling notices. In exceptional cases BR provides video training or conductors.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many incidents there were of railway signals being passed at danger since 1979; and how many of those were *(a)* considered to be sufficiently serious to merit reporting to the railway inspectorate, *(b)* resulted in a derailment and *(c)* resulted in a collision involving one or more passenger trains.

Mr. Freeman: I understand from British Rail that there were 8,171 incidents of signals passed at danger (SPAD) over the years 1979-90. These involved 60 collisions and 124 derailments to trains of all types. There is no statutory requirement for operators to report SPAD incidents unless an accident occurs.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all the single lead junctions on the railways in Scotland.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not readily available.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what type of signalling was in force at the time of the Newton, Glasgow rail accident on 21 July.

Mr. Freeman: Trains were signalled under track circuit block regulations and controlled by multiple aspect colour light signals equipped with the automatic warning system. The signalling at Newton is controlled by solid state interlocking.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if the railway inspectorate made adverse comments on

the singling of any specific double junctions proposed under the north Clyde track improvement and resignalling scheme;

(2) if he will list those double junctions which have been or are to be converted to single lead junctions as part of the north Clyde track improvement and resignalling scheme.

Mr. Freeman: Five junctions were converted as part of this scheme—Bellgrove, Knightswood North, Hyndland North and South, and Westerton. The railway inspectorate discussed the conversions in detail with BR, and in most cases the BR view was accepted but in one case two extra signals were provided and one was moved. Extra controls were added.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport in how many incidents of railway signals being passed at danger in 1990, the signals in question had been repositioned or the track been remodelled less than three months before.

Mr Freeman: Out of 898 incidents on BR in 1990, nine occurred following signalling and/or track alterations.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many incidents of signals being passed at danger each year since 1989 took place on single lead junctions and involved passenger trains.

Mr. Freeman: Seven in 1990, and three in 1991.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many double junctions on British Rail were converted to single lead junctions each year since 1989; and on how many occasions the railway inspectorate approved such conversions.

Mr. Freeman: Three junctions were converted in 1990, and work is in hand to convert four this year. All conversions have been approved by HM railway inspectorate.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if any parts of the railway routes travelled by the trains involved in the Newton, Glasgow rail accident on 21 July had signalling problems as highlighted in the British Rail signal and telecommunications technical investigation report 91019.

Mr. Freeman: No.

Rail Services

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations his Department has received on the allocation of grants to specified rail services; whether he intends to review subsidies with a view to introducing such provision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The Department received representation on this issue from the Central Transport Consultative Committee on 16 July and is considering them.

Departmental Houses, Archway Road

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for the Department of Transport-owned houses in the Archway road area.

Mr. Chope: The Department is required by law to dispose of all its properties in the Archway road area as they are no longer needed for highway purposes. Some vacant commercial properties have already been sold. Options for disposing of the balance of the properties are being explored.

A34

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make a decision about the proposed road improvements to the A34 by junction 13 on the M4 near Chieveley.

Mr. Chope: I hope it will be possible to announce a preferred route for the A34 Chieveley/M4 (junction 13) improvement in the early autumn.

Pleasure Boats (Safety)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the reasons for the delay of five years before pleasure boat operators have to implement his Department's safety guidelines.

Mr. McLoughlin: Consultative documents for new life-saving appliance and survivability standards for small passenger ships have been issued which do not propose a delay for implementation of those standards for five years but put forward "phase-in" proposals over a five-year period. Approximately 1,000 ships and launches will be affected by these proposals. Some ships already comply with the new requirements. To impose a shorter "phase-in" period would not be realistic.

Highway Code

Mr. Jessel: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what requirements apply to drivers of cars on giving way to persons riding bicycles across pedestrian crossings.

Mr. Chope: Drivers are required to give precedence to pedestrians, including those pushing bicycles, on a pedestrian crossing. No specific legal provisions apply in the case where the cyclist has not dismounted: both the driver and cyclist are required to show the same due consideration for other road users as on any other part of the carriageway.

Buses

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his proposals to encourage greater use of buses and further investment in the bus manufacturing industry.

Mr. Freeman: Buses play an invaluable role in transporting large numbers of people going about their daily business. They will continue to be the major form of public transport in most urban areas and their greater use can play a significant part in reducing congestion and improving the environment.

My Department is currently working on new advice to local authorities on a variety of traffic management measures designed to give buses advantage over other traffic. We intend to publish new guidance before the end of the year.

We have recently set up a working group with local authorities and the bus industry to look at ways of encouraging more bus usage. Local authorities have been asked to identify bus priority schemes for credit approvals and we hope to be able to support some measures in 1992-93.

Investment in new buses is a matter for the operators, but it is clearly in their interests to ensure they provide as modern and attractive facilities as possible. London Buses Ltd. plans to spend up to £30 million on bus purchase and bus refurbishment in 1991-92.

Environmental standards for vehicles are of the utmost importance. We have taken the lead in the EC in pressing for tough new emission standards for large diesel-engined vehicles.

We are currently investigating the possibility of improving the in-service checks on smoke emissions and the public are being encouraged to report to the traffic commissioners any heavy vehicles emitting excessive smoke.

We are committed to the creation of a thriving bus industry, with high quality standards, which is capable of meeting the future needs of the travelling public.

Crash Helmets

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will seek information from each other European Community country where crash helmets for motorcyclists are not compulsory about the increase in the number of fatal and serious accidents to motor cyclists exceeding the number in the United Kingdom, on a comparable basis.

Mr. Chope: I will write to my hon. Friend.

London Underground (Safety)

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive a copy of Her Majesty's railway inspectorate's further study of the management of safety on the London Underground.

Mr. Rifkind: Her Majesty's Chief Inspecting Officer of Railways tells me that the report of the further study announced on the 23 May 1989, will be completed within the coming month. I will arrange for a copy of the report, entitled "The Management of Safety on London Underground Ltd.—A Further Study", to be placed in the Library of the House.

Lead-free Petrol

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the amount of lead-free petrol used as a percentage of total petrol consumption in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* each of the other European Community countries.

Mr. Baldry: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside to my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) on 24 July 1991.

ENVIRONMENT

Greenhouse Gases

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress the Government have made since September 1990 in the attempts to secure international action to reduce greenhouse gases; and what action the United Kingdom Government are taking independently to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

Mr. Heseltine: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) on 19 July 1991, columns *375-76*.

Local Government Finance

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list *(a)* the rate support grant, *(b)* the non-domestic rate income and *(c)* the domestic rate income together with the percentages and totals for Tower Hamlets council in each year since 1979.

Mr. Key: No figures are available centrally for rate income for Tower Hamlets council before 1983-84.

	Rate support grant		*Domestic rate income*[1]		*Non-domestic rate income*[2]		*£ million*
		Per cent.		*Per cent.*		*Per cent.*	*Total*
1979-80	33·7	—	—	—	—	—	—
1980-81	36·8	—	—	—	—	—	—
1981-82	31·2	—	—	—	—	—	—
1982-83	28·4	—	—	—	—	—	—
1983-84	24·7	(23)	27·8	(26)	56·4	(52)	108·9
1984-85	23·7	(21)	31·0	(27)	59·9	(52)	114·6
1985-86	21·3	(19)	31·3	(27)	62·3	(54)	114·9
1986-87	56·9	(36)	33·3	(21)	68·9	(43)	159·1
1987-88	61·4	(36)	35·9	(21)	71·1	(42)	168·4
1988-89	61·5	(35)	40·2	(23)	76·0	(43)	177·7
1989-90	77·2	(46)	32·8	(20)	57·6	(34)	167·6

[1]Domestic rates include rebates but are net of domestic rate relief grant.
[2]Non-domestic rates are net of disabled non-domestic relief grant and enterprise zone grant.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a list of the 15 local authorities which have the greatest arrears in collection of *(a)* community charge and *(b)* rents, indicating in each case the political control of the authority.

Mr. Portillo: Local authorities have been asked to report to the Department on their arrears of community charge at 31 March 1991 by 7 August. For details of local authorities' cumulative rent arrears, I refer my hon. Friend to the statement made by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning on 21 February, *Official Report*, column *209*. All the 15 authorities with the highest percentages of arrears outstanding at the end of 1989-90, the latest year for which figures are available, were Labour controlled at that time.

Catalytic Converters

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the price before and after taxation of an average motor car with and without a catalytic converter, with and without automatic transmission for *(a)* cars under 1300 cc, *(b)* cars over 1300 cc and under 2300 cc and *(c)* cars over 2300 cc; and what research he has undertaken into the effect of the extra cost relating to a catalytic converter on potential purchasers.

Mr. Baldry: The information required by my hon. Friend is not available to me. However, the estimated cost of an optional catalytic converter on a new car is approximately £350. The cost of an optional automatic transmission on a new car ranges from approximately £400 to over £800.

Hedgerows

Mr. Robert B. Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the future of hedgerow protection.

Mr. Baldry: In our White Paper, "This Common Inheritance", the Government proposed new measures to give local planning authorities powers to safeguard key hedgerows. Subsequently, we issued a consultation paper —as part of our wider review of tree preservation policies and legislation—which gave further details of our proposals.

As I explained to the House at the Report stage of the Planning and Compensation Bill, responses to the consultation were extensive and raised a range of basic issues. We explored these further in a series of meetings which I held with a number of interested parties during the spring, and have been giving careful attention to the various comments made.

We have concluded that some of the criticisms made of our initial proposals have force; in particular that more comprehensive and systematic arrangements for protecting hedgerows are required; that the mechanics of the proposed new system should be refined; that payments for management should be targeted on hedgerows most likely to benefit, rather than be limited to those under threat of removal, and should reflect a wider range of management options; and that the burden of such payments should not fall on local authorities.

We are therefore proposing measures which will address these criticisms, and now intend to go forward on a somewhat different basis from that set out in our consultation paper.

The revised proposals would consist of two elements: a hedgerow notification scheme and separately administered and funded hedgerow management grants.

The notification scheme would be administered by local planning authorities. It would require those who wish to remove hedgerows—or to reduce them in size beyond dimensions which would be laid down in regulations—to notify their local authority of their intention to do so. If the authority did not respond to the proposal within 28 days of such notification, the owner or occupier would be able to proceed. However, if the authority took the view that the hedgerow was of value for landscape, wildlife or historical reasons it would register it as such and inform the owner or occupier accordingly. Where a hedge was registered, the owner or occupier would be required to retain the hedgerow concerned—and to undertake such work on it only as was consistent with its long-term retention and the maintenance of its amenity value. That would include, for example, trimming as part of normal agricultural operations.

There would be a right of appeal to the Secretary of State against the decision of the local authority concerned to register a hedgerow. It would be open to the appellant to request that the Secretary of State set aside the registration on the grounds that retention of the hedgerow would pose a significant threat to the viability of the farm business.

In the absence of a successful appeal, registration of a hedgerow would confer protection for a period of 10 years. Exemptions would apply for certain contingencies, such as disease, and for minor works such as moving a gateway, and it would be open to the local authority to revoke registration at any time it considered this appropriate.

Removal of a hedgerow without notifying the local authority, removal of a hedgerow following registration, or unauthorised reduction in the size of a hedgerow would all constitute an offence.

The proposed new arrangements therefore offer a comprehensive—but straightforward—means of safeguarding our hedgerow heritage, and I hope they will be widely welcomed.

At the same time we recognise that some farmers may need assistance if they are to maintain or bring our hedgerow stock back into positive management. We are therefore proposing separate arrangements—administered by the Government or their agencies—to offer grants for that purpose aimed at encouraging landowners and farmers to reintroduce environmentally beneficial management, after taking account of existing grants.

Eligible operations would include laying coppicing and —where appropriate—biennial trimming, but not the costs of annual maintenance where this was carried out as part of normal farming operations. In some cases the most environmentally beneficial course of action may be to leave a hedgerow in an unmanaged state for the immediate future.

Separating arrangements for protecting hedgerows from aid for management will ensure that resources are used to best effect and are directed at those hedgerows which will gain most from positive management of this type, having regard to the character of the hedgerow concerned, local custom and practice and the most appropriate cycle of management.

Administering the proposed system of protection separately from aid for management will therefore provide an essential element of flexibility in efforts to conserve this important feature of the countryside.

I intend to make a fuller statement in due course, giving further details of the operation of both schemes. In the meantime, we shall be glad to receive comments from interested parties on our revised proposals, to assist in the process of refining and finalising them. To that end both I and my officials will be pleased to take part in further discussions as appropriate.

So far as Wales is concerned, the Welsh Office proposes to ask the Countryside Council for Wales to explore the possibility of including a hedgerow management grants system as part of its proposals for the countryside stewardship scheme.

These revised proposals fulfil our White Paper commitment, and mark a significant step in the task of

conserving the amenity of our rural areas. Some aspects —in particular the proposed notification procedures—will require primary legislation, and it is our intention to seek to introduce this when parliamentary time permits.

Housing

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many housing starts and completions there were in each quarter of 1990 and in the first two quarters of 1991 in each English standard region.

Mr. Yeo: Figures up to the end of the first quarter of 1991 are in table 1.3 of the March quarter 1991 edition of "Housing & Construction Statistics: Great Britain: Part 1". A copy is in the Library. Corresponding figures for the second quarter of 1991 are not yet available.

Radioactive Materials

Mr. Marland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of occasions in the last 10 years when radioactive sources escaped from the official control regime in the United Kingdom; whether these were reported separately as containing high, medium and low levels of activity, how many mislaid sources reached the metals reclamation industry; and how many prosecutions were instigated.

Mr. Baldry: Any person wishing to keep or use radioactive material in England and Wales must be registered by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960. Control is exercised by the imposition of strict limits and conditions contained in certificates of registration issued by HMIP following careful consideration of the relevant circumstances. One of these conditions requires the user to inform the police and the chief inspector of HMIP without delay if he believes the registered source has been lost or stolen and to take all practical steps to recover the source. All registered users are subject to inspection to ensure that the limits and conditions in certificates are being complied with.

As an indication of the importance attached to the proper regulation of radioactive substances, the Government have recently increased the maximum penalties for offences under the Radioactive Substances Act to include an unlimited fine and imprisonment for five years on indictment.

A small number of lost or stolen sources are notified to HMIP each year and reports on these cases will contain details of the levels of activity involved. All cases are thoroughly investigated by HMIP, which is aware of only one incident where a lost source may have entered the metals reclamation industry. In this case HMIP is currently investigating the circumstances surrounding a quantity of pelletised steel dust contaminated with radioactivity which was shipped from Ireland to Avonmouth in September 1990.

There have been two prosecutions involving lost or stolen sources in the past 10 years. I am satisfied that the Radioactive Substances Act continues to provide a robust control over the use of radioactive materials in this country.

Housing Association Grants

Mr. Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the amount of grant paid and the number of organisations grant-aided under section 50 of the Housing Act 1988 for each financial year since enactment, including the amount available in the current financial year.

Mr. Yeo: The Housing Corporation grant under section 50 of the Housing Act 1988 was as follows:

	£
1989-90	1,220,458,374
1990-91	1,738,092,695
1991-92[1]	2,228,375,000

[1] Provisional.

The total number of housing associations which are paid grants each year is not held by the Department. I have therefore asked the corporation to respond to the hon. Member direct. The subsequent reply will be placed in the Libraries of the House.

Mr. Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the amount of grant paid and the number of organisations grant-aided under section 87 of the Housing Associations Act 1985 for each financial year since enactment, including the amount available in the current financial year.

Mr. Yeo: I believe that the hon. Member is referring to the programme of promotional and advisory grants administered by the Housing Corporation under, principally, section 87 of the Housing Associations Act 1985. The level of the corporation's programme, financed by grant-in-aid from the Department, has been as follows for the years in question:

	£000s
1985-86	342·1
1986-87	509·7
1987-88	472·3
1988-89	586·3
1989-90	1,109·0
1990-91	2,699·5
1991-92	3,702·0

Decisions on the allocation of funds to particular organisations and projects are entirely a matter for the Housing Corporation. I have therefore asked the corporation to write to the hon. Member about the number of organisations which have received grant.

Co-operative Promotion Allowance

Mr. Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the amount of co-operative promotion allowance paid and the number of organisations to which it was paid in each financial year since its introduction, including the amount available in the current financial year.

Mr. Yeo: Co-operative promotion allowance is paid at the discretion of the Housing Corporation from the funds which the Department makes available to support development by housing associations. I have therefore asked the corporation to write to the hon. Member giving the information requested.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on which local authorities have losses arising out of the BCCI closure, including the amounts in each case.

Mr. Key: A number of authorities which had deposits with BCCI have written to the Department. Apart from that, I do not at present have any information beyond that which has appeared in the press.

Catalytic Converters

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of *(a)* the income to the Exchequer and *(b)* the financial benefit to the environment from the sale of catalytic converters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I have been asked to reply.

Catalytic converters will be fitted to virtually all new petrol cars from the end of 1992. They will add to their cost and fuel consumption will increase, but there will be major improvements in local and regional air quality. It is impossible to predict *(a)* the effect these changes will have on revenue to the Exchequer, given the unpredictable nature of the market, and *(b)* the financial benefit to the environment at this time from the sale of these devices, given that many of the factors involved cannot be costed.

Guest Houses

Mr. Bellotti: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to collect statistics on the number of guest houses that provide fewer than six bed spaces per night.

Mr. Key: No.

Mortgage Repossessions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many mortgage repossessions there have been in each county in England and Wales during each of the last 12 months for which records are available; and what were the annual figures for each of the last 12 months.

Mr. Yeo: Figures are not available in the form requested.

The most recent figures published by the Council of Mortgage Lenders show that, for the United Kingdom as a whole, there were 16,560 repossessions in the six months ended 30 June 1990, and 27,330 in the six months ended 31 December 1990. Total repossessions in 1990 affected less than 0·5 per cent. of borrowers.

Aggregates

Mr. Walden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest date by which comments on the recently published aggregates demand forecasts should be submitted to his Department for them to be taken into account in the revision of MPG6.

Mr. Yeo: My Department has not specified any time limit for comments to be made on the forecasts. But to enable views to be taken into account in the preparation of the draft revised quidelines we would welcome comments within the next four months.

Mr. Alan Blumlein

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library a copy of the letter from the Minister of State, Baroness Blatch, on the papers of the late electronics engineer Alan Blumlein.

Mr. Heseltine: These papers are not the Government's responibility, and Baroness Blatch has not written a letter about them.

Property Services Agency

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what impact "Options for Change" will have on the PSA work undertaken for Defence Works Services for the Ministry of Defence in Germany and the United Kingdom.

Mr. Yeo: It is clear that there will be an overall reduction in MOD's requirement for works services as a result of "Options for Change". The consequences for individual locations, and individual suppliers of services such as PSA, have still to be worked out.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what fee value of new business has been started by each of PSA's new business divisions since untying was introduced.

Mr. Yeo: Civil clients untied from PSA for major works from 1 April 1988. All MOD works services and civil minor works and maintenance were untied from 1 April 1990. Since untying PSAS businesses have been successful in winning work with total fee values as follows.

	£ million
PSA Projects	90·9
Building Management	18·7
PSA International	19·0

The figures for building management and PSA International represent the fee value of work either won in competition or through negotiation. The figure for PSA projects represents the fee value of all new projects awarded since 1 April 1988 for civil and wider market clients and since 1 April 1990 for MOD by negotiation or competition.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the projected cost of privatising PSA; and what return is anticipated from the sale of any or all of the business divisions.

Mr. Yeo: The projected cost of preparing PSA for privatisation including the costs of the sales process depends on the strategy adopted. They are commercially sensitive estimates.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether any Crown property will be included in the sale of the PSA businesses as part of the assets of the organisation.

Mr. Yeo: Whether any properties will be sold with parts of PSA will depend on the particular needs of the organisations after privatisation. At the time of the Property Services Agency and Crown Suppliers Bill 17 freehold Crown properties were identified as being potentially transferable with the PSA, if needed. The great majority of existing PSA accommodation is leasehold.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the resignation of the PSA's chief executive.

Mr. Yeo: Mr. Geoffrey Chipperfield, the current chief executive, has not resigned. His predecessor was Mr. Patrick Brown, who transferred on 26 June to become Permanent Secretary of the Department of Transport.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much the Property Services Agency spent on hospitality in the financial years 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Sir George Young: PSA's expenditure on hospitality was as follows:

	£
1989-90	27,107
1990-91	51,268

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many, and at what cost, performance bonuses and merit payments were made to grade 5 and above civil servants in the Property Services Agency for 1989-90.

Mr. Yeo: Three bonus payments totalling £2,800 were made in 1989-90. Merit payments—performance range points—were also made to 16 staff at grade 5 level or above on the basis of their performance in that year. The annual cost of these payments amounted to £25,129 in 1990-91.

Leases

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many statutory tenants there are in houses who are holding over from 14-year leases and with full repairing responsibilities.

Sir George Young: This information is not available.

Redundancy Dowry

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the redundancy dowry, referred to in his oral answer of 10 July, *Official Report*, columns 949-50, will *(a)* fully cover all the redundancy entitlement earned in Government service by the transferred staff and *(b)* be contained within a trust fund or funds fully independent to the purchasers of each business.

Sir George Young: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him yesterday.

Riverside Site, Twickenham

Mr. Jessel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to give his planning decision on the Twickenham riverside site; and if he will inform the hon. Member for Twickenham of his decision no later than he informs the local planning authority and the developers.

Mr. Yeo: The inspector's report on the application by Marks and Spencer plc in relation to the site is currently under consideration and we hope to issue a decision shortly. I can also confirm that the issue of the decision will be co-ordinated, so that notification to the local planning authority, the applicant and the hon. Member for Twickenham are dispatched at the same time.

Rented Housing

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will publish a table showing for each region in England his Department's assessment of the current shortfalls of rented housing in relation to local needs;

(2) what is the deficiency in the quantity of housing available through housing associations and local authorities for rent in each region of England; what research is being carried out by his Department on the deficiency; and when he will report on the findings of such research;

(3) what assumptions about the future rented housing demand he makes in determining the number of homes to be started by housing associations and local authorities each year; and on what factual information he bases those assumptions;

(4) if he intends to prepare and publish a review of projected housing need in relation to this Department's funding of rented housing programmes;

(5) if he will list the allocations his Department has made in 1990-91 and 1991-92 to increase the supply of rented homes in areas where housing shortages exist; the estimated number of additional homes that will result from these allocations and his Department's estimate of the shortages that will remain after these homes have been built;

(6) what steps his Department takes to measure any shortfall between the supply and demand for rented housing provided by housing associations and local authorities each year.

Sir George Young: Estimates of need for subsidised housing are not susceptible to precise quantification, depending as they do both on subjective judgment of what constitutes need, and on factors affecting access to owner occupation, such as interest rates and house prices, which can vary in the short term. We nevertheless take account of indicators of housing need in the allocation of capital resources to housing associations—which are now the main providers of new subsidised housing—and to local authorities. The housing needs indicator, reviewed each year jointly by my Department, the Housing Corporation and the National Federation of Housing Associations, and used in allocation of resources to Housing Corporation regions, incorporates factors such as homelessness, overcrowding, the household-dwelling balance and the accessibility of owner-occupation; allocation of resources to associations within regions is a matter for the Housing Corporation, which takes these and other factors into account. The generalised needs index, used in allocation of resources to local authorities and determined following consultation with the local authority associations, also includes these factors, with a lower weighting because most authorities' capital expenditure is on renovation of their existing stock.

Various projects in the Department's housing research programme are designed to improve our knowledge of housing need. I announced the capital allocations to local authorities for 1991-92 on 13 December, *Official Report*, columns *463-64*, and the regional distribution of the Housing Corporation's approval development programme on 13 February, *Official Report*, columns *470-1*. I shall write to the hon. Member with fuller details of the

composition of the housing needs indicator and the generalised needs index and of the housing research programme.

We have recognised that there are shortages of subsidised rented housing in some areas and we have provided resources for a substantial increase in output by housing associations, from 21,000 in 1989-90 to 40,000 in 1993-94; details are given in my Department's annual report (Cm. 1508), paragraphs 7.35 to 7.38 and figures 70 and 71. Availability of resources for subsidised housing is considered in the public expenditure survey each year.

Birds

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what assumptions he has made about the origin of birds in his calculation of the numbers of captive birds of prey in the United Kingdom;

(2) what proportion of captive birds of prey in the United Kingdom were *(a)* bred in captivity, *(b)* illegally imported and *(c)* taken unlawfully from the wild.

Mr. Baldry: Section 7 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act requires that all captive birds of the species listed in schedule 4 are registered with my Department. A prerequisite of registration is the provision of details of the origin of the bird. Over 75 per cent. of registered captive birds of prey were bred in captivity. Evidence that birds may have been illegally imported or taken unlawfully from the wild is passed to the enforcement authorities. No estimate is available of unregistered birds illegally held.

Bottles

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will consult his counterparts in Sweden, Denmark and Germany to seek information on the ways in which they have encouraged the use of returnable, refillable bottles for drinks which are on sale in shops; and if he will investigate the feasibility of introducing such measures in the United Kingdom;

(2) if he will make it his policy to persuade supermarkets to make greater use of refillable containers when selling drinks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The Government's White Paper on the Environment, "This Common Inheritance", stated that encouraging the re-use or recycling of materials was a priority. The Government recognise that the use of refillable beverage containers can make environmental and economic sense in certain circumstance. The White Paper also recognised that policies should be based on the best scientific and economic information. The Government have therefore commissioned a study by consultants of the implications of a deposit refund scheme for beverage containers. This includes studies of schemes in place in other countries.

Written Questions

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many parliamentary questions for written answer have been answered by his Department so far this Session, and in the comparable period for the last Session; and if he will publish a table of how many answers *(a)* do not give the information requested because of (i) disproportionate cost or (ii) other reasons, *(b)* give an undertaking to write to the hon. Member who asked the question and *(c)* were referred for answer to the chief executive of each next steps agency.

Mr. Heseltine: So far in this Session my Department has answered 2,899 written parliamentary questions. The figure for the comparable period in the last Session is 4,156. The other information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Non-domestic Rate

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish his best estimate of the actual total yield from the national non-domestic rate in *(a)* 1990-91 and *(b)* 1991-92.

Mr. Portillo: We currently estimate that the non-domestic rate yield in England will be about £11 billion for 1990-91 and £12·2 billion for 1991-92.

Local Government Boundary Commission

Mr. Jessel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the reports of the Local Government Boundary Commission covering Greater London and Surrey to be published.

Mr. Key: The commission has issued three sets of draft proposals which concern the Greater London/Surrey boundary. Public responses have been received and are being considered by the commission, after which it will submit reports to my right hon. Friend.

Red Squirrel

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action is being taken to prevent the further decline and regional extinction of the red squirrel from those areas of England which it was known to occupy 10 years ago.

Mr. Baldry: Under schedule 5 to the Wildlife and Countryside Act, the red squirrel is fully protected throughout Britain against killing, injuring, taking and selling. There are projects being carried out in various parts of England to determine the population dynamics of the red squirrel for conservation management purposes. Several of these projects receive support from public sources, and the results should assist the efforts being made by English Nature and others to conserve the species.

Eco-labelling

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make it his policy that eco-labelling should start with raw materials rather than at the stage of manufacture.

Mr. Baldry: The Government are already committed to awarding eco-labels to products on the basis of the impact they have on the environment from the cradle to the grave. Analysis of the cradle stage will cover raw materials.

Pesticides

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce regulations requiring local authorities to provide warnings by notice or broadcast in the areas concerned that pesticide spraying is to take place.

Mr. Baldry: Under the Control of Pesticides Regulations, all pesticide products must be approved by Ministers of six Government Departments, including my own, before they can be sold, supplied, stored, used or advertised. Appropriate conditions are attached to the approvals which, if followed, will ensure safe use of the pesticide. For example, some pesticides have specified re-entry times before which members of the public, or other unprotected individuals, should not be allowed access to treated areas.

In addition to the specific controls through the approvals scheme, there are more general controls through the consents of the regulations. It is, for example, a requirement that the users of pesticides take all reasonable precautions to protect the health of human beings. This is not specified in a precise way because the user is best able to judge what is needed in the specific circumstances of his particular pesticide use. In some cases warning notices may be appropriate; in others they may be unnecessary, in yet others they may be inadequate if used alone.

I am not aware of any considerations that would justify another layer of control of the kind suggested.

Radon Gas

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research has been undertaken into the effectiveness of the removal of radon gas from newly constructed dwellings; and if he will outline the results of the research.

Mr. Yeo: The Building Research Establishment is undertaking research into the practical building problems and the effectiveness of measures to combat radon gas in newly constructed dwellings. The findings of the research are being taken into account in revised guidance to support the Building Regulations, but final results will not be available until next year.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what evidence he has relating to the effect of radon gas on the life expectancy of people living in and around Dartmoor.

Mr. Baldry: The evidence for the health effects of radon gas in Dartmoor and elsewhere is provided by the National Radiological Protection Board. In particular, I refer my hon. Friend to the "Documents of the NRPB", Vol. I, Nos. 1 and 4, 1990, copies of which are in the Library of the House.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the new maps being prepared by his Department indicating where radon is to be found at its highest levels.

Mr. Baldry: Yes.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will outline the research evidence lying behind the setting of an advisory level of 200 becquerels in newly constructed dwellings.

Mr. Baldry: The research evidence requested is set out in the National Radiological Protection Board publication "Documents of the NRPB", volume I, No. 1, 1990. Copies were placed in the Library on publication.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what method of site inspection he proposes to introduce to discover *(a)* whether radon is present, *(b)* in what quantities and *(c)* whether it is potentially dangerous to health.

Mr. Baldry: My Department funds the National Radiological Protection Board to carry out free surveys of the levels of radon in houses using passive etched-track detectors over a period of at least three months. The NRPB advises the householder of the danger to health according to the recorded radon level. There is no reliable method of predicting radon levels from site measurements before house construction.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what proposals he has to introduce under section C2 of the Building Regulations 1985 mandatory requirements for methods of construction so as to prevent the entry of radon gas into newly constructed dwellings;

(2) what advice he is giving building control officers with regard to the reduction of radon gas to less than 200 becquerels.

Mr. Yeo: Regulation C2 of the Building Regulations 1985 requires precautions to be taken to avoid danger to health caused by substances found on or in the ground to be covered by the building. Interim guidance relating to radon was produced in June 1988 to support this requirement. A revised approved document for part C which specifically refers to radon will be published later this year, and this will be supported by more detailed guidance on methods of construction to limit the entry of radon gas into newly constructed dwellings.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average annual dose of radon received by people in the United Kingdom, expressed in terms of milliSieverts; and what is the average in Devon.

Mr. Baldry: The average annual dose of radon received by people in the United Kingdom is 1 milliSievert effective dose equivalent. In Devon, the annual average dose is 3·5 milliSieverts.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the migration of uranium daughter radionuclides in natural sediments; and to what extent there are similar elements with regard to radon gases in rock formations.

Mr. Baldry: The solid radioactive species in the uranium decay series do not migrate in dry rock formations. However, radon, which is a noble gas, readily migrates through fissured rocks, soils and sediments.

Clean Council Campaign

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has received a copy of the Friends of the Earth's clean council campaign; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I am not aware of any such campaign.

Housing (Public Health)

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received the document "Housing or Homelessness: a Public Health Perspective," published by the Faculty of Public Health Medicine; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: My Department received this report in May. It raises matters of interest to the Department of Health as well as to my Department. We will give careful consideration to its recommendations.

Community Charge

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received seeking the introduction of a 100 per cent. rebate for the community charge for income support claimants from April 1992.

Mr. Key: We have received a number of representations in support of 100 per cent. rebates.

Mineral Planning Guidance

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to revise Mineral Planning Guidance note No. 3; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The Government have no immediate plans to revise the guidelines in MPG3, but we are continuing to monitor their use. Officials will be discussing their effectiveness with representatives of the industry and the local authorities later in the year.

Direct Labour Organisations

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what provision there is for local authorities to privatise their direct labour organisations.

Mr. Key: There is no reason why a local authority which wishes to privatise its direct labour organisation should not do so. Direct labour organisations are in any case subject to compulsory competitive tendering under the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980 and the Local Government Act 1988. My right hon. Friend is currently considering the scope for extending the list of services subject to competition.

Planning Inspectorate

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the planning inspectorate will become an executive agency under the next steps initiative.

Sir George Young: We intend to launch the Planning Inspectorate executive agency on 1 April 1992.

A main aim of the new agency will be to maintain the high quality of the planning inspectorate's work in relation to planning appeals and its other responsibilities. Inspectors' recommendations and decisions on planning cases will continue to be made by reference to statutory requirements and the Government's policy guidance. Their independence will not be impaired. Agency status will define more sharply the objectives which the inspectorate aims to achieve, and the greater management flexibility which it permits will promote greater efficiency.

The relationship between Ministers and the agency's chief executive, who will also be the chief planning inspector, will be set out in a framework document, which is now being prepared. The chief executive's post will be subject to open competition.

Unleaded Petrol

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of petrol sales in the United Kingdom now consist of unleaded petrol

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 24 July 1991]:* I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside to my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) on 24 July 1991.

Thorne Moor

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether planning consents for peat digging on Thorne Moor near Doncaster have been reviewed under the Mineral Act 1981;

(2) what proportion of Thorne Moor has planning permission for peat extraction; and what restoration of those areas subject to extraction has taken place.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 5 July 1991]:* I shall write to the hon. Member.

European Commission

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to estimate the future cost to British business of each of the European Commission's environmental proposals currently under consideration.

Mr. Baldry: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Biodiversity

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress the Government have made since September 1990 in implementing their intended five-point plan for major studies on the status of the world's biodiversity.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Member is referring to the five-point plan described on page 52 of the environment White Paper.

The first of the five points relates to the financing of a major study on the status of the world's biological diversity. This study is being carried out by the world conservation monitoring centre, Cambridge and is expected to be completed by the middle of next year. The other studies referred to in the White Paper have already been completed. They are summarised in the booklet entitled "Biological Diversity and Developing Countries: Issues and Options". This was published by the Overseas Development Administration last month. A copy is in the House of Commons Library.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the total amount of housing benefit reimbursed *(a)* to local authorities and *(b)* private

tenants in each financial year in (i) England and (ii) Great Britain in respect of rebates granted to council tenants since the beginning of the scheme;

(2) what is the total amount of housing benefit in each financial year paid by local authorities in *(a)* England and *(b)* Great Britain to council tenants since the scheme began;

(3) what is the total Government expenditure on housing benefit on a financial year basis in *(a)* England and *(b)* Great Britain.

Mr. Yeo: I will write to the hon. Gentleman.

Environmental Challenges

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what contributions the Government have made either independently or through the European Community to help central and eastern Europe cope with environmental challenges since September 1990; and if he will make a statement.

(2) in what specific ways since September 1990 the Government have now established a strict environmental regime for waste disposal in order to minimise the production of waste.

Mr. Heseltine: I will write to the hon. Member.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Immigration Appeals

Mr. Darling: To ask the Attorney-General what is the average delay between the hearing of an immigration appeal by an adjudicator and the dispatch of the determination to the appellant or his or her authorised representative, listed by each immigration appeals hearing centre.

The Attorney-General: The immigration appellate authorities do not record detailed statistics on the average delay at each hearing centre between the hearing of an immigration appeal by an adjudicator and the dispatch of the determination to the appellant or his or her authorised representative. However, it is possible to provide the following estimates:

	Weeks
Thanet House, London	4-7
Harmondsworth[1]	4-8
Birmingham	4-8
Leeds[2]	4-5
Manchester	4-7

[1] Includes Cardiff and Belfast.
[2] Includes Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Attorney-General what is the average delay, listed by each immigration appeals hearing centre, between receiving the explanatory statement and other papers about a case *(a)* from a British post overseas and *(b)* from the Home Office sending these papers out to the appellant or his or her authorised representative.

The Attorney-General: Upon receipt of an explanatory statement and other papers about an appeal from a British post overseas the immigration appellate authorities are able to dispatch copies of the case papers to the parties' representative in this country within one week for cases to be heard at Thanet house in London and two to three weeks for cases to be heard at the IAA's regional hearing centres.

In Home Office cases, copies of the case papers are sent to the appellant or their representatives when the appeal is set down for hearing. For all the IAA's hearing centres, this is usually within four to five weeks of the IAA receiving the explanatory statement from the Home Office.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Attorney-General if he will provide a table of the number of appeals to the immigration appeal tribunal allowed and dismissed in 1990 and the first quarter of 1991.

The Attorney-General: The information requested is set out in the table.

	Allowed	*Remitted*[1]	*Dismissed*
Appeals heard 1990	171	225	260
Appeals heard January-March 1991	23	50	77

[1] For re-hearing before an immigration adjudicator

Mr. Darling: To ask the Attorney-General if he will provide a table showing the number of appeals to immigration adjudicators allowed and dismissed in 1990 and the first quarter of 1991 broken down according to the nationality of the appellant and the type of decision appealed against.

The Attorney-General: The information is not readily available in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. The number of appeals to immigration adjudicators allowed and dismissed in 1990 and the first quarter of 1991 broken down according to the type of decision appealed against is given in the table.

Type of decision	*1990*		*January to March 1991*	
	Appeals allowed	*Appeals dismissed*	*Appeals allowed*	*Appeals dismissed*
Exclusion—Appeal at Port	29	174	2	77
Exclusion—External Appeals	57	997	24	460
Refusal of Certificate Entitlement	37	152	15	72
Refusal of Entry Clearance for Temporary purposes (NOT HUSBANDS or WIVES or FIANCES or FIANCEES)	1,100	3,544	324	1,593
Refusal of Entry Clearance for Employment, Business or Independent Means (NOT HUSBANDS, WIVES, FIANCES or FIANCEES)	9	18	5	19
Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by WIVES and CHILDREN, other dependent relatives and returning residents.	611	829	110	285
Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by female fiancees	10	31	5	2
Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by husbands	530	835	128	333
Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by male fiances	293	468	82	150

Type of decision	1990 Appeals allowed	1990 Appeals dismissed	January to March 1991 Appeals allowed	January to March 1991 Appeals dismissed
Variation of Landing Conditions (including curtailment of stay or duration or conditions of leave to remain given to persons previously exempted (S. 14(2)).	21	88	1	16
Refusal to Vary Leave to Enter	130	2,951	70	1,636
Decision to make Deportation Order	36	620	9	174
Refusal to revoke Deportation Order	4	17	0	5
Giving of Removal Directions	3	53	0	6
Destination Only Appeal	0	0	0	0
Total	2,870	10,777	775	4,828

Menwith Hill Byelaws

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Attorney-General what has been the cost of bringing prosecutions under the Menwith Hill Military Lands Byelaws in each year since the byelaws came into force.

The Attorney-General: More than 100 prosecutions have been brought under the Menwith Hill Military Lands Byelaws since 1986 when the byelaws came into force. It is not possible to identify the individual cost each year of these cases.

Correspondence

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Attorney-General if he will arrange to have printed in the *Official Report* a copy of the letter dated 4 July, reference C91//232/8 from the Lord Chancellor to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East.

The Attorney-General: No, but arrangements have been made to place copies of the letter in the Libraries of both Houses.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to the letter from the Lord Chancellor to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East of 4 July, reference C91/232/8, if he will list those debt-related proceedings which involve a risk of imprisonment.

The Attorney-General: The debt-related proceedings for which the Lord Chancellor has responsibility which involve a risk of imprisonment are as follows:

1. Oral Examination.
2. Attachment of Earnings.
3. Rescue of goods seized in execution.
4. Judgment summons.

There are other debt proceedings which are dealt with in the magistrates' courts which involve a risk of imprisonment. As such, these are the responsibility of the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

Asylum and Immigration Service

Mr. Janner: To ask the Attorney-General what the latest available annual figures are for *(a)* how much was spent on legal aid for asylum and immigration advice, *(b)* what proportion the above amount represents in terms of the entire legal aid budget, *(c)* what proportion of the above amount involved less than two hours advice and *(d)* what proportion of the above amount involved more than two hours advice.

The Attorney-General: Separate information is not available for the cost of legal advice for immigration or asylum cases. However, £2,652,727 was paid under the legal aid green form scheme for all immigration and nationality advice and assistance in the financial year 1990-91. This represented approximately 0·4 per cent. of the total payments made out of the legal aid fund during that period, or 3 per cent. of the total spent on the legal aid green form scheme. Information is not available on the proportion of payments for work involving more or less than two hours advice. Legal aid is also available for judicial review proceedings concerning immigration and asylum cases, but separate figures for the amount spent are not available.

Industrial Injuries

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Attorney-General what information is held on, or estimate made of, the number of successful claims and the total and average amounts of compensation awarded by courts or settled out of court in respect of industrial injuries during each of the last 10 years, based on the date of the injury, both in cash terms and adjusted to take account of inflation.

The Attorney-General: Information is not collected in the form requested.

Information on personal injury at work cases dealt with in the Queen's Bench division of the High Court has been collected on a sample basis for two months each year since 1986. The results of this exercise are as follows:

Personal injury at work cases dealt with in the Queen's Bench division in the two months sampled

	Number of claims	Number awarded to plaintiff	Amount awarded £	Amount awarded per case £
1986	340	96	1,904,364	19,837
1987	424	161	4,353,809	27,042
1988	566	190	4,990,737	26,267
1989	629	153	5,984,239	39,113
1990	546	115	6,249,586	54,344

Maguire Judgment

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Attorney-General if he will arrange for a copy of the Maguire judgment to be placed in the House of Commons Library.

The Attorney-General: Further to my reply of 2 July 1991, I have today placed in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament copies of the judgment of the Court of Appeal in the Maguire case.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Correspondence

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to provide a substantive reply to the letter dated 15 April from the hon. Member for Woolwich about pressures on teachers, which was acknowledged on 16 April (reference TE/0511/1010).

Mr. Eggar: I have written to the hon. Member today.

Football

Mr. Bellotti: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will invite the Football Association and the Football League and Professional Footballers Association to discuss the problems smaller clubs face in the league with regard to losing their right to gain promotion and a place in the highest league.

Mr. Atkins: The promotion arrangements for any proposed new structure for football are a matter for the football authorities.

Recreation and Leisure Courses

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the future of recreation and leisure courses following the publication of the White Paper "Education and Training for the 21st Century".

Mr. Eggar: The duty to secure adequate provision of recreational and leisure education for adults will remain with local education authorities. It will be for authorities, as now, to determine their expenditure across the services for which they are responsible.

Science Services

Dr. Bray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how many staff work in his Department's science section; and what is the distribution of their grades;

(2) what are the annual running costs of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils.

Mr. Eggar: There are 36·3 full-time equivalent staff in the Department's science branch in the following grades:

	Number
Grade 3	1
Grade 5	2
Grade 6	1
Grade 7[1]	8
SEO	2
HEO(D) (accountant)	1
HEO	7
Senior personal secretary	1
Administration trainee	1
EO	4
Personal secretaries	3
AO	3·5
AA	0·8
Typist	1

[1] Grade 7 is seconded to the Link secretariat at the Department of Trade and Industry.

In 1990-91 the net running costs of the Department's science branch amounted to about £767,000 excluding accommodation costs and certain centrally provided services.

Dr. Bray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how many staff work for the Advisory Board for the Research Councils; and what is the distribution of their grades;

(2) what are the annual running costs of his Department's science section.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The advisory board's secretariat currently consists of the following staff:

	Number
Grade 5	1
Grade 7	2
HEO	1
EO	1
Personal secretaries	2
AO	0·5
AA	0·2

and there is one grade 7 vacancy.

The ABRC's running costs in 1990-91 totalled £498,000, including the costs of commissioned studies but

Funding Councils

Dr. Bray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many staff in his Department's further and higher education 1 section work on the distribution of funds for science by the Polytechnics and Colleges and Universities Funding Councils.

Mr. Alan Howarth: About five staff are concerned with policy for the distribution of funds for research by the two councils, alongside other work.

Youth Clubs

Mr. Bellotti: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has on the number of secondary school pupils per youth worker/club leader for each local authority from 1979 to 1991.

Mr. Atkins: Data are shown in the table for individual local education authorities from 1979-80 to 1989-90. Data are not available for 1990-91.

Number of secondary pupils per youth worker/club leader by LEA

	1989-90	*1988-89*	*1987-88*	*1986-87*	*1985-86*	*1984-85*	*1983-84*	*1982-83*	*1981-82*	*1980-81*	*1979-80*
Outer London boroughs											
301 Barking	829	541	980	1,023	1,168	1,110	1,131	487	705	599	623
302 Barnet	731	1,365	—	1,171	1,133	1,176	1,155	515	971	389	416
303 Bexley	—	408	417	464	485	367	1,204	562	1,336	619	1,629
304 Brent	573	145	161	171	203	138	146	141	374	317	335
305 Bromley	502	515	627	735	774	804	914	1,905	1,800	1,858	1,527
306 Croydon	—	—	500	561	598	876	974	1,162	841	912	1,183

	1989-90	1988-89	1987-88	1986-87	1985-86	1984-85	1983-84	1982-83	1981-82	1980-81	1979-80
307 Ealing	—	—	—	4,370	922	1,172	1,147	1,159	1,037	946	1,281
308 Enfield	533	991	1,041	1,089	1,398	1,746	1,993	2,127	1,910	1,449	1,464
309 Haringey	—	—	—	75	118	141	154	199	257	1,150	1,579
310 Harrow	419	423	427	543	556	569	563	573	598	614	1,321
311 Havering	1,147	1,204	1,217	1,281	1,155	1,132	995	1,030	1,023	1,434	1,560
312 Hillingdon	565	785	828	845	—	712	665	723	797	679	666
313 Hounslow	—	1,045	880	927	957	830	771	788	809	819	820
314 Kingston	—	360	377	389	410	441	451	465	465	528	643
315 Merton	3,736	167	1,764	—	1,106	1,180	998	1,165	1,215	1,006	868
316 Newham	—	624	2,277	1,025	1,148	1,220	1,262	1,307	1,179	1,638	1,567
317 Redbridge	318	309	1,474	917	941	981	1,013	827	485	498	508
318 Richmond	614	743	1,130	1,150	1,135	1,127	973	688	1,179	1,057	1,089
319 Sutton	1,275	1,302	1,361	1,245	1,295	664	688	705	721	1,482	1,503
320 Waltham Forest	383	411	415	481	532	577	641	665	754	768	815
Total Outer London Boroughs	632	463	657	544	591	568	619	594	761	756	855
427 ILEA	110	—	66	—	283	86	94	101	248	260	305
Total Greater London	225	463	171	769	443	212	230	237	463	472	541
Metropolitan Districts											
West Midlands											
330 Birmingham	877	1,070	—	1,603	640	708	690	808	807	863	754
331 Coventry	299	798	1,083	1,039	905	984	1,032	1,333	2,714	1,213	810
332 Dudley	603	597	502	922	1,062	1,379	2,154	686	1,585	812	826
333 Sandwell	961	478	596	640	702	747	784	892	932	1,606	1,590
334 Solihull	838	878	756	797	838	881	910	751	747	652	665
335 Walsall	148	153	164	203	234	255	273	326	335	339	347
336 Wolverhampton	246	631	1,088	1,188	1,832	1,923	2,045	3,257	757	825	831
Total West Midlands	427	530	716	725	621	681	717	759	787	768	733
Merseyside											
340 Knowsley	244	360	542	1,088	1,775	2,818	1,876	1,960	2,063	2,183	2,341
341 Liverpool	699	1,827	368	—	—	—	286	387	1,523	1,647	2,160
342 St. Helens	—	—	—	1,510	1,985	2,065	2,138	2,160	2,126	4,323	5,748
343 Sefton	874	898	577	1,525	1,880	1,676	1,898	1,950	1,947	6,667	5,476
344 Wirral	943	443	559	448	1,287	1,337	1,369	1,524	1,638	2,121	1,918
Total Merseyside	641	822	548	820	1,640	1,719	653	824	1,747	2,383	2,644
Greater Manchester											
350 Bolton	8,841	1,048	863	797	842	879	878	966	974	1,122	989
351 Bury	265	259	348	349	710	597	768	495	1,047	517	1,056
352 Manchester	—	—	406	442	450	515	292	292	290	289	415
353 Oldham	706	538	576	785	860	892	707	719	710	626	605
354 Rochdale	535	218	407	547	551	681	631	688	1,314	769	776
355 Salford	1,225	1,424	1,533	1,670	2,205	2,101	1,430	1,539	1,612	1,546	1,856
356 Stockport	2,580	452	455	536	3,059	3,228	7,868	681	847	874	674
357 Tameside	767	676	651	718	825	1,433	845	1,227	549	688	1,539
358 Trafford	229	253	277	472	479	2,142	504	865	1,057	675	1,526
359 Wigan	—	—	892	1,329	1,800	1,776	844	2,683	962	773	765
Total Greater Manchester	657	427	521	629	807	986	662	680	672	608	760
South Yorkshire											
370 Barnsley	92	1,453	1,565	1,720	1,821	1,751	467	946	974	982	890
371 Doncaster	209	219	286	390	530	487	507	408	1,153	955	967
372 Rotherham	800	822	—	321	376	357	367	371	369	363	373
373 Sheffield	754	1,176	695	799	—	1,095	1,907	513	539	551	586
Total South Yorkshire	250	541	523	535	565	653	612	486	606	594	607
West Yorkshire											
380 Bradford	335	—	495	493	560	635	576	621	682	627	603
381 Calderdale	301	418	794	879	921	946	575	520	538	412	356
382 Kirklees	498	1,517	1,656	1,911	1,931	1,990	1,695	1,005	2,017	1,690	503
383 Leeds	—	704	712	752	1,058	449	598	577	630	632	595
384 Wakefield	—	—	—	1,155	1,241	1,124	1,190	1,225	1,140	896	583
Total West Yorkshire	595	756	704	780	931	683	722	694	785	709	628
Tyne and Wear											
390 Gateshead	266	294	6,751	1,425	2,955	2,182	575	587	616	781	799
391 Newcastle upon Tyne	246	379	313	467	621	519	655	676	325	333	329
392 North Tyneside	1,211	447	444	578	604	773	762	947	973	987	877
393 South Tyneside	338	361	530	561	595	637	233	275	271	320	327
394 Sunderland	431	437	432	489	564	1,546	644	726	1,539	1,749	1,580
Total Tyne and Wear	365	383	484	575	687	866	525	588	537	588	574

	1989-90	1988-89	1987-88	1986-87	1985-86	1984-85	1983-84	1982-83	1981-82	1980-81	1979-80
Total Metropolitan districts	455	536	588	672	769	796	661	673	752	732	750
Non Metropolitan counties											
901 Avon	306	262	1,009	1,065	1,300	1,349	1,431	1,459	1,760	1,356	1,408
902 Bedfordshire	1,884	620	661	764	816	1,096	897	872	896	929	928
903 Berkshire	690	707	735	814	851	860	927	973	1,010	1,092	1,108
904 Buckinghamshire	450	701	390	409	447	463	516	625	878	542	510
905 Cambridgeshire	1,160	1,180	1,224	1,433	1,457	520	527	526	681	606	636
906 Cheshire	1,002	521	611	650	730	1,455	1,489	1,543	1,485	799	800
907 Cleveland	339	337	369	374	413	428	436	443	509	349	352
908 Cornwall	1,162	2,098	2,552	2,655	3,235	4,123	4,139	4,140	4,757	4,784	4,768
909 Cumbria	1,658	1,739	1,576	—	907	949	908	1,156	1,650	1,929	1,853
910 Derbyshire	491	254	272	524	551	681	773	838	1,206	1,243	1,331
911 Devon	706	768	801	868	994	1,004	1,068	1,061	1,103	1,094	1,071
912 Dorset	710	681	736	592	615	673	1,156	1,013	986	993	961
913 Durham	201	308	329	371	411	1,743	1,765	1,847	2,961	2,334	3,050
914 East Sussex	926	1,041	1,163	2,244	2,175	1,488	1,585	1,837	1,631	922	1,395
915 Essex	1,494	1,639	1,708	1,794	1,911	1,977	2,080	2,058	1,787	1,707	1,191
916 Gloucestershire	414	441	1,014	1,063	579	604	622	618	622	592	598
917 Hampshire	1,261	1,539	1,644	1,798	1,875	780	905	845	976	1,017	854
918 Hereford and Worcester	929	980	1,062	1,219	1,251	1,395	1,500	2,031	2,262	2,360	2,327
919 Hertfordshire	979	969	1,013	1,057	1,109	1,153	1,189	1,238	967	1,278	1,243
920 Humberside	755	834	926	1,269	1,372	411	417	421	1,492	1,501	88
921 Isle of Wight	442	440	514	525	602	614	720	692	669	871	814
922 Kent	2,302	2,395	2,816	3,321	3,339	3,654	3,915	3,537	4,011	3,795	3,793
923 Lancashire	321	340	386	411	704	740	899	764	829	577	576
924 Leicestershire	278	302	303	383	447	560	640	798	828	889	780
925 Lincolnshire	453	502	529	559	586	657	635	1,123	1,154	872	846
926 Norfolk	1,088	1,143	1,355	1,399	812	846	859	914	953	967	896
928 Northamptonshire	1,203	973	988	1,038	3,731	566	664	730	874	830	1,417
929 Northumberland	708	897	934	941	1,154	1,194	1,228	1,276	875	886	561
927 North Yorkshire	475	516	514	551	697	621	687	717	1,111	955	1,047
930 Nottinghamshire	236	255	283	312	317	283	499	508	652	669	640
931 Oxfordshire	679	688	695	941	4,373	621	1,040	1,069	1,053	1,012	1,032
932 Salop	430	496	563	614	672	709	792	843	1,077	1,047	950
933 Somerset	480	490	507	557	575	1,679	2,034	2,747	2,755	3,025	2,337
934 Staffordshire	1,400	1,440	1,265	1,053	582	481	403	2,819	2,656	2,708	2,628
935 Suffolk	914	736	756	761	707	600	610	630	684	670	702
936 Surrey	828	948	1,075	1,209	1,292	1,210	1,278	1,272	761	965	962
937 Warwickshire	313	382	432	476	597	658	133	1,203	1,257	1,311	1,325
938 West Sussex	568	586	715	750	856	1,999	2,063	1,263	961	881	885
939 Wiltshire	733	770	447	497	527	540	570	675	601	504	478
Total non-metropolitan counties	594	596	662	753	803	768	791	959	1,085	990	966
Total England	483	568	491	733	727	588	588	646	845	803	819
Welsh counties											
Clwyd	532	557	616	671	761	477	525	544	524	537	515
Dyfed	2,612	2,582	2,662	2,777	2,869	2,210	2,203	2,280	1,951	1,826	1,731
Gwent	1,370	1,540	1,831	1,739	901	1,028	1,103	674	946	466	475
Gwynedd	626	675	835	772	839	932	947	941	1,073	913	955
Mid Glamorgan	—	525	639	1,129	1,176	1,207	1,458	1,154	1,161	1,121	1,044
Powys	399	391	397	414	426	391	348	347	763	765	416
South Glamorgan	650	627	288	308	446	487	588	601	631	599	652
West Glamorgan	1,619	1,715	1,811	1,811	1,895	1,974	1,189	453	547	395	400
Total Welsh Counties	843	768	707	807	878	830	874	703	803	648	634
All shire counties	608	609	666	758	810	773	798	927	1,051	943	920
Total England and Wales	494	578	501	737	735	599	599	649	842	791	805

Adult Education

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) of 16 July, *Official Report*, column *160*, whether that adult education work which is undertaken in conjunction with *(a)* health authorities and *(b)* social services departments and which is to assist people in, or leaving, residential care, to facilitate independent living, will come within the duties of the further education funding councils or of local education authorities.

Mr. Eggar: We are currently considering the responses to the proposals set out in the White Paper. We intend to ensure that the legislation makes clear the division of

responsibilities between the further education funding councils and local education authorities within the new structure for further education.

Youth Service

Mr. Bellotti: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will give the actual expenditure on youth service for each local authority since 1979;

(2) if he will give the expenditure on youth services per local education authority secondary school pupil for each local authority from 1979 to 1991;

(3) if he will give the percentage of actual expenditure on youth service against grant-related expenditure assessment and standard spending assessment for the years since 1979 broken down for each local education authority.

Mr. Atkins: The readily available information is shown in the tables. The latest year for which information on actual expenditure is available is 1988-89. Information for years before 1987-88 could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Table 1
Expenditure on the Youth Service, 1987-88

Local education authority	*Net recurrent expenditure*[1]	*Net recurrent expenditure*[1] *per secondary pupil*[2]	*Actual expenditure as percentage of GREA for youth and related services*
	£000	*£*	*Per cent.*
Barking	628	67	97
Barnet	970	54	72
Bexley	783	52	101
Brent	3,625	306	213
Bromley	825	47	82
Croydon	840	71	58
Ealing	[3]n/a	n/a	n/a
Enfield	687	75	58
Haringey	n/a	n/a	n/a
Harrow	621	36	73
Havering	704	52	86
Hillingdon	714	52	81
Hounslow	727	57	73
Kingston-upon-Thames	572	75	130
Merton	376	32	57
Newham	911	66	60
Redbridge	877	65	94
Richmond-upon-Thames	387	57	74
Sutton	479	44	85
Waltham Forest	1,286	102	108
ILEA	30,535	282	225
Birmingham	4,197	61	68
Coventry	906	44	55
Dudley	836	46	73
Sandwell	657	31	39
Solihull	386	25	49
Walsall	1,956	93	154
Wolverhampton	876	50	55
Knowsley	488	45	52
Liverpool	2,101	66	89
St. Helens	0	0	0
Sefton	609	30	54
Wirral	1,025	45	78
Bolton	921	48	76
Bury	872	77	134
Manchester	2,235	83	87
Oldham	630	40	61
Rochdale	1,320	83	134
Salford	516	34	48
Stockport	786	40	79
Tameside	1,039	68	120
Trafford	569	46	67
Wigan	819	34	69
Barnsley	519	32	61
Doncaster	1,366	62	117
Rotherham	889	45	86
Sheffield	n/a	n/a	n/a
Bradford	2,827	65	108
Calderdale	930	68	113
Kirklees	1,325	46	72
Leeds	2,592	46	87
Wakefield	678	30	57
Gateshead	795	61	102
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	1,155	65	103
North Tyneside	512	34	76
South Tyneside	1,549	152	242
Sunderland	733	35	60
Avon	4,017	70	124
Bedfordshire	1,058	24	47
Berkshire	n/a	n/a	n/a
Buckinghamshire	2,188	62	95
Cambridgeshire	1,626	39	69
Cheshire	1,739	25	49
Cleveland	2,347	55	91
Cornwall	533	17	37
Cumbria	1,256	37	78
Derbyshire	4,522	72	133
Devon	2,611	44	82
Dorset	1,459	36	76
Durham	1,105	27	49
East Sussex	981	27	47
Essex	3,389	32	67
Gloucestershire	1,699	49	93
Hampshire	2,857	32	52
Hereford and Worcester	1,193	24	51
Hertfordshire	2,441	35	70
Humberside	3,178	47	93
Isle of Wight	418	41	112
Kent	2,291	22	42
Lancashire	4,052	44	72
Leicestershire	2,615	41	70
Lincolnshire	1,014	26	51
Norfolk	1,603	37	67
North Yorkshire	1,410	30	62
Northamptonshire	1,609	35	75
Northumberland	698	25	71
Nottinghamshire	4,630	67	114
Oxfordshire	1,101	31	52
Salop	1,587	53	103
Somerset	1,927	65	127
Staffordshire	2,421	32	66
Suffolk	1,966	41	92
Surrey	2,073	43	61
Warwickshire	1,436	51	77
West Sussex	1,394	34	67
Wiltshire	1,499	42	73
England Totals/ averages	161,470	53	87

[1] Gross expenditure excluding financing costs of capital expenditure, less income other than specific grant income. Derived from local authorities' spending returns to the Department of the Environment.

[2] Derived from local authorities' returns of their pupil numbers to the Department of Education and Science.

[3] n/a denotes that a spending return was not received from the authority.

Table 2
Expenditure on the youth service, 1988-89

Local education authority	*Net recurrent expenditure*[1] *£000*	*Net recurrent expenditure*[1] *per secondary pupil*[2] *£*	*Actual expenditure as percentage of GREA for youth and related services Per cent.*
Barking	697	78	96
Barnet	966	55	60
Bexley	758	52	86
Brent	2,377	215	122
Bromley	894	57	77
Croydon	1,054	63	64
Ealing	1,804	160	89
Enfield	796	49	58
Haringey	[3]n/a	n/a	n/a
Harrow	648	83	66
Havering	845	51	92
Hillingdon	1,018	77	100
Hounslow	737	60	63
Kingston-upon-Thames	580	79	115
Merton	459	41	60
Newham	1,104	83	65
Redbridge	1,078	81	100
Richmond-upon-Thames	514	76	86
Sutton	517	49	81
Waltham Forest	1,336	113	98
ILEA	35,377	341	224
Birmingham	4,396	67	62
Coventry	1,095	57	59
Dudley	983	57	76
Sandwell	736	37	39
Solihull	430	29	48
Walsall	2,305	117	160
Wolverhampton	2,070	126	116
Knowsley	666	67	63
Liverpool	2,392	79	89
St. Helens	328	25	40
Sefton	843	44	68
Wirral	1,512	70	101
Bolton	1,057	58	77
Bury	916	87	124
Manchester	n/a	n/a	n/a
Oldham	683	45	57
Rochdale	1,453	96	129
Salford	538	38	44
Stockport	598	33	53
Tameside	1,149	79	117
Trafford	677	59	71
Wigan	876	39	65
Barnsley	551	37	57
Doncaster	1,305	62	97
Rotherham	1,029	55	87
Sheffield	3,038	111	125
Bradford	3,127	73	104
Calderdale	1,103	84	119
Kirklees	1,426	52	67
Leeds	6,860	127	205
Wakefield	n/a	n/a	n/a
Gateshead	722	59	82
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	659	39	51
North Tyneside	585	40	79
South Tyneside	1,855	195	263
Sunderland	1,010	51	72
Avon	5,269	96	140
Bedfordshire	1,131	26	44
Berkshire	2,185	47	65
Buckinghamshire	2,370	69	88
Cambridgeshire	1,780	44	65
Cheshire	2,005	30	50
Cleveland	2,629	65	90
Cornwall	787	26	48
Cumbria	1,333	41	73
Derbyshire	5,066	85	130
Devon	2,913	51	79
Dorset	1,722	44	77
Durham	1,263	33	49
East Sussex	1,089	31	44
Essex	4,026	40	69
Gloucestershire	2,147	65	104
Hampshire	3,230	37	51
Hereford & Worcester	1,201	24	45
Hertfordshire	2,782	42	70
Humberside	3,839	63	99
Isle of Wight	467	46	109
Kent	2,708	27	44
Lancashire	5,179	59	80
Leicestershire	2,946	48	69
Lincolnshire	1,096	30	48
Norfolk	1,870	45	68
North Yorkshire	1,587	36	60
Northamptonshire	1,706	38	69
Northumberland	681	24	60
Nottinghamshire	5,233	80	113
Oxfordshire	1,325	39	55
Shropshire	1,788	63	100
Somerset	2,478	87	143
Staffordshire	2,599	36	62
Suffolk	2,124	45	88
Surrey	2,420	53	63
Warwickshire	1,434	54	69
West Sussex	1,599	40	66
Wiltshire	1,480	43	63
England Totals/ Averages	191,322	65	88

Notes to tables

(1) Gross expenditure excluding financing costs of capital expenditure, less income other than specific grant income. Derived from local authorities' spending returns to the Department of the Environment.

(2) Derived from local authorities' returns of their pupil numbers to the Department of Education and Science.

(3) n/a denotes that a spending return was not received from the authority.

Mr. Bellotti: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement following the annual review of the voluntary sector of the youth service as indicated by him on 5 April 1990, *Official Report*, column *731*.

Mr. Atkins: In announcing his proposals for the establishment of a National Youth Agency on 5 April 1990, the then Secretary of State said that he proposed to require the agency to report to him annually. The National Youth Agency was established on 1 April 1991 and its first annual report will be made in 1992. We have separately carried out a review of grants to the voluntary sector of the Youth Service, and are currently considering the comments submitted by interested bodies as part of a process of consultation.

Mr. Bellotti: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the expenditure on grant aid given to voluntary youth organisations by each local authority from 1979 to 1991.

Mr. Atkins: This information is not collected centrally.

Community Colleges

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what effect on fees and provision of courses his proposals for further education will have in rural communities at present served by community colleges;

(2) what effect on fees and provision of courses his proposals for further education will have in smaller coastal localities where students may have to travel long distances to attend courses.

Mr. Eggar: Between them, the further education funding councils and local education authorities will continue to have a duty to secure the provision of the full range of further education. Governing bodies of schools will have a new power to provide education for part-timers and adults. Our proposals are intended to ensure that there is a coherent pattern of provision which is readily accessible to local communities.

Written Questions

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many parliamentary questions for written answer have been answered by his Department so far this Session; and in the comparable period for the last Session; and if he will publish a table of how many answers *(a)* do not give the information requested because of (i) disproportionate cost or (ii) other reasons, *(b)* give an undertaking to write to the hon. Member who asked the question and *(c)* were referred for answer to the chief executive of each next steps agency.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is a matter of public record.

Citizens Charter

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what will be the cost in a full year of the proposals on pages 13 and 14 of the White Paper "The Citizen's Charter", Cm. 1599.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I expect that the proposals will be contained within planned expenditure. The charter proposals will also inform discussion of future expenditure plans.

Foreign Students (Designation)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the position of *(a)* members of the British volunteer programme and *(b)* members of the diplomatic service and the armed forces with respect to their designation as home or as foreign students for the purposes of tuition fees and grant eligibility when they have worked overseas for more than three years.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The conditions of eligibility for mandatory student awards and for the "home student" rate of tuition fee are set out in the Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations and the Education (Fees and Awards) Regulations respectively. The requirements include ordinary residence in the British islands throughout the three years preceding the first year of the course, other than wholly or mainly for the purpose of receiving full-time education. Special provisions apply to residence in EC territory. There are no specific exemptions for members of the British volunteer programme, diplomatic service or armed forces, but where the ordinary residence requirement cannot be met only because of temporary employment overseas an exemption applies which has the effect of treating the student as a home student. It is for local education authorities in the case of awards, and for further and higher education institutions in the case of fees, to determine whether an individual student is eligible, having regard to his particular circumstances, the provisions of the regulations and any relevant case law.

Secondary Schools

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science under what circumstances and under what conditions he permits the construction of secondary schools whose estimated structural life is less than 60 years; and what policy he adopts in respect of such schools now nearing the end of any short-term estimated life span.

Mr. Fallon: New school building projects for maintained and grant-maintained schools are required to comply with the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1981 and the Department's construction standards. These do not stipulate a minimum structural life.

Further Education

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what support for non-vocational courses he will give when the proposals of his recent White Paper on further education are brought into effect.

Mr. Eggar: The further education funding councils will be resourced to secure adequate provision of a wide range of further education for adults, including courses leading to academic and vocational qualifications and basic skills. We shall also carefully consider standard spending assessments in the light of local education authorities' duty to secure provision of other further education for adults.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether, prior to vesting day, colleges of further education and local education authorities can enter into binding agreements that colleges of further education will make no claim to permanent possession of off-site accommodation made available to them by local education authorities.

Mr. Eggar: The land, buildings and equipment currently used by colleges which will transfer to the new sector will be vested in those colleges on 1 April 1993. However, my right hon. and learned Friend has decided that, in exceptional circumstances, where the governing body of a college has so agreed with a local education authority, specific assets can remain with the authority after vesting day. My right hon. and learned Friend will need to approve any agreement having this effect.

In addition, it will be possible to carry forward existing shared use agreements relating to particular facilities.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if his Department will provide additional funds for extra staff management and training in colleges of further and higher education prior to the inception of independent corporate status; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We recognise the importance of careful preparation by colleges for independence. We are already looking at the needs of colleges, and the means of meeting them. If needs are identified which cannot be met through existing funding, my right hon. and learned Friend will look at them in the context of the overall funds available for his programme in the period in question.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from the Association of Colleges for Further and Higher Education on the state of their buildings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The association's response to the recent White Paper, "Education and Training for the 21st Century", refers to the condition of college buildings.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether local education authorities will continue to be financially responsible after vesting day for development programmes already started at colleges of further education but not scheduled to be completed until further education colleges have passed from local education authority control.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend announced on 9 May 1991 at col 563 that, subject to certain conditions, the Further Education Funding Council will take responsibility for servicing debts incurred by local education authorities for new capital spending in colleges of further education and sixth form colleges. The council will service only debts arising from contracts entered into after 1 April 1991 which have a value in excess of £50,000 and which have been approved by my right hon. and learned Friend.

Voluntary Schools

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the total value of the bids from the voluntary school sector in major and minor capital programmes for the year 1991-92; and what is his total allocation for that year.

Mr. Fallon: Bids for new major and minor capital projects in the voluntary school sector amounted to a first year spend of £92 million in 1991-92. The total allocated for new work in that year was £23 million.

Multiple Sclerosis

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) which medical research units working on the causes and treatment of multiple sclerosis are currently receiving public funds;

(2) if he will make a statement on progress being made by Government-funded research programmes into the causes and treatment of multiple sclerosis;

(3) how much public money each year since 1979 has been devoted to research into the causes and treatment of multiple sclerosis.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The main Government agency for funding medical research is the Medical Research Council which receives its grant-in-aid from the Department. It is an independent body which normally decides its research priorities on its own expert judgment. I understand that in 1989-90 (the latest year for which details are available) it supported work directly relevant to multiple sclerosis at two units in Oxford. It is also funding a range of research into normal and disordered functions which is of potential relevance. The council continually reviews all its research areas to ensure that progress is satisfactory and that resources are best deployed.

Research on multiple sclerosis is undertaken by charities, and may also be undertaken by university departments and medical schools with support from the University Funding Council, and by health departments and authorities. Figures are not available for total expenditure from public funds on multiple sclerosis research since 1979, but the MRC's expenditure on directly relevant research is:

Financial year	*£000s*
1979-80	656
1980-81	747
1981-82	826
1982-83	501
1983-84	485
1984-85	446
1985-86	403
1986-87	404
1987-88	297
1988-89	216
1989-90	180

The MRC is always willing to consider funding for soundly based research proposals in competition with other applications.

Playgroups, Tower Hamlets

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the numbers of *(a)* children attending and *(b)* sites for (i) registered pre-school nurseries and (ii) playgroups in Tower Hamlets for each year since 1979.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have been asked to reply.

Information available centrally is shown in the table. Information is not collected centrally on the number of children attending these facilities. Annual information is published in "Children's Day Care Facilities at 31 March", copies of which are available in the Library. The publication for 1990 will be available in the autumn.

Day care places for children under 5 in the London borough of Tower Hamlets, rate per thousand population, 1981-89.

	Registered Day Nurseries		*Registered Playgroups*		*Registered Childminders*	
	No. of places	*Rate*	*No. of places*	*Rate*	*No. of places*	*Rate*
1981	169	17·4	365	37·6	350	36·1
[1]1982	—	—	—	—	—	—
[1]1983	—	—	—	—	—	—
[1]1984	—	—	—	—	—	—
1985	0	0·0	594	49·9	510	42·9
1986	0	0·0	715	57·2	460	36·8
1987	12	0·9	634	48·8	320	24·6
1988	121	8·9	510	37·5	382	28·1
1989	121	8·8	489	35·4	437	31·7

[1] Return not submitted for these years.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Pergau Hydro-electric Project

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what feasibility studies were carried out by the Overseas Development Administration of the Pergau hydro-electric project before offering aid to the Government of Malaysia;

(2) what additional studies were considered by the Overseas Development Administration in relation to the Pergau project.

Mrs. Chalker: In considering this project the Overseas Development Administration had available a feasibility study carried out by the Snowy Mountains Engineering Corporation and as part of our own appraisal financed studies of environmental issues and contract pricing.

Iraq

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his assessment of the immediate humanitarian needs of Iraq.

Mrs. Chalker: Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan produced last week a detailed report on humanitarian needs in Iraq, following the United Nations mission to Iraq which he led earlier this month. We and others are giving the report our urgent consideration. We are continuing our assistance to displaced people in northern Iraq through provision of vehicles, agricultural equipment and building materials, and are playing a leading role in a European Community initiative to provide food, clean water, health care and shelter to those in need in the north-east of the country.

PRIME MINISTER

Defence Equipment Finance Department

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Prime Minister when co-operation between International Military Services and the Defence Equipment Finance Department of the Midland International Trade Services was terminated.

The Prime Minister: Decisions on individual business contacts by International Military Services are matters for the company's judgment, and are subject to commercial confidentiality.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Prime Minister what defence firms based in Britain have had links with the Defence Equipment Finance Department of the Midland International Trade Services.

The Prime Minister: This is a matter for the companies concerned.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the Government Departments which have co-operated with the Defence Equipment Finance Department of the Midland International Trade Services.

The Prime Minister: The Ministry of Defence and Export Credits Guarantee Department have had routine contacts with the Defence Equipment Finance Department of Midland International Trade Services. There may also have been routine contacts with other departments, but no records of such contacts are kept centrally.

Written Questions

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Prime Minister how many parliamentary questions for written answer have been answered by his Department so far this Session, and in the comparable period for the last Session; and if he will publish a table of how many answers *(a)* do not give the information requested because of (i) disproportionate cost or (ii) other reasons, *(b)* give an undertaking to write to the hon. Member who asked the question and *(c)* were referred for answer to the chief executive of each next steps agency.

The Prime Minister: The information requested is a matter for public record.

Citizens Charter

Mr. Straw: To ask the Prime Minister what was the total cost of the design, preparation, printing and distribution of the White Paper on the citizens charter, Cm. 1599.

The Prime Minister: The cost of the design and preparation of Cm. 1599 is likely to be in the region of £33,000.

The costs for printing, publishing and distributing the White Paper were met by Her Majesty's Stationery Office, which aims to recover its costs from sales revenue.

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Prime Minister what was the total cost of printing and publishing the citizens charter, Cm. 1599.

The Prime Minister: The costs of printing and publishing the citizens charter White Paper Cm. 1599 were met by HMSO who aim to recover their costs from sales revenue. The estimated cost of producing the short version of Cm. 1599 was £60,000.

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Prime Minister what is the total cost to public funds of the pledges made in the citizens charter.

The Prime Minister: The Government have put, and will continue to put, extra resources into priority public services whenever extra money can be afforded. Under the charter programme it will also find better ways of converting the money that can be afforded into even better services. I therefore expect the cost to be met within the existing public expenditure programme.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the opinion surveys carried out in the course of preparation of the citizens charter; and if he will place the results of each survey in the Library, together with the name of the organisation which carried out each survey.

The Prime Minister: No opinion surveys were carried out in the course of preparing the White Paper. The White Paper itself is a means of sounding public opinion and it is proposed that the views of the public should be sought regularly about the services they use.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Prime Minister what was the total cost of the launch at the Queen Elizabeth II centre of the White Paper, the citizens charter, Cm. 1599.

The Prime Minister: The estimated cost of the launch is £73,000. This covers the cost of hiring the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre and ancillary facilities.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Prime Minister if he will give a full list of arms purchases made through BCCI and thought to have been for Iraq during the last 10 years.

The Prime Minister: I do not have this information.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Prime Minister if he will place in the Library copies of all correspondence he received from the Governor of the Bank of England relating to the Bank of Credit and Commerce International since June 1987.

The Prime Minister: No. Exchanges between the Governor and myself are confidential. Any material relating to BCCI would, moreover, be covered by the provisions of part V of the Banking Act 1987. Lord Justice Bingham will of course have access to any correspondence received from the Governor relating to BCCI.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Prime Minister what information he has on which defence firms based in Britain have had links with BCCI.

The Prime Minister: The relationship between defence firms and BCCI is a matter for the companies concerned.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Prime Minister what assistance Her Majesty's Government and the Bank of England gave to United States officials in 1990 investigating affairs of the BCCI.

The Prime Minister: Since Operation C Chase in 1988, Customs and Excise investigators have kept in regular

touch with their US counterparts regarding drugs money laundering matters. The Bank of England has co-operated with the US authorities as fully as it can within the constraints imposed on it by the Banking Act.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Prime Minister (1) whether, in the inquiry into the Bank of Credit and Commerce International, Lord Justice Bingham will have powers to compel attendance from directors or employees of self-regulatory organisations set up under the terms of the Financial Services Act 1986;

(2) whether, in the inquiry into the Bank of Credit and Commerce International, Lord Justice Bingham will have powers to compel attendance from Government servants and regulators who have left the public service.

The Prime Minister: This is a non-statutory inquiry. In the light of the experience of a number of similar non-statutory inquiries in recent years, we do not expect any difficulties in securing the attendance of witnesses.

Bank of England

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the dates on which he met the Governor of the Bank of England since June 1987; and what was discussed on each occasion.

The Prime Minister: I have met the Governor from time to time to discuss a wide range of issues.

Food Aid, Africa

Mr. Michael: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if he will seek to ensure that the European Commission places a higher priority on humanitarian considerations than cost-effectiveness in deciding allocation of food aid to Africa;

(2) if he will list the surplus commodities held in the intervention stocks of the European Commission, the quantity of each commodity currently held or held on the latest date for which the information is available and the amount of each commodity that has been used within the programme of food aid for Africa which was agreed in May;

(3) if he will list the surplus commodities held in the intervention stocks of the European Commission and indicate, for each item on the list, the steps he has taken to find ways that items might be used to combat starvation and poverty in Africa and elsewhere as an alternative to remaining in store;

(4) if he will list the surplus commodities held in the intervention stocks of the European Commission and indicate, for each item on that list, his assessment of ways in which that commodity could be used *(a)* as immediate emergency food aid for Africa and elsewhere and *(b)* as part of long-term programmes to prevent starvation;

(5) further to his answer of 22 July, if he will *(a)* indicate the quantity of grain being drawn from intervention stocks of the European Commission, *(b)* indicate the quantity of grain that would meet the needs of the special programme of food aid for Africa and *(c)* indicate whether additional quantities of grain could make a contribution to meeting the needs of people facing starvation in Africa over and above the needs of the special programme;

(6) further to his answer of 22 July, if he will indicate the measurements of cost-effectiveness currently being used by the European Commission to cost the special programme of food aid for Africa;

(7) further to his answer dated 22 July, if he will seek to persuade the European Commission to increase the use of grain from intervention stocks to meet the needs of people currently facing starvation in Africa.

The Prime Minister: I am satisfied that humanitarian considerations, in particular the need to ensure that the right product reaches the right people at the right time, are given high priority by the European Commission. However, the very substantial cost of transport from Europe to the more remote parts of Africa has to be taken into account when determining the source of grain for relief purposes; for that reason we encourage the Commission to buy food in nearby countries with exportable surpluses whenever appropriate.

Significant intervention stocks are held of cereals (particularly common wheat, durum wheat, barley and rye), milk products, beef and wine. Of these only common wheat and, to a limited extent, rice are suitable for use as emergency food aid. So far in 1991 262,000 tonnes of common wheat held in intervention have been used in this way. In addition substantial quantities of wheat have been purchased on the European Commission open market by the Commision and member states for food aid purposes; some 90 per cent. of the food provided under Community action programmes (1·7 million tonnes of cereals, and smaller quantities of other products this year) is obtained from within the Community. Tables showing the amounts of the various products held in intervention are deposited regularly in the Libraries of the House.

The main priority now in combating famine in Africa is to encourage donors to deliver quickly pledges already made and to find ways of speeding up distribution within the affected countries to the people most in need. We shall continue to take every opportunity to pursue these issues with other donors, including the European Commission, and with the international organisations and recipient countries. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development will be discussing them with the main British non-governmental organisations on 25 July.

Tourism

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Prime Minister if he has any plans to appoint a tourism ombudsman.

The Prime Minister: No. There is already a comprehensive framework of consumer protection legislation in place, which will be further strengthened for the travel and tourism industry by the implementation of the European Community package travel directive.

Postal Services

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his statement of 22 July concerning postal services of the Royal Mail, what factors Her Majesty's Government will take into account in determining the price level at which private service alternatives will be permitted; and when he expects to announce the new level.

The Prime Minister: In determining the minimum price level at which private operators will be allowed to provide letter services, the Secretary of State for Trade and

Industry will satisfy himself that the Post Office's ability to meet its statutory obligations and to provide a nationwide letter service within an affordable uniform tariff structure will not be undermined. He will also bear in mind the potential for improvements in the Post Office's efficiency and service quality as well as tariff levels and the financial targets that he sets. He will make a significant move after the necessary legislation is enacted.

Science and Technology Secretariat

Dr. Bray: To ask the Prime Minister what are the annual running costs of the Cabinet Office science and technology secretariat.

The Prime Minister: In 1990-91 the running costs of the science and technology secretariat were £1,228,322.

Dr. Bray: To ask the Prime Minister how many staff work in the Cabinet Office science and technology secretariat; and what is the distribution of their grades.

The Prime Minister: The number of staff working in the Cabinet Office science and technology secretariat on 1 July 1991 was 36. The grade distribution is as follows:

	Number
Chief scientific officer	1
Grade 3	1
Grade 5	2
Grade 6	3·5
Grade 7	8
HEO	1
EO	3·5
AO	4
AA	3
SPS	2
PS	5
Typist	2

Civil Nuclear Materials

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Prime Minister what proposals Her Majesty's Government have considered for a new international convention to bring together in a single convention agreements relating to the regulation of civil nuclear issues and radioactive materials currently the subject matter of several international conventions; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government are not considering any such proposals.

Mr. Alan Blumlein

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will acquire for the nation the biographical papers relating to the electronics engineer Alan Blumlein, inventor of stereo and pioneer of electronic television and radar.

The Prime Minister: Neither I, nor my colleague the Minister for the Arts, is aware of any sale of papers relating to Alan Blumlein. The question of acquisition of such papers for the nation therefore does not arise.

G7 Conference

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister what was the total estimated cost to Her Majesty's Government of hosting the Group of Seven conference in London.

The Prime Minister: With many accounts still to be settled, I cannot give a precise figure, but I expect the total cost to be around £7 million.

Mr. Bob Ingham

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what correspondence his office has received from Mr. Bob Ingham of Woodlands crescent, Knutsford over the past two years; if he will list the subjects of the correspondence; and what response has been made.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 23 July 1991]:* My office received a letter addressed to me from Mr. Bob Ingham on 30 August 1990 on the subject of sewage, which my office acknowledged, noting the contents and stating that the letter was being sent on, for information, to the Department with policy responsibility for the matter raised.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the total number of confirmed cases of BSE in each county or Scottish region at the latest available date in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Gummer: The information up to 19 July 1991 is as follows:

County	*Cases*
ENGLAND:	
Northern	
Cleveland	39
Cumbria	608
Durham	112
Humberside	134
Northumberland	136
Tyne and Wear	4
Yorkshire, North	1,164
Yorkshire, South	98
Yorkshire, West	135
Total	2,430
Midlands and Western	
Cheshire	904
Derbyshire	506
Herefore and Worcester	595
Lancashire	699
Leicestershire	759
Manchester	33
Merseyside	14
Nottinghamshire	193
Salop	752
Staffordshire	593
West Midlands	18
Warwickshire	328
Total	5,394
Eastern	
Bedfordshire	88
Cambridgeshire	110
Essex	143
Hertfordshire	137
Lincolnshire	257
Norfolk	524
Northamptonshire	274
Suffolk	378
Total	1,911

County	Cases
South-East	
Berkshire	190
Buckinghamshire	285
Hampshire	1,182
Isle of Wight	228
Kent	645
London	18
Oxfordshire	489
Surrey	288
Sussex, East	417
Sussex, West	790
Total	4,532
South-West	
Avon	647
Cornwall	2,363
Devon	3,538
Dorset	2,692
Gloucestershire	920
Somerset	2,915
Wiltshire	1,941
Total	15,016
WALES	
Clwyd	377
Dyfed	1,377
Mid Glamorgan	77
Glamorgan, South	84
Glamorgan, West	16
Gwent	233
Gwynedd	88
Powys	296
Total	2,548
SCOTLAND:	
South	
Borders	53
Central	30
Dumfries	207
Lothian	23
Strathclyde	272
North	
Fife	62
Grampian	201
Highland	56
Orkney	10
Shetland	3
Tayside	85
Western Isles	1
Total	1,003
NORTHERN IRELAND:	
Antrim	66
Armagh	18
Down	45
Fermanagh	20
Londonderry	25
Tyrone	41
Total	215

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many BSE carcases have been *(a)* incinerated and *(b)* buried in 1991 in England.

Mr. Gummer: In the period January to May 1991 9,593 BSE carcases were incinerated and 306 buried in England.

Cereal Production

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the amount of land in each county which has been under cereal production for each year since 1987.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested is given in the following table. Data are taken from the 1987 to 1990 June agricultural censuses and hence exclude estimates for minor holdings not in the annual census.

Census of agriculture June 1987-90
Distribution of cereals area by county

'000 hectares

	1987	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*
Avon	17·0	17·6	17·1	16·2
Bedfordshire	55·3	53·3	54·3	51·5
Berkshire	37·5	37·2	36·2	33·7
Buckinghamshire	54·7	52·4	51·5	47·0
Cambridgeshire	170·5	166·2	164·9	161·2
Cheshire	29·8	29·7	28·5	26·2
Cleveland	14·7	14·2	14·6	13·2
Cornwall[1]	46·2	46·1	43·9	40·4
Cumbria	24·6	24·0	22·4	20·3
Derbyshire	32·0	32·4	32·7	31·1
Devon	74·3	74·4	70·0	65·6
Dorset	56·7	56·9	56·7	53·6
Durham	36·5	37·3	37·6	34·9
East Sussex	31·1	30·4	28·8	26·6
Essex	161·2	155·2	158·9	153·7
Gloucestershire	81·0	80·4	76·9	70·3
Greater London	4·6	4·6	4·3	4·1
Greater Manchester	6·1	6·2	6·1	5·9
Hampshire	104·6	105·9	105·2	101·2
Hereford and Worcester	90·8	91·4	90·7	84·3
Hertfordshire	59·4	58·4	58·7	56·5
Humberside	178·9	178·0	179·7	172·6
Isle of Wight	8·8	9·3	9·1	8·1
Kent	92·8	89·2	92·7	86·1
Lancashire	19·5	20·0	19·0	17·2
Leicestershire	87·4	86·0	87·2	80·9
Lincolnshire	290·6	285·3	290·5	279·3
Merseyside	10·0	10·0	9·9	9·1
Norfolk	214·3	210·1	210·6	204·5
North Yorkshire	196·7	196·2	198·6	189·9
Northamptonshire	94·8	92·8	93·0	85·5
Northumberland	74·9	76·0	77·0	72·9
Nottinghamshire	81·7	80·5	81·3	75·8
Oxfordshire	110·2	107·7	107·5	99·8
Shropshire	84·2	85·0	85·4	80·5
Somerset	45·8	47·7	47·6	44·2
South Yorkshire	35·7	35·6	35·1	32·7
Staffordshire	46·1	46·1	46·6	42·8
Suffolk	173·3	169·5	172·5	169·0
Surrey	15·1	14·1	13·5	12·5
Tyne and Wear	8·2	8·2	7·9	7·3
Warwickshire	68·0	66·7	67·7	62·4
West Midlands	5·6	5·6	5·5	5·4
West Sussex	44·8	43·8	41·5	40·0
West Yorkshire	22·5	22·3	23·0	22·0
Wiltshire	114·2	113·4	113·1	106·6
England	3,312·9	3,273·0	3,275·1	3,105·1

[1] Includes Scilly Isles.
Notes: Minor holdings are excluded.
Triticale is included from 1989.

Oil Seed Rape

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the amount of land in each county under oil seed rape since 1987.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested is given in the following table. Data are taken from the 1987 to 1990 June agricultural censuses and hence exclude estimates for minor holdings not in the annual census.

Census of Agriculture June 1987-90
Distribution of oil seed rape area by county

'000 hectares

	1987	1988	1989	1990
Avon	0·5	0·5	0·5	0·7
Bedfordshire	7·9	7·3	6·2	7·9
Berkshire	2·8	2·4	2·7	3·3
Buckinghamshire	6·4	5·9	6·0	7·4
Cambridgeshire	18·5	16·5	15·9	19·2
Cheshire	2·2	1·9	1·6	1·8
Cleveland	2·3	2·1	1·9	2·8
Cornwall inc Scilly Isles	0·7	0·7	0·3	0·6
Cumbria	0·5	0·5	0·3	0·3
Derbyshire	3·7	3·6	3·0	3·4
Devon	0·9	0·8	0·7	0·9
Dorset	1·0	1·1	1·0	1·4
Durham	5·3	4·9	4·8	6·8
East Sussex	2·1	2·1	1·7	2·2
Essex	22·5	21·3	20·5	22·8
Gloucestershire	5·5	5·3	5·5	7·1
Greater London	0·6	0·5	0·6	0·7
Greater Manchester	0·5	0·4	0·4	0·6
Hampshire	6·2	4·8	4·7	6·1
Hereford and Worcester	5·3	4·7	4·6	5·8
Hertfordshire	8·6	7·3	7·4	8·8
Humberside	25·7	23·1	21·0	24·5
Isle of Wight	0·5	0·6	0·7	0·9
Kent	14·4	12·9	11·4	15·1
Lancashire	0·9	0·8	0·8	1·3
Leicestershire	13·4	12·7	11·6	14·1
Lincolnshire	40·7	34·8	32·0	38·6
Merseyside	0·4	0·5	0·5	0·6
Norfolk	11·2	8·9	7·1	9·4
North Yorkshire	19·6	17·5	16·4	19·5
Northamptonshire	18·6	16·4	16·0	18·3
Northumberland	7·1	6·7	6·9	10·0
Nottinghamshire	13·5	11·6	10·7	12·5
Oxfordshire	11·6	11·3	10·4	12·7
Shropshire	4·2	3·5	2·9	3·5
Somerset	1·2	0·9	0·7	0·9
South Yorkshire	6·1	6·0	5·3	5·8
Staffordshire	4·5	4·1	3·3	4·0
Suffolk	17·5	13·3	12·6	13·9
Surrey	1·1	1·3	1·2	1·4
Tyne and Wear	1·2	1·1	1·2	1·5
Warwickshire	10·4	9·4	8·8	9·9
West Midlands	0·6	0·5	0·5	0·6
West Sussex	3·7	3·0	2·9	3·6
West Yorkshire	3·1	2·9	2·6	3·0
Wiltshire	5·4	5·0	4·6	6·4
England	340·6	303·5	282·7	342·5

Note: Minor holdings are excluded.

Grants and Subsidies

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the amount of money which was paid out by each of his divisional offices for each *(a)* agricultural subsidy scheme and *(b)* grant scheme available to farmers in 1990.

Mr. Gummer: The money dispersed by each of my divisional offices on the principal grant and subsidy schemes in 1990 is shown in the table:

Divisional office	*Environmentally sensitive areas* £'000	*Farm and conservation grant scheme* £'000	*Farm diversification grant scheme* £'000	*Farm woodland scheme* £'000	*Hill livestock compensatory allowances* £'000	*Sheep annual premium scheme* £'000	*Suckler cow premium scheme* £'000	*Set-aside* £'000
South western region								
Exeter	—	2,350	221	46	3,360	9,273	2,625	283
Gloucester	—	1,222	206	144	—	3,551	1,331	1,376
Taunton	822	2,001	207	4	1,161	4,311	1,380	377
Truro	327	667	131	9	992	3,288	1,554	219
Eastern region								
Chelmsford	—	260	95	31	—	528	388	1,183
Huntingdon	—	148	33	71	—	2,497	647	1,530
Lincoln	—	221	42	27	—	1,064	872	526
Norwich	3,286	545	93	133	—	1,035	1,043	1,279
Northern region								
Beverley	201	513	52	20	1,024	2,130	1,329	310
Carlisle	64	1,530	85	19	7,654	10,618	2,393	66
Newcastle	372	356	90	29	7,338	9,093	4,153	400
Northallerton	534	1,201	160	24	4,860	8,504	1,959	165
South eastern region								
Guildford	26	478	61	42	—	2,132	1,068	1,245
Maidstone	605	428	177	14	—	3,919	718	802
Oxford	—	399	89	60	—	2,502	911	1,885
Midlands and Western region								
Crewe	629	3,698	173	31	2,213	6,643	2,038	390
Nottingham	556	704	81	32	1,221	4,175	1,345	350
Preston	—	1,113	59	—	1,688	3,678	828	118
Worcester	—	541	84	69	2,679	7,501	1,536	316

Horses and Ponies (Exports)

Mr. Ward: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made by Her Majesty's Government in their negotiations with the European Commission and other member states with regard to preventing a renewal of an export trade in horses and ponies for slaughter.

Mr. Maclean: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) on 18 July 1991, *Official Report*, column *282*.

Wildlife and Landscape Conservation

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of regional and national training courses on wildlife and landscape conservation where held for Agricultural Development and Advisory Service officers in 1990 and to date in 1991; and how many are planned for the rest of 1991 in each region.

Mr. Gummer: The numbers of national and regional training courses on wildlife and landscape conservation held in 1990 and in 1991, to date, for Agricultural Development and Advisory Service advisers are as follows:

	National	*Regional*
1990	6	9
[1]1991	6	6

[1] To date.

Training courses planned for the remainder of 1991 are as follows:

	Number
National	3
Regional:	
Eastern	1
Midlands and Western	2
Northern	1
South Western	4
Wales	1

Written Questions

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many parliamentary questions for written answer have been answered by his Department so far this Session, and in the comparable period for the last Session; and if he will publish a table of how many answers *(a)* do not give the information requested because of (i) disproportionate cost or (ii) other reasons, *(b)* give an undertaking to write to the hon. Member who asked the question and *(c)* were referred for answer to the chief executive of each next steps agency.

Mr. Curry: The Department has answered 1,360 parliamentary questions for written reply in the current parliamentary Session to date, and 1,870 questions for the equivalent period in the last Session. The further information requested by the hon. Member is not collected and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Salmon

Mr. Beith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to publish the report on east coast fisheries prepared under the Salmon Act 1986; and whether the original report which he receives will be published without alteration.

Mr. Curry: Section 39 of the Salmon Act 1986 requires the presentation of a review to Parliament on the salmon net fisheries off the north-east coast of England and the east coast of Scotland. Scientists at the Scottish Office and from this Department have completed a substantial background paper which is now being considered.

A report will be presented to Parliament as soon as possible.

Mr. Beith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the significance of the north-east coast salmon fishery as a component of the fishing industry of that area, and of the effect on the industry which would result from a ban on that fishery.

Mr. Curry: The majority of fishermen operating off the north-east coast of England fish for a variety of different species. For those fishermen who fish for salmon it can represent a significant part of their annual income. However, the mixed species nature of the fishery means that it is difficult to quantify the effect that banning salmon fishing would have on the industry.

Ministry Staff, Devon

Mr. Speller: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has for reorganising his offices and staff in Devon.

Mr. Curry: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given on 23 July to my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Irvine).

THE ARTS

Written Questions

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Minister for the Arts how many parliamentary questions for written answer have been answered by his Department so far this Session, and in the comparable period for the last Session; and if he will publish a table of how many answers *(a)* do not give the information requested because of (i) disproportionate cost or (ii) other reasons, *(b)* give an undertaking to write to the hon. Member who asked the question and *(c)* were referred for answer to the chief executive of each next steps agency.

Mr. Renton: The information requested is a matter of public record.

Edinburgh Art Galleries

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has now received about the closure of art galleries in Edinburgh; and if he will reconsider his decision not to hold an inquiry into the Scottish Arts Council's funding of the visual arts.

Mr. Renton: I received five letters about the Edinburgh art galleries, including one from the hon. Member for

Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). This matter falls within the remit of the chairman of the Arts Council of Great Britain, to whom I have referred the correspondence for his consideration and for direct replies. I have, however, been kept closely in touch with developments and I understand that the chairman's view is that an inquiry would be inappropriate. I see no reason to dissent from this.

Works of Art

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will specify the allocations made to public institutions in the United K.ngdom, during the half-year ended 30 June, of individual works of art and museum objects pre-eminent for national, scientific, historical or artisitc interest which have been accepted in satisfaction of inheritance tax or capital transfer tax, together with information, where applicable, as to conditions or wishes expressed by testators or executors in the matter of allocation; whether he will list the works of art and museum objects which are still awaiting allocation, with the respective dates of their acceptance in satisfaction of inheritance tax or capital transfer tax; and whether a press notice will be issued from his Department covering the information given in his reply.

Mr. Renton: The information the hon. Gentleman requests is as follows:

Item	*To whom allocated*	*Conditions/wishes expressed*
East Anglian collection of paintings and George III Cabinet	Norwich Castle Museum	Conditional
Two paintings by Nasmyth	University of Manchester—Whitworth Art Gallery	Conditional
Painting by Sickert	Tate Gallery	Wish to go to Tate Gallery
Collection of works by and relating to John Piper	Wolverhampton Museum and Art Gallery	Wish to go to Wolverhampton Art Gallery
Four Old Master drawings	National Galleries of Scotland	Conditional
Portrait of Charles Hope by Raeburn	National Galleries of Scotland	Conditional
Stamp Collection	British Library	Wish to go to the British Library
Collection of photographs by and of Cecil Beaton	National Portrait Gallery	Conditional
Portrait attributed to Reynolds	National Galleries of Scotland—to remain in situ in Paxton House, Berwickshire	Conditional

Items awaiting allocation	*Date of acceptance*
*Portrait by Beechey	20 April 1990
*Painting by Lucas de Heere	20 April 1990
*Two portraits by Gainsborough, one by Rubens and a landscape by Seghers	20 April 1990
Portrait of Professor Hill by Raeburn	12 March 1991
Harpsichord by Burkat Shudi	12 March 1991
Collection of drawings by Runciman	26 April 1991
Papers of George Bellas Greenough	26 April 1991
Whistler watercolour	26 April 1991
Collection of musical instruments	26 April 1991

Note: The three offers marked * were omitted, in error, from the answer given to the hon. Member for Warley, East on 21 January 1991 at column 9.

Press notices have already been issued announcing the acceptance of all these items and the allocations that have been made to date.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Local Government Finance

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what training or guidance material has been issued for magistrates dealing with poll tax cases; if he will place copies of such material in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Guidance was contained in Home Office circular 23/1990, issued on 14 March 1990, a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he now has as to the number of people who have served, or are serving, a prison sentence for non-payment of the 1990-91 poll tax, and the length of their sentences; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: According to the records held centrally, which are approximate, six prisoners had been received into Prison Service establishments in England and Wales by 31 March 1991 following committal for non-payment of the community charge. The periods of committal imposed were 10 days, two weeks, three weeks, one month (2), and three months. Reliable information is not yet available centrally for such prisoners received since March 1991.

Magistrates Clerks

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the salaries of clerks to the magistrates courts are first paid by local authorities and then reimbursed by his Department, or paid directly; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Salaries are paid by local authorities, which receive specific grant support from the Home Office for magistrates courts expenditure.

Visas

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance he has given to *(a)* airlines and *(b)* British posts abroad about the categories of people who are visa nationals but who are exempt from requiring visas to re-enter the United Kingdom after an absence abroad; why it was decided not to record this exemption on people's passports; and if he will publish the guidance.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A copy of the guidance given to airlines on the exemption criteria has been placed in the Library. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has, I understand, similarly advised posts abroad. In addition, posters covering the changes have been displayed at all British posts abroad and all applicants granted a visa now receive a standard passport-sized card setting out the terms of the new extended visa exemption scheme. Now that the exemption scheme applies uniformly to all nationalities, a "visa exempt" passport endorsement is no longer necessary.

Mrs. Zabeda Begum Yaqoob

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what response he has made to the representations made by the hon. Member for Bradford, West in the case of Mrs. Zabeda Begum Yaqoob (Ref. Y48459); when his Department informed the hon. Member for Bradford, West of an intention to deport Mrs. Yaqoob from the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what notices were sent to the Bradford home address of Mrs. Zabeda Begum Yaqoob (Ref. Y48459) prior to her deportation from the United Kingdom; on what dates such notices were sent; how they were delivered; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what representations he has received concerning Mrs. Zabeda Begum Yaqoob (Ref. Y48459); following her deportation from the United Kingdom from *(a)* her representative and *(b)* other persons or organisations;

(4) when Mrs. Zabeda Begum Yaqoob, born in 1950, (Ref. Y48459) was deported from the United Kingdom; who was her representative; what notices concerning his intention to deport were sent to her representative; on what dates such notices were sent; how such notices were sent; and if he will make a statement;

(5) what inquiries were made by his officials into hospital treatment being received by Mrs. Zabeda Begum Yaqoob (Ref. Y48459) before she was deported from the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Representations from the hon. Member for Bradford, West on behalf of Mrs. Zabeda Begum Yaqoob were rejected on 17 January 1989 and subsequently on 7 April 1989, when he was informed of the intention to make a deportation order against her. Notice of this decision was sent on 13 April 1989 to her legal representatives, Messrs Carter Gouldsborough, of Bradford, by first class ordinary post and on 14 April 1989 to Mrs. Yaqoob at her home address by first class recorded delivery post together with the appropriate appeals forms. Her appeal against the decision was dismissed on 11 September 1990.

No representations on her behalf have been received from her representatives or others following her deportation from the United Kingdom on 14 May 1991. We were not informed that Mrs. Yaqoob was receiving any hospital treatment before she was deported and there was therefore no cause for inquiries to be made.

Sexual Offences Act

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his Department's policy towards the use of police officers to encourage or in any way induce offences to be committed under section 32 of the Sexual Offences Act 1956.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Measures to detect crime are operational matters for chief officers of police. However, the Home Office has issued guidance to all police forces which stresses that police officers must not incite the commission of offences.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the incidence of police officers encouraging or inducing offences to be committed under section 32 of the Sexual Offences Act 1956.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information of methods of detection for offences committed under section 32 of the Sexual Offences Act 1956 is not collected centrally.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment his Department has made of the financial cost incurred by the deployment of a single police officer in surveillance of a public toilet for one day.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Available figures on the cost of police officers' time are not related to the duties on which they are engaged; additional costs are not normally incurred by the deployment of officers on particular duties.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidelines have been issued relating to police operations applied to the entrapment of homosexual men for soliciting.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Home Office has issued guidance to all police forces which stresses that police officers must not incite the commission of criminal offences. Instructions relating to particular police operations against suspected indecency are a matter for individual chief officers.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many parliamentary questions for written answer have been answered by his Department so far this Session, and in the comparable period for the last Session; and if he will publish a table of how many answers *(a)* do not give the information requested because of (i) disproportionate cost or (ii) other reasons, *(b)* give an undertaking to write to the hon. Member who asked the question and *(c)* were referred for answer to the chief executive of each next steps agency.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The information requested is a matter of public record.

Remand (Young People)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy that young people on remand should be dealt with in such a way as to maximise public protection and minimise serious re-offending while ensuring cost-effectiveness.

Mr. John Patten: The Government's policy is to ensure that the courts have the powers they need to deal properly with juvenile defendants having regard to all relevant matters including the protection of the public and the prevention of offending. The Criminal Justice Bill makes the necessary provision.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is currently *(a)* the average cost, *(b)* the highest cost and *(c)* the lowest cost per week of holding a young person on remand in secure accommodation which is provided (i) in premises other than prison accommodation and (ii) in various types of prison accommodation.

Mrs. Rumbold: Information about remand prisoners is not held separately.

The average weekly cost of holding a juvenile in a closed youth establishment in 1989-90 was £346. At the establishments with the highest and lowest costs the average weekly costs were £450 and £260 respectively.

Information about non-prison service establishments is not available.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the alternatives to secure accommodation he is currently considering in respect of young people on remand.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health is establishing a national steering group which will consider the practical arrangements for dealing with remanded juveniles under the Criminal Justice Bill.

Karamjit Singh Chahal

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a further statement on the case of Karamjit Singh Chahal.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to him on 25 June at columns *405-6*.

Crimes of Violence

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his Department's policy towards the monitoring of crimes of violence against lesbians and gay men; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The monitoring of crimes of violence against lesbians and gay men is, in common with many other types of crime, a matter for individual chief officers. For example, I understand that the Metropolitan police have identified four divisions in which specific monitoring of such attacks is being undertaken on a pilot basis with a view to developing good practice. Attacks on lesbians and gay men are as unacceptable as any other incidents of violence against individuals, and I have every confidence in the determination and ability of the police to protect all members of the public.

Returning Residents

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people, by nationality, have requested entry to the United Kingdom, as returning residents, in each quarter since May 1990; how many have been *(a)* readmitted as such, *(b)* readmitted for a limited period and *(c)* been refused entry to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I will write to the hon. Member.

Cymag

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration his Department is giving to banning the possession and sale of Cymag.

Mr. John Patten: The Poisons Rules 1982 already prohibit the sale of Cymag to the general public. The Poisons Board in November 1990 considered the case for further strengthening controls on the availability of Cymag but concluded that changes to the poisons legislation would not be justified.

Bailiffs

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has now issued best practice guidance on the use of bailiffs by magistrates courts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I hope that it will be possible to publish the guidance next month, and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many complaints have been received by clerks of the court as to the actions or conduct of bailiffs involved in the collection of poll tax debts; and of these how many cases resulted in the complaint being held in favour of the complainant.

Mr. John Patten: Bailiffs used to levy distress in community charge cases are employed by the local authority, and not by the court. Justices' clerks will therefore not necessarily be aware of complaints about their conduct, and we do not have information about their number. However, the Community Charges (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1989 make provision for a person aggrieved by the levy of, or an attempt to levy, a distress to appeal to a magistrates court. A total of 14 such appeals were heard during the last financial year. Information about their outcome is not readily available.

Police Conduct

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is now the total amount paid by the Metropolitan police in *(a)* out-of-court settlements and *(b)* in-court awards arising from complaints about police conduct in the past 12 months to date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the amounts paid by the Metropolitan police in settlements out of court and under awards made by the courts arising from allegations of wrongful acts by Metropolitan police officers are as follows:

	Settlements out of court £	*Awards made by the courts* £
1990	557,214	188,110
[1]1991	280,169	17,901

[1] To 23 July.

Summer Projects, Manchester

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on funds offered for summer projects in the Moss Side and Hulme areas of Manchester by his Department; what requests were received from local groups; and what was his response.

Mr. John Patten: The hon. Member and others have expressed concern about the risks to children in Moss Side and Hulme of being drawn into crime and drug misuse. Local groups have discussed these concerns with Home Office officials, the local probation service, and officials from the Moss Side and Hulme task force and Manchester and Salford city action team, and have proposed organising a range of activities for young people this summer and beyond, aimed at reducing these risks. Funding of £46,300 to support these schemes has been offered by the Home Office, Department of Education and Science, local task force and city action team.

Prisoners (Searches)

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many strip searches were carried out on female prisoners sentenced category A and remand prisoners being held in Her Majesty's prisons, Durham and Brixton, since November 1989; what prison contraband, smuggled item, or illegal correspondence was discovered in any search; in how many cases prisoners refused to be searched and had to be restrained while the search was being conducted; and what were the reasons for each search.

Mrs. Rumbold: Between 1 November 1989 and 30 June 1991, category A women prisoners held in Brixton and Durham prisons were strip searched on a total of 254 occasions. No unauthorised article was found. On no occasion did the prisoners refuse to be strip searched. Strip searching is a routine security measure to which all prisoners—male and female—are subject, both for its deterrent effect and as a means of discovering unauthorised articles.

Magistrates Courts

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the reorganisation of magistrates courts in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We have received many comments from interested bodies and individuals on the report of the magistrates courts scrutiny, and have been giving them careful consideration.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what changes he proposes to make to the formula for cash limiting the magistrates courts system to meet the needs of rural areas.

Mr. John Patten: We shall give careful thought to the representations about the needs of rural areas made in the course of consultations on the proposed formula for the allocation of current grant before reaching final decisions.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the reasons for the closure of Darwen magistrates court.

Mr. John Patten: I understand that no decision has yet been taken by the Lancashire magistrates courts committee that this courthouse should be closed.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many rural magistrates courts he estimates will close in England and Wales in 1991 and 1992.

Mr. John Patten: We have made no such estimate, since decisions on the maintenance of courthouses are in the first place matters for the responsible magistrates courts committees in consultation with their paying authorities. Cash limits on current grant will reinforce the need for committees to consider the number and location of courthouses as part of their general responsibility for providing an effective and efficient service, having regard to the needs of court users as well as to affordability; but the effect on individual committees will depend on the total grant available to support magistrates courts expenditure and on the arrangements for its allocation by area, on which final decisions have not yet been made.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received with regard to the closure of magistrates courts in Dyfed; and what action he proposes to take.

Mr. John Patten: We have as yet received no representations in relation to the decision by the Dyfed magistrates courts committee on 18 July to close 11 courthouses. If there is an appeal by the paying authority under the Justices of the Peace Act 1979 against this decision we shall of course consider it on its merits.

Monmouth Police Station

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has had concerning funding in relation to the condition of Monmouth police station; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Representations about Monmouth police station have been received from members of the Gwent police authority and from a number of hon. Members.

Charity Laws

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to reform the current charity laws; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to reform the current charity laws; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The Government's proposals for reforming charity law are set out in the White Paper, "Charities: A Framework for the Future", published in 1989. There is always pressure for a place in the legislative programme, but preparation of a Bill is well advanced and we hope that there will be an early opportunity to introduce the legislation.

Prison Escapes

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many category A prisoners escaped from dispersal prisons during 1990-91; and from which establishments.

Mrs. Rumbold: On 15 January 1991 a category A prisoner under escort to Her Majesty's prison Full Sutton escaped, in company with a category B prisoner. Both were recaptured later the same day.

During 1990-91 no category A prisoners have escaped from within a dispersal prison.

Criminal Records

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to make a statement on the scrutiny of criminal records.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The scrutiny report raises some difficult and sensitive issues on the scope, management and disclosure of criminal records which require careful consideration. The Government's views on the report will be made known as soon as possible.

Gambling Machines

Mrs. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if his Department has received any representations from Mr. Mark Griffiths, of Polytechnic South West, Plymouth, on the effects of gambling machine abuse upon young people.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No.

Sick Leave

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when work commenced on the proposed circular on sickness and sick leave; and when he expects it to be published.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Police Records

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if there is a recommended or statutory period during which police forces should retain interview notes and case documents before they are destroyed;

(2) if he will make it his policy to issue guidance that no police interview notes or case documents should be destroyed for as long as a person is imprisoned on conviction of the crime involved;

(3) if he will list the practice of each police force in England and Wales for the retention of interview notes and case documents in serious cases.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There is no such statutory or recommended period. The policy on retention of interview notes and case documents is a matter for each chief officer of police.

Information on the practice of individual forces is not held centrally. At present we have no plans to issue guidance to police forces.

Immigration

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for entry clearance from *(a)* wives, *(b)* husbands, *(c)* fiancés and *(d)* fiancées made at British posts in (i) New Delhi, (ii) Bombay, (iii) Calcutta, (iv) Madras, (v) Dhaka, (vi) Islamabad, (vii) Karachi and (viii) Colombo for each quarter since January 1990 were (1) received, (2) granted and (3) refused; how many refusals at each post were (A) wholly and (B) partly because the visa officer was not satisfied that the primary purpose of the marriage was not immigration; how many refusals at each post were (x) wholly and (y) partly because the visa officer was not satisfied that the couple could support and accommodate themselves without recourse to public funds; what was the refusal rate at each post; and what percentage of those refusals were (I) wholly and (II) partly on primary purpose grounds.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 24 July 1991]:* Information for the Indian sub-continent for the whole of 1990 and, where available, for the first quarter of 1991 is given in the tables. Where the numbers are small, the figures for individual posts have been combined. To keep down the cost, only annual data for 1990 have been given. For information for the first quarter of 1990, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 26 July 1990 at columns *468-72*.

Information on refusals which takes account of successful appeals is not compiled for periods shorter than 12 months. Corresponding information for Colombo is not available centrally.

Table 1

Spouses and fiance (e) in the Indian sub-continent applying for entry clearance for settlement in the United Kingdom

Number of persons or percentage

	Husbands					
	1990					*1991*
	1st quarter	*2nd quarter*	*3rd quarter*	*4th quarter*	*Year*	*1st quarter*
New Delhi (including Calcutta)						
Applications received[1]	70	90	80	60	290	70
Applications granted[2]	60	50	50	40	200	40
Applications refused initially	40	20	30	40	130	50
Refusal rate (percentage)[3]	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	35	n.a.
Bombay (including Madras)						
Applications received[1]	100	70	50	40	270	100
Applications granted[2]	60	40	60	30	190	30
Applications refused initially	50	40	50	50	200	40
Refusal rate (percentage)[3]	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	44	n.a.
Dhaka						
Applications received[1]	140	150	160	160	610	130
Applications granted[2]	40	70	60	50	220	70
Applications refused initially	90	70	100	80	340	60
Refusal rate (percentage)[3]	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	58	n.a.

Husbands

	1990				1991
	1st quarter	*2nd quarter*	*3rd quarter*	*4th quarter*	*Year*	*1st quarter*
Islamabad (including Karachi)						
Applications received[1]	620	490	420	410	1,950	560
Applications granted[2]	210	200	230	350	1,000	390
Applications refused initially	530	370	270	380	1,550	410
Refusal rate (percentage)[3]	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	53	n.a.

Number of persons or percentage

Fiances

	1990				1991
	1st quarter	*2nd quarter*	*3rd quarter*	*4th quarter*	*Year*	*1st quarter*
New Delhi (including Calcutta)						
Applications received[1]	80	60	60	40	230	50
Applications granted[2]	30	20	10	20	80	20
Applications refused initially	30	20	20	40	110	40
Refusal rate (percentage)[3]	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	56	n.a.
Bombay (including Madras)						
Applications received[1]	80	60	40	40	220	70
Applications granted[2]	60	40	20	20	150	10
Applications refused initially	30	50	30	50	160	30
Refusal rate (percentage)[3]	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	40	n.a.
Dhaka						
Applications received[1]	10	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	20	[4]—
Applications granted[2]	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	10	—
Applications refused initially	10	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	20	—
Refusal rate (percentage)[3]	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	72	n.a.
Islamabad (including Karachi)						
Applications received[1]	110	80	60	60	310	70
Applications granted[2]	60	40	60	70	230	50
Applications refused initially	210	110	100	80	500	70
Refusal rate (percentage)[3]	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	60	n.a.

Number of persons or percentage

Wives

	1990				1991
	1st quarter	*2nd quarter*	*3rd quarter*	*4th quarter*	*Year*	*1st quarter*
New Delhi (including Calcutta)						
Applications received[1]	180	190	140	140	660	200
Applications granted[2]	160	160	170	170	660	130
Applications refused initially	10	20	30	30	100	20
Refusal rate (percentage)[3]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	12	n/a
Bombay (including Madras)						
Applications received[1]	460	280	200	250	1,210	450
Applications granted[2]	270	210	370	250	1,100	320
Applications refused initially	20	20	30	30	110	30
Refusal rate (percentage)[3]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	9	n/a
Dhaka						
Applications received[1]	310	320	330	270	1,240	240
Applications granted[2]	350	350	350	200	1,250	240
Applications refused initially	90	60	70	50	270	30
Refusal rate (percentage)[3]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	6	n/a
Islamabad (including Karachi)						
Applications received[1]	920	650	670	560	2,800	800
Applications granted[2]	660	700	860	730	2,950	890
Applications refused initially	120	100	60	70	340	90
Refusal rate (percentage)[3]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	11	n/a

Number of persons or percentage

Fiancees

	1990				1991
	1st quarter	*2nd quarter*	*3rd quarter*	*4th quarter*	*Year*	*1st quarter*
New Delhi (including Calcutta)						
Applications received [1]	60	70	60	50	240	50
Applications granted[2]	50	20	20	60	150	40

	Fiancees					
	1990					1991
	1st quarter	2nd quarter	3rd quarter	4th quarter	Year	1st quarter
Applications refused initially	20	[4]—	10	20	50	30
Refusal rate (percentage)[3]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	24	n/a
Bombay (including Madras)						
Applications received[1]	70	40	40	40	200	50
Applications received[2]	40	30	20	40	130	30
Applications refused initially	10	10	10	10	40	10
Refusal rate (percentage)[3]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	22	n/a
Dhaka						
Applications received[1]	10	[4]—	10	10	30	10
Applications granted[2]	[4]—	10	[4]—	[4]—	20	[4]—
Applications refused initially	—	[4]—	—	—	[4]—	[4]—
Refusal rate (percentage)[3]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	6	n/a
Islamabad (including Karachi)						
Applications received[1]	50	50	50	40	190	50
Applications granted[2]	60	40	60	40	200	50
Applications refused initially	10	10	10	10	40	[4]—
Refusal rate (percentage)[3]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	16	n/a

[1] Including applications subsequently withdrawn or lapsed
[2] Granted initially or on appeal
[3] Applications refused initially, minus applications granted on appeal, as a percentage of applications decided
[4] 5 or fewer
n/a = not available

Table 2

Spouses and fiance(e) in the Indian Sub-continent refused[1] entry clearance for settlement in the United Kingdom in 1990

Number of persons or percentage

	Number refused because couple could not accommodate and/or maintain themselves without recourse to public funds:		*Number refused because primary purpose of the marriage was to obtain admission to the United Kingdom:*		*Primary purpose refusals as a percentage of all refusals:*	
	Solely for these	*Partly for these reasons*	*Solely for this reason*	*Partly for this reason*	*Solely on primary purpose grounds*	*Partly on primary purpose grounds*
New Delhi (including Calcutta)						
Husbands	—	10	60	10	53	10
Fiances	[4]—	10	60	10	60	12
Wives	10	10	50	[4]—	57	3
Fiancees	—	10	60	10	49	28
Bombay (including Madras)						
Husbands	[4]—	10	150	10	92	4
Fiances	[4]—	[4]—	100	10	86	8
Wives	10	[4]—	60	[4]—	59	2
Fiancees	[4]—	[4]—	20	[4]—	59	5
Dhaka						
Husbands	10	60	220	60	70	18
Fiances	—	10	10	10	[2]41	[2]35
Wives	40	30	[4]—	10	2	5
Fiancees	—	—	—	—	[3]—	[3]—
Islamabad (including Karachi)						
Husbands	30	700	390	690	34	60
Fiances	[4]—	190	120	210	34	60
Wives	90	40	20	20	11	12
Fiancees	[4]—	10	10	10	19	24
Total Indian sub-continent						
Husbands	30	770	820	770	47	44
Fiances	[4]—	200	280	230	49	41
Wives	140	70	130	30	25	6
Fiancees	10	20	50	10	42	20

[1] Applications refused initially, minus applications granted on appeal.
[2] Percentage based on fewer than 15 applications refused.
[3] Percentage not calculated for five or fewer applications refused.
[4] Five or fewer, or ½ per cent. or less.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for settlement by wives and children in *(a)* Dhaka and *(b)* Islamabad were (i) received, (ii) granted, (iii) refused, (iv) deferred at

first interview, (v) lapsed and (vi) outstanding and awaiting first interview for each quarter since the beginning of 1990.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 24 July 1991]:* The information requested is given in the table.

Wives and children applying for entry clearance for settlement in the United Kingdom[1]

Number of persons

Post	*Applications*					
	Newly received[2]	*Granted*[3]	*Refused initially*[4]	*Referred or deferred*[5]	*Withdrawn or lapsed*[6]	*Awaiting first interview at end of quarter*
Dhaka						
1990						
1st quarter	1,320	1,570	520	470	280	1,600
2nd quarter	1,190	1,650	380	[6]—	240	1,300
3rd quarter	1,110	1,330	360	[6]—	160	1,100
4th quarter	980	650	200	[6]—	20	1,500
1991						
1st quarter	640	940	220	[6]—	50	1,300
Islamabad						
1990						
1st quarter	1,190	990	250	640	100	1,700
2nd quarter	860	1,050	200	[6]—	60	1,400
3rd quarter	890	1,170	130	[6]—	40	1,200
4th quarter	840	1,190	180	[6]—	40	1,000
1991						
1st quarter	980	1,240	160	[6]—	60	1,300
Karachi						
1990						
1st quarter	100	60	10	10	[7]—	70
2nd quarter	70	80	[7]—	[6]—	[7]—	50
3rd quarter	80	70	10	[6]—	10	50
4th quarter	60	50	—	[6]—	[7]—	50
1991						
1st quarter	80	40	[7]—	[6]—	—	100

[1] Including all persons applying for a certificate of entitlement to the right of abode in the United Kingdom.
[2] Data include some double counting in respect of applications recorded initially for entry clearance and then subsequently for a certificate of entitlement.
[3] Granted initially or on appeal.
[4] Since about the end of 1989, settlement applications have been refused in the circumstances where previously they would have been lapsed.
[5] Referred to the Home Office for decision or deferred for further inquiries.
[6] Data discontinued from May 1990.
[7] Five or fewer.

Violence Against Women

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the progress towards implementing the recommendations of the Women's National Commission report on violence against women.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 28 June 1991]:* We welcome the Women's National Commission's report on violence against women in 1985. In the light of that report, and of research studies which have provided fresh insight into offences of rape and domestic violence, we have issued guidance to the police on how to improve their response to these crimes; strengthened the powers of the courts to punish offenders and to protect victims; and encouraged local agencies to work together to provide help and support to women who are victims of violent or sexual crimes.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Bank Auditing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to introduce legislation under which all banks would be required to file their annual accounts within 90 days of the year end.

Mr. Maples: None. All limited companies are already subject to statutory time limits for the filing of accounts.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to introduce legislation under which all banks would be required to publish a cash flow statement and related data.

Mr. Maples: The Government have no plans to introduce legislation in this area. I understand, however, that the Accounting Standards Board is working towards the publication later this year of an accounting standard which will require companies to include a cash flow statement in their annual accounts.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what plans he has to propose legislation to prevent banks from operating off-balance sheet financing schemes in their financial statements;

(2) what plans he has to introduce legislation under which bank auditors will be changed every five years;

(3) whether he has any plans to propose legislation under which bank depositors would individually be able to sue the auditors if the bank fails.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will propose legislation under which banks selling off-balance sheet financing schemes will not be licensed;

(2) if he will propose legislation under which a bank's auditors would be banned from supplying non-audit services;

(3) if he will propose legislation under which the annual reports of the banks will be required to publish the highest and the lowest interest rates charged by them during the year;

(4) if he will propose legislation under which all banks will be required to publish the auditor's comments on the internal financial controls of banks;

(5) if he will propose legislation under which all bank advertisements will be required clearly to state the maximum protection available to depositors.

Mr. Maples: The Government have no plans to introduce legislation.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has any plans to investigate the role of unqualified individuals in the audit of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International.

Mr. Maples: I am not aware of any suggestion that the individuals in charge of the audit of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International were not suitably qualified.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to review the operations in the United Kingdom of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International in respect of inducements to clients and information provided to customers, with a view to possible amendments to the banking legislation.

Mr. Maples: I refer the hon. Member to the announcement made by the Prime Minister on 22 July at column 757.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what communications he has received from Ernst and Young about the operations of BCCI.

Mr. Maples: Ernst and Young did not communicate any doubts about the operations of BCCI to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, nor would I expect them to have done so.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the incidence of prosecutions of BCCI officials for money laundering in the United States of America since 1986.

Mr. Maples: I understand that employees of companies in the BCCI group were indicted in Tampa, Florida in 1988 and subsequently convicted in 1990. Two prosecutions were brought in the United Kingdom in connection with the same case.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the number of United Kingdom depositors involved in the BCCI bank, together with the total capital involvement.

Mr. Maples: I understand that the branches of BCCI in the United Kingdom had some 70,000 depositors including overseas and United Kingdom residents and 140,000 accounts in both sterling and other currencies. It has not yet been possible for the (provisional) liquidator to estimate the capital involved.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether BCCI had at the time of, or recently prior to, its closure the control of any other banks with current operations in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maples: No.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent discussions have been held between the Treasury and Mr. Agha Hasan Abedi about BCCI banking operations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maples: There have been no discussions between the Treasury and Mr. Agha Hasan Abedi.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the scale of illegal money laundering identified in the operations of BCCI in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maples: One employee in the United Kingdom operations of BCCI was convicted of money laundering last year. There have been no further prosecutions of United Kingdom employees of BCCI for money laundering.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will place in the Library copies of all correspondence he received from the Governor of the Bank of England relating to the Bank of Credit and Commerce International since June 1987.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No. Exchanges between the Governor and myself are confidential. Any material relating to BCCI would, moreover, be covered by the provisions of part V of the Banking Act 1987. Lord Justice Bingham will of course have access to any correspondence received from the Governor relating to BCCI.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consultations his Department had with the Governor of the Bank of England about his visit to Abu Dhabi to meet officials concerning the BCCI issue.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 22 July 1991]:* My officials and I have discussed BCCI with the Governor on a number of occasions over the last few weeks, both before and after his visit to Abu Dhabi.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to consult a creditors' meeting before a liquidator is appointed in connection with BCCI.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. I shall therefore write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he was informed of the intention of the Bank of England to close the Bank of Credit and Commerce International.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 22 July 1991]:* I was informed on 28 June that the Bank of England proposed to call the College of Supervisors together to consider closure.

Banking Act (Disclosure Requirements)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what monitoring he does of accounting disclosure requirements imposed under the Banking Act; and how this is reported to Parliament.

Mr. Maples: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. I shall therefore write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Banks (Investigations)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he can give an undertaking that in internal investigations of banks carried out under the Banking Act partners from auditing firms criticised by Department Trade and Industry inspectors will not be used.

Mr. Maples: I am advised that the Bank of England will continue to take into account all relevant factors in deciding who should conduct investigations commissioned under the Banking Act.

Committee on Local Authority Borrowing

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the members of the Treasury committee on local authority borrowing; how often the committee meets; what are its terms of reference; when the status of the list of authorised institutions was last discussed; what advice the representative of the Bank of England gave about the status of the list; if he will publish the minutes of the meeting; and what information he has about the subsequent circulation to local authorities by the local authority associations represented at the meeting of the advice given by the Bank of England.

Mr. Maples: The Committee on Local Authority Borrowing is chaired by the Treasury and includes Government and Bank of England officials and representatives from the local authority associations. There is no regular cycle for meetings. The terms of reference are

"to consider Local Authority Borrowing".

The status of the list of institutions authorised under the Banking Act 1987 was discussed at the meeting held on 10 May. The issue was raised because some local authorities had deposits with Chancery bank, which had been put into administration. A Bank of England representative advised that:

"it was important to regard the list of authorised institutions as just that: a list of institutions authorised to take deposits at the date of the list. . . . The list did not say anything about the relative creditworthiness of the institutions or that they could not fail. That was an assessment the local authorities, and other depositors, had to make."

A copy of the minutes of the meeting are being placed in the Library. The minutes are sent to those present. Wider circulation by the representatives of the local authority associations is a matter for them.

Butchers

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the number of independent butchers' shops that have ceased trading in the last 12 months.

Mr. Maples: I have been asked to reply. The number of traders registered for VAT as butchers was 13,641 in April 1991 compared with 14,181 12 months previously.

Income Tax, Scotland

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is the average income tax payable by each tax unit in Scotland;

(2) how many tax units there are in Scotland paying tax at the *(a)* basic rate and *(b)* higher rate.

Mr. Maude: The estimated numbers of single people and married couples resident in Scotland liable to income tax solely at the basic rate is 1·77 million for 1988-89, the latest available year. In addition some 90,000 were liable to tax at the higher rate. The average income tax liability per tax-paying tax unit is estimated to be £1,880 in 1988-89.

Foundation for Sport and the Arts

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether Her Majesty's Government's relationship with the Foundation for Sport and the Arts and the Football Trust will be reviewed in the event of a change of ownership of any member of the Pools Promoters Association.

Mr. Mellor: Whether or not Her Majesty's Government would need to review its relationship with the Foundation for Sport and the Arts or with the Football Trust would depend upon who the new owners were and on their attitude to their company's continued participation in either body.

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what will be the channel of communication between Her Majesty's Government and the Foundation for Sport and the Arts, once the foundation has been formally established.

Mr. Mellor: It is important that there should be a single channel of communication between Her Majesty's Government and the Foundation for Sport and the Arts. It will be provided by the Department of Education and Science and, in particular, the Minister for Sport. A representative of the Department will attend meetings of the foundation's trustees. I regret any confusion that may have been caused by my mistaken reference to another Minister in this context during the recent debate on clause 114 of the Finance Bill on 15 July at column 172.

Central Statistical Office

Dr. Bray: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many staff work in the Central Statistical Office; and what is the distribution of their grades;

(2) what is the annual budget of the Central Statistical Office.

Mr. Maples: As at 12 July 1991, there were 1,099·5 staff employed by the Central Statistical Office, with a grade distribution as follows:

	Number
Grade 1A	1·0
Grade 2	1·0
Grade 3	3·0
Grade 4	1·0
Grade 5	20·0
Grade 6	3·0
Grade 7	67·5
Senior executive officer	34·0
Senior assistant/assistant statistician	25·0
Higher executive officer	142·0
Executive officer	274·0
Administrative officer	384·5
Administrative assistant	65·0
Higher graphics officer	1·0
Graphics officer	4·0
Senior information officer	1·0
Information officer	1·0
Assistant information officer	1·0
Mapping and charting officer	1·0
Librarian	1·0
Typing manager	2·0
Phototypesetter	1·0
Senior personal secretary	3·0
Personal secretary	22·5
Typist	16·0
Support manager 3	1·0
Support grade band 1	6·0
Support grade band 2	17·0
Total	1,099·5

Note: Part-time staff are counted as 0·5.

Details of the 1991-92 provision for the Central Statistical Office (class XVIII, vote 13) are shown in Supply Estimates 1991-92 (HC 236-XVIII). The net provision for 1991-92 is £31,741,000, comprising gross provision of £32,791,000 and appropriations in aid of £1,050,000.

Company Vans

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the maximum penalties that can be imposed on companies which fail to register the information detailing the private use of company vans when completing P11D forms for the Inland Revenue.

Mr. Maude: The maximum penalty which an employer can be charged for fraudulently or negligently completing a form P11D is £3,000.

National Savings Office, Durham

Mr. Speller: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many complaints he has received regarding the national savings office in Durham and delays in notification to regional post offices of payments to be made on specific dates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maples: I have received no complaints of this nature during 1991. If my hon. Friend has a specific case in mind perhaps he would like to write to me or the director of savings so that inquiries can be made.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his reply of 22 July, if he will make it his policy to keep statistics on parliamentary questions for written answers to his Department to show how many answers *(a)* do not give the information requested because of (i) disproportionate cost or (ii) other reasons, *(b)* give an undertaking to write to the hon. Member who asked the question and *(c)* were referred for answer to the chief executive of each next steps agency.

Mr. Mellor: No. Answers to parliamentary questions are published in the *Official Report* and are therefore open to public scrutiny; additionally, statistical data may be accessed through POLIS.

Bank of England

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the dates on which he met the Governor of the Bank of England since June 1987; and what was discussed on each occasion.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have met the Governor from time to time to discuss a wide range of issues.

Duty-free Goods

Sir Barney Hayhoe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the international treaties or agreements which govern or are relevant to the existence and continuation of the duty-free concession for international travellers.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. I shall therefore write to my right hon. Friend and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Deposit Takers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the banking companies on the Bank of England's current list of deposit takers supplied to local authorities.

Mr. Maples: The Department of the Environment wrote to local authorities on 21 June asking them to complete a routine statistical return of their borrowing and lending. Enclosed with their letter was a list of "institutions included within United Kingdom banks (at 31 December 1990)". The list was provided solely to assist completion of the statistical return. It is published annually in the Bank of England's *Quarterly Bulletin* and I have placed a copy in the Library.

Personal Equity Plans

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for personal equity plans.

Mr. Maude: Personal equity plans continue to do very well. In 1990-91 a further half million plans were taken out, with initial investment of £1·6 billion. The average amount invested was a little over £3,000.

The total number of plans taken out, since their introduction in 1987, is now nearly 1·5 million. And the total subscribed—ignoring withdrawals and growth—is almost £4 billion.

These figures do not yet reflect the changes announced in this year's Budget.

Public Service Pensions

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what he estimates would be the cost of increasing the pensions from a current date of those retired public servants whose pensions were permanently depressed as a result of retirement during the 1970s and 1980s when their pay was held down by Government policy but later the subject of special reviews for those remaining in service, in accordance with the arrangements set out in Inland Revenue memorandum No. 12 of February 1974.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. I shall therefore write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Western Isles Council

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list for each transaction the sums advanced by the Treasury to Western Isles islands council in 1990 and 1991; if he will give the reasons for each advance; and what was the rate of interest charged by the Treasury on each advance.

Mr. Maples *[holding answer on 22 July 1991]:* The Treasury does not lend money to local authorities. Public sector lending to local authorities is carried out by the Public Works Loan Board. The PWLB does not disclose its transactions with individual authorities.

Interest Rate Swaps

Mr. Meale: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on which local authorities were involved in problems with interest rate swaps, including details of the amounts involved in each case.

Mr. Key: I have asked to reply.

I am not aware of any comprehensive list of authorities which were involved in interest rate swaps and the amounts involved in each case. A list of authorities was published in *The Daily Telegraph* on 2 January 1991 and was the subject of comment in the *Local Government Chronicle* on 11 January. I cannot vouch for the accuracy of the list.

Accounting Law

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will review accounting law and practice concerning banks and their subsidiaries.

Mr. Maples: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has just completed final consultations on draft regulations to implement the EC Bank Accounts Directive. I have no plans to review the area separately.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Office Costs Allowance

Mr. Page: To ask the Lord President of the Council whether he will refer the office costs allowance to the Top Salaries Review Body.

Mr. MacGregor: The Top Salaries Review Body last reviewed the office costs allowance in 1987. I have written to the chairman of the Top Salaries Review Body, asking him to conduct a further review, in the following terms:

"As you know, I was very grateful that you were able to deal so quickly with the recent reviews of the Parliamentary Pension Scheme and Resettlement Grants.

The TSRB has also periodically reviewed aspects of the structure of Parliamentary allowances. The Office Costs Allowance was last reviewed in 1987. The Government does not consider that a fundamental review of Parliamentary allowances is necessary at present, but would be grateful if the TSRB would conduct a further review of the operation of the Office Costs Allowance in the House of Commons dealing as before with structure, level and uprating.

It would be very helpful if the TSRB could report on the Office Costs Allowance by the end of the year."

Parliamentary Sittings

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Lord President of the Council what information he has on the average number of sitting days per year over the past five years for the lower house of the legislature for each of the EC countries, together with the United States of America and Canada; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 8 July 1991]:* No detailed information is kept by my office, but I understand that some of the data requested are published in the latest edition (1986) of the Inter-Parliamentary Union's "Parliaments of the World", a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

New Members (Induction Book)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Lord President of the Council what progress has been made in preparing an induction book for new hon. Members, based on codifying all the existing materials issued to new hon. Members by the various Departments and originators in the House of Commons.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 19 July 1991]:* Arrangements are now well advanced for the production at the beginning of the next Parliament of a looseleaf A4 size binder containing information about the services provided for Members and their staff by the six Departments of the House and other public agencies. Space will be available in the binder for information for new Members from other services, including the political parties. A final mock-up of this publication will be submitted to the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee for approval before the end of the Session.

Terrace Dining Rooms

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Lord President of the Council (1) if he will list the total number of bookings in the past 12 months for which details are available for the Terrace Dining Rooms made by *(a)* Conservative Members and *(b)* Members of all other parties;

(2) if he will list the bookings made for the Terrace Dining Rooms in the first full week of June, listing organisations and Members who make the bookings;

(3) what is the allocation system for Members to book the Terrace Dining Rooms.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 23 July 1991]:* In accordance with regulations agreed by the Services

Committee for banqueting services, Members may book Terrace Dining Rooms A, B, C and D, the Terrace Pavilion, the Members' Dining Room, the Harcourt Grill Room, and the Westminster Hall Cafeteria for functions sponsored by themselves. Members may have no more than three bookings outstanding at any one time in their name.

It is not the practice to disclose details of bookings made by Members.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Lord President of the Council whether he has considered alternative uses for Terrace Dining Rooms as *(a)* creches for the children of hon. Members and staff, *(b)* study rooms for Members and *(c)* cafeteria facilities for children's parties visiting the House.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 23 July 1991]:* Suggestions similar to those made by the hon. Member have been made in the past, but were considered to be inappropriate. The Terrace Dining Rooms form part of a useful facility for Members to entertain their guests.

The Services Committee is nevertheless giving serious consideration in different contexts to each of the matters raised in the question.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South Africa

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what meetings he had during his recent visit to South Africa in which he discussed or made representations on the causes of violence in Natal and the Transvaal.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs discussed the issue of violence with many of those he met in South Africa including President de Klerk, Mr. Mandela and Chief Buthelezi.

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what conditions apply to grant payments by Her Majesty's Government to the Inkatha organisation in South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: We do not give direct financial support to any party in South Africa. We have given material help to organisations in South Africa previously excluded from the national political process. So far we have given to the ANC £71,500 worth of assistance, to Inkatha £43,783 and to the PAC £2,784. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs outlined the conditions applying to this assistance in his reply to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) on 13 June 1990 at column 255.

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he made to President de Klerk on his recent visit to South Africa, on the need for the South African Government to maintain law and order in an impartial manner; and what representations have been made by the European Community.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs stressed to President de Klerk and his ministers the need to ensure that the security forces act impartially and effectively. The European Community made a demarche to the South African Government on 28 May, urging them to do everything in their power to put an end to violence, effectively and impartially.

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the South African Government concerning the covert activities of South Africa's security services.

Mrs. Chalker: We discuss a wide range of issues with the South African Government regularly. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs spoke to Mr. Pik Botha, the South African Foreign Minister, on 24 July.

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish the sums of money paid to Her Majesty's Government either directly or by the British ambassador to South Africa's special fund to Inkatha in each year since 1988.

Mrs. Chalker: We have made no payments to any fund for Inkatha. We have made available material help to them and others previously excluded from the national political process as explained in answer to an earlier question.

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what meetings during his recent visit to South Africa he had with Chief Buthelezi; and if he raised the involvement of members of the Kwa Zulu Assembly in violence in Natal.

Mrs. Chalker: Chief Buthelezi called on my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in Durban on 9 July. They discussed ways in which to bring about an end to violence in Natal. They agreed that all political leaders have a responsibility to use their influence to reduce tension and promote political tolerance.

Western Sahara

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government intend to sponsor the sending of a parliamentary monitoring team to the referendum in the western Sahara.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We understand that in due course the United Nations Secretariat will approach member states of the United Nations Security Council to ask whether they intend to send unofficial observers to monitor the referendum campaign and the referendum, due to take place in early 1992. We shall inform the House when we have further information.

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government intend to contribute *(a)* forces, *(b)* police and *(c)* civilian personnel to the United Nations operations conducting the referendum in the western Sahara.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are contributing to the cost of the operation. In addition we are providing the peace-keeping force with 15 military observers.

Soviet Union

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics about the failure to grant exit visas to Olga Mariya and Yakov Bekker of Doshanbe, Yefim and Yevglariya Gelman of Chelyabinsk, and the Gurevich family and Vladimir Idelson of Leningrad, to enable them to rejoin family in Israel.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are prepared to consider raising these cases with the Soviet authorities, but to make representations effectively we would need further information from either the families or concerned organisations.

Vienna Talks

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the content of recent NATO proposals for reducing military manpower in Europe at the Vienna talks.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Further negotiations are taking place in Vienna, in accordance with the CFE treaty, focusing primarily on measures to limit national military manpower in Europe. Under NATO proposals tabled on 4 July, a broad definition of manpower would be agreed including all full-time military personnel of land, air and air defence forces together with personnel in all other land-based units holding equipment limited by the CFE treaty. NATO's proposals would require each participant to limit and where necessary reduce its military personnel through an international commitment, in order to achieve a stable and secure balance of forces at a lower overall manpower level. Limitations should be implemented within 40 months of the CFE treaty entry into force.

Nuclear Arms

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy for reducing the overall remaining Soviet nuclear threat to Britain through negotiation; and what proposals he has for negotiations to reduce the threat *(a)* from non-strategic naval nuclear missiles and *(b)* from Soviet nuclear-capable aircraft.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We welcome the prospect of signature of a START agreement, which will be a milestone towards a safer and more stable world; this agreement will benefit the broader security of the allies. Follow-on talks on strategic arms limitation will be held between the United States and Soviet Union. Proposals concerning coverage of further systems are a matter for the two sides. Soviet aircraft in Europe are already limited by the CFE treaty.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects the short-range nuclear force talks to begin.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: NATO is committed under the London declaration to talks aimed at reducing US and Soviet short-range nuclear forces in Europe. Preparations for these talks are continuing within the alliance. No date has been set for such talks to begin.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether it remains Her Majesty's Government's policy to support the principle of challenge inspections, anytime, anywhere, without right of refusal, for verification of the proposed chemical weapons convention.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We continue to believe that a system of intrusive challenge inspections will represent an essential element of an effective verification regime for the future chemical weapons convention.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been received by Her Majesty's Government from other members of the western group of nations since the proposal on challenge inspections was made to the negotiations on the chemical weapons convention at the conference on disarmament on 15 July by Her Majesty's Government, together with Australia, Japan and the United States of America.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have received no formal representations from other members of the western group of nations since proposals for a challenge inspection regime for a future chemical weapons convention were tabled in the conference on disarmament on 15 July. We have been, and shall remain, in close and regular contact with the other members of the western group on this and the remaining outstanding issues in the negotiations.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library a copy of the proposal on challenge inspections made to the negotiations on the chemical weapons convention at the conference on disarmament on the 15 July, by Her Majesty's Government, together with Australia, Japan and the United States of America.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I am making arrangements to place in the Library a copy of CD/CW/WP 352 of 15 July, the conference on disarmament document which sets out the US proposals for a challenge inspection regime which were co-sponsored by the United Kingdom, Japan and Australia.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations took place between Her Majesty's Government and the other members of the western group of nations at the conference on disarmament before the proposal on challenge inspections was made to the negotiations on the chemical weapons convention at the conference on disarmament on the 15 July, by her Majesty's Government, together with Australia, Japan and the United States of America.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There was close and regular consultation between all members of the western group of nations at the conference on disarmament (CD) before the tabling by the United States of the text of a proposed challenge inspection regime under the co-sponsorship of the United Kingdom, Japan and Australia.

Biological Weapons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy on the biological weapons convention.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We fully support the 1972 biological and toxin weapons convention and believe it represents an important international norm against the development, acquisition and retention of biological and toxin weapons. We hope that measures to strengthen the treaty regime will be agreed at the third review conference in September this year.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals Her Majesty's Government will be making to the biological weapons convention review conference to be held in September.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We shall be submitting proposals to strengthen the existing provisions of the biological weapons convention and to maintain its status as an important international norm against biological and toxin weapons. Central to our policy will be proposals to improve and extend the regime of confidence-building measures, to improve organisational arrangements by establishing a supportive body and to examine the feasibility of devising effective verification procedures.

Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 12 July, *Official Report*, column *520*, on what date he placed in the Library a copy of the updated British data exchanged in accordance with section VII of the protocol on notification and exchange of information to the CFE treaty giving the details of the location of British forces in the United Kingdom and continental Europe.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The updated British data exchanged in accordance with section VII of the CFE treaty protocol was added to the Library following the exchange in February this year.

We have checked with the Library; the papers are available for consultation in the international affairs and defence section.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 12 July, *Official Report*, column *520*, if he will place in the Library a copy of the updated United States data exchanged in accordance with section VII of the protocol on notification and exchange of information to the CFE treaty giving the details of the location of United States forces in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Some basic data on equipment holdings is contained in the 1991 Statement on the Defence Estimates.

Beyond this it is not our responsibility to publish the CFE data provided by other member states. It is up to individual states to publish their own data.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has regarding the timetable for ratification of the conventional forces in Europe treaty by other states; and if he will list those countries that have already ratified this treaty.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Czechoslovakia ratified the CFE treaty on 23 July. Most of our NATO allies hope to be able to ratify during the autumn, as do we. Indications from other CFE signatories so far are that they too intend to ratify before the end of the year.

Mrs. Jamila Sadiq

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the British High Commission in Islamabad sent papers to the Home Office concerning Mrs. Jamila Sadiq (Ref. IMP S767465 (S)) who has applied to join her husband in the United Kingdom; when the post received a request to send a second set of papers concerning her case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In accordance with the guidelines on the handling of representations by Members of Parliament in immigration cases, issued to Members on 14 December 1988, I have referred the question to the correspondence unit of the migration and visa department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The hon. Member will receive a reply from the unit as soon as possible.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many parliamentary questions for written answer have been answered by his Department so far this Session, and in the comparable period for the last Session; and if he will publish a table of how many answers *(a)* do not give the information requested because of (i) disproportionate cost or (ii) other reasons, *(b)* give an undertaking to write to the hon. Member who asked the question and *(c)* were referred for answer to the chief executive of each next steps agency.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Including the aid wing, this Department has answered 1,989 written questions so far this Session. This compares with 2,203 questions for the comparable period in the 1989-90 Session. Nine from the current session were referred for answer to next steps' chief executives. None was referred during the previous Session. The rest of the information requested is not centrally recorded and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received from the United Kingdom's overseas posts concerning the administration and activities of any branch of BCCI; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: All overseas posts were informed of the action on 5 July by the regulatory authorities in a number of jurisdictions to secure control of the assets of banks in the BCC group. A number of posts have subsequently reported on developments in individual countries. We had reports last year of the indictment of BCCI in Florida on charges of money laundering. We are checking whether we have had reports from posts about other banks in the BCC group prior to 5 July and will write to the hon. Member.

Hong Kong

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many people arriving in Hong Kong since 12 July in order to attend the global Chinese student union conference there were refused entry to Hong Kong; what reasons were given for their refusal; and what representations have been achieved about this both in the United Kingdom and in Hong Kong.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Fourteen people arriving in Hong Kong since 12 July for the conference were denied entry to Hong Kong. These decisions are matters for the Hong Kong Government. Few representations have been received about this in Hong Kong, and still fewer here.

G7 Summit

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total cost to the Exchequer of the G7 summit.

Mr. Garel-Jones: With many accounts still to be settled, I cannot give a precise figure, but I expect the total cost to be around £7 million.

South Georgia (Hazardous Waste)

Mr. Donald Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in removing hazardous materials and waste from the abandoned whaling stations on South Georgia.

Mr. Garel-Jones: An operation to deal with the problems of potential environmentally damaging materials in the old whaling stations on South Georgia took place from January to May this year. It was funded jointly by the Government of South Georgia and Christian Salvesen plc, who hold the leases to the stations. The work was carried out to specifications laid down by environmental consultants commissioned by the Government of South Georgia, who have now inspected it and approved the success of the operation. Items of historical interest are to be preserved in a South Georgia whaling museum.

ENERGY

Energy Conservation

Sir Marcus Fox: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to energy conservation in Government Departments to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Wakeham: I am required to give agreement in principle that any proposed exhibition meets the criteria laid down by the Serjeant at Arms. If my hon. Friend would care to provide details of the exhibition, I shall give the request full and prompt consideration.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the progress since September 1990 in implementing a programme to develop renewable energy technologies showing promise of commercial viability; and when he will announce the conclusions of the review of future policy.

Mr. Wakeham: My Department has been undertaking a substantial programme to develop renewable energy technologies consistent with the strategy published in 1988 as Energy Paper 55. For example, my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) recently announced further funding of £205,000 for the United Kingdom's first shoreline wave energy system, and a £250,000 programme of research into solar energy. Moreover, we have made available considerable financial support through the non-fossil fuel obligation to generators utilising renewable energy technology. The Department's strategy on renewable energy sources is currently being reviewed and I would expect results to be available early in 1992.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proposals he has to amend or reform the current annual round of bidding by promoters of renewable energy projects for approval by the Non-Fossil Fuel Purchasing Agency.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The procedures to select projects to be contracted in fulfilment of a non-fossil fuel obligation for renewables are a matter for the regional electricity companies and their agents, the Non-Fossil Purchasing Agency Ltd, which must bear in mind that the Director-General of Electricity Supply has to be satisfied with the arrangements.

Salter's Duck

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about Government policy towards research and development of offshore wave power devices, with specific reference to Salter's Duck.

Mr. Moynihan: The Department of Energy is currently reviewing the prospects for wave energy across the whole range from shoreline to large-scale offshore devices, including the Salter Duck. The review is expected to be completed later this year.

Further funding of £205,000 for the United Kingdom's first shoreline wave energy system on the Scottish island of Islay was announced on 15 July, bringing the total funding by the Department for this device to £900,000.

Peat

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his answer of 20 December 1990, *Official Report*, column *304*, to the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) whether, in the light of the volume of extraction of peat in the Flow Country, and of the studies conducted for his Department, he will make it his policy to discontinue the use of peat, other than for local domestic use in traditional areas; and if he will set out the policy conclusions for his studies.

Mr. Moynihan: The final studies undertaken on behalf of the Department of Energy concerning the potential use of peat as a fuel particularly in relation to Scottish peat resources have now been concluded. My Department does not regard the use of peat as an industrial fuel to be an economic proposition. However the use of peat for any potential application now commands widespread environmental concerns. The findings of these latest studies will be published shortly and include much information on Scottish peat resources which should greatly assist future environmental assessment studies. The Government fully recognise the desirability of preserving peatlands and are actively considering the ways of resolving the apparent conflict between peat extraction and conservation issues.

Wind Energy

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what consultations he has had with the director of the Meteorological Office concerning the supply of relevant sections of the national wind map to promoters of wind energy projects.

Mr. Moynihan: I understand that the Meteorological Ofice routinely sells its wind data to the promoters of wind energy projects, but the Department has had no contact with it regarding this activity.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many parliamentary questions for written answer have been answered by his Department so far this Session, and in the comparable period for the last Session; and if he will publish a table of how many answers *(a)* do not give the information requested because of (i) disproportionate cost or (ii) other reasons, *(b)* give an undertaking to write to the hon. Member who asked the question and *(c)* were referred for answer to the chief executive of each next steps agency.

Mr. Wakeham: The information requested is a matter of public record.

Gas Exploration, Ryedale

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many licences have been granted for the exploration of gas in the Ryedale district.

Mr. Wakeham: Since the introduction of the Petroleum (Production) Regulations 1966, 23 petroleum licences have been awarded covering areas wholly or partly within the Ryedale district. Of these, 13 are still in existence. These licences confer rights to explore for oil as well as gas. I have placed in the Libraries of both Houses a copy of a map which shows the current licensed areas in the Ryedale district.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list *(a)* the area, *(b)* the applicant and *(c)* the date of all applications that have been made to date to take up licences granted for gas exploration in the Ryedale district.

Mr. Wakeham: The table lists the licences which have been awarded for areas which are wholly or partly in Ryedale district since the introduction of the Petroleum (Production) Regulations 1966. The licences confer rights to explore for oil as well as gas.

Licence	*Date of application*	*Applicant group*	*Current licensees*	*Area awarded*	
Exploration Licences (XLs)					
XL146	May 1980	Clyde Petroleum		429 sq kms	Licence surrendered
XL148	May 1980	Clyde Petroleum		116 sq kms	Licence surrendered
XL149	May 1980	Taylor Woodrow RTZ ELF James Finlay Candecca		158 sq kms	Licence surrendered
XL150	May 1980	Amoco		476 sq kms	Licence surrendered
XL167	August 1981	Weeks Petroleum Lennox Oil Whitehall Petroleum		486 sq kms	Licence surrendered
XL202	June 1982	Taylor Woodrow RTZ ELF James Finlay Candecca Resources		491 sq kms	Licence surrendered
Production Licences (PLs)					
PL076	December 1967	BP Exploration Home Oil		477 sq kms	Licence surrendered
PL077	December 1967	BP Home Oil	Kelt U.K. Ltd. Candecca Resources Marinex Exploration Tullow Exploration	469 sq kms	
PL079	December 1967	BP Home Oil	Kelt U.K. Ltd. Candecca Resources Marinex Exploration Tullow Exploration	488 sq kms	
PL080	December 1967	BP Home Oil	Kelt U.K. Ltd. Candecca Resources Marinex Exploration Tullow Exploration	470 sq kms	
PL081	December 1967	BP Home Oil	Kelt U.K. Ltd. Candecca Resources Marinex Exploration Tullow Exploration		
PL164	February 1969	Anco Exploration		467 sq kms	Licence surrendered

Licence	Date of application	Applicant group	Current licensees	Area awarded	
PL234	July 1982	Taylor Woodrow RTZ ELF James Finlay Candecca Resources	Kelt U.K. Ltd. Candecca Resources Nedlloyd Energy	150 sq kms	
Exploration Licences (EXLs)					
EXL005	September 1985	Taylor Woodrow Candecca Resources ELF James Finlay RTZ	Kelt U.K. Ltd. Candecca Resources Pict Petroleum ELF Oil and Gas	91 sq kms	
EXL006	September 1985	Amoco ELF	Amoco UK Ltd. ELF UK Ltd.	192 sq kms	
EXL036	September 1985	Shell Garth Resources		155 sq kms	Licence surrendered
EXL098	September 1986	Clyde Petroleum Ind Scot Energy Bow Valley	Clyde Exploration Industrial Scotland Energy Bow Valley Petroleum	116 sq kms	
EXL099	September 1986	Taylor Woodrow Candecca Resources RTZ ELF James Finlay		40 sq kms	Licence surrendered
EXL105	May 1987	Enterprise Oil B Gas BP Pet Dev Peko Pet Whitehall Pet	Tullow Exploration B Gas BP Exploration Amerada Hess DNO Onshore	170 sq kms	
EXL129	January 1988	Marinex Pet Aran Energy Holl Sea Search Renown Energy	Teredo Pet Aran Energy Puffin Oil Monument Resources	151 sq kms	
EXL130	January 1988	Amoco UK	Amoco UK	51 sq kms	
EXL180	October 1989	Kelt U.K. Ltd. Candecca Resources Marinex Exploration Tullow Exploration	Kelt U.K. Ltd. Candecca Resources Marinex Exploration Tullow Exploration	85 sq kms	
Appraisal Licence (AL)					
AL003	July 1989	Kelt U.K. Ltd. Candecca Resources Teredo Pet Tullow Exploration James Finlay	Kelt U.K. Ltd. Candecca Resources Marinex Exploration Tullow Exploration	40 sq kms	

Note: Under "Applicant Group" and "Current Licensees", all companies involved in the licence are listed. In each case the operator of the licence is the first listed.

Electricity

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his answer of 15 July, *Official Report*, column 2, what total declared net capacity of electricity generation he anticipates being installed by the year 2000.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The need for additional capacity by 2000 is uncertain and will depend upon a number of factors including the future demand for electricity and commercial judgments on the economic life of existing plant. A range of scenarios for net capacity changes is provided in Energy Paper No. 58 (table 4.9) published in January 1990 a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. The scenarios cover the period 1990-2005.

Hot Water Boilers

Mr. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he first consulted the National Gas Consumers Council concerning the proposed European Community directive concerning the efficiency requirements for new hot water boilers fired with liquid or gaseous fuels.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Since the European Commission published its proposal for a directive on hot water boilers, in November 1990, my energy efficiency office has been holding staged consultations with interested bodies in the United Kingdom. The initial stages of consultations were technically based and involved the gas industry and manufacturing organisations. Formal consultations with consumers associations, including the National Gas Consumers Council, have been under way since June 1991.

Nuclear Levy

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proportion of the nuclear levy is going to *(a)* the nuclear and *(b)* the renewable non-fossil fuel generating stations in (i) the current financial year and (ii) the next financial year.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Precise figures for the distribution of the fossil fuel levy between nuclear and renewables for the current financial year are not available. However, the capacity contracted within the non-fossil fuel obligation for nuclear for the current financial year is now some 8GW, compared with some 27MW for renewables. The distribution of the levy will be broadly related to these capacities. It is not possible to give the corresponding figures for the next financial year, since the second non-fossil fuel obligation for renewables has not yet been made.

Acid Rain

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will fund future research at the CERL laboratory, Leatherhead, in the area of acid rain and sulphur dioxide emissions from fossil-fuel generating stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Reductions in the emission of sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides are governed by the European large combustion plant directive. Research into the most effective way of meeting these reductions is a matter for the industry. In addition, the Department's Advisory Council on Research and Development maintains a watching brief on developments in electricity research and development and will make recommendations to the Secretary of State as appropriate.

Sour Gas Power Station

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he plans to hold the public inquiry into the application of Kelt UK to build a sour gas power station at Claypit plantation in the Vale of Pickering, north Yorkshire; and what the terms of reference are to be.

Mr. Wakeham: I expect to hold the public inquiry which will assist me in my decision on Kelt UK Limited's application early in 1992. I shall announce full details in due course.

I will issue, in advance of the inquiry, a statement of the matters which seem to me relevant to my consideration of the application. I will take all relevant factors into account in preparing that statement.

Power Generating Stations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has on the locations *(a)* in the United Kingdom, *(b)* in Europe and *(c)* in other parts of the world of land-based power generating stations using hydrogen sulphide gas.

Mr. Wakeham: Hydrogen sulphide is not a fuel used in power generation though it may be present as an impurity in certain fuels.

Permanent Under-Secretary of State

Mr. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he intends to appoint a full-time permanent Under-Secretary of State for his Department.

Mr. Wakeham: The present Permanent Under-Secretary of State, Mr. J. R. S. Guinness, already holds his appointment on a full-time basis.

Non-fossil Fuel Obligation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the approximate date of the opening of bidding for initial applications for the third tranche of the renewables section of the non-fossil fuel obligation.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend has not yet made a decision on the timing of the next tranche of the renewables non-fossil fuel obligation.

Carbon Tax

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what plans he has to institute a carbon tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The Government's policy on the use of economic instruments for environmental protection is set out in the White Paper, "This Common Inheritance". In the long term, action to control emissions will inevitably have to include increases, achieved by taxation or other means, in the relative price of energy. However, the White Paper made clear the Government's intention not to introduce any such measures in the next few years outside the transport sector.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the final outturn, and what is the present forecast of schemes presented in tables 11 and 12 of his Department's expenditure plans; what were the figures for 1990-91 and 1991-92; and what was the outturn for 1989-90 in real terms.

Mr. Lilley: The information requested is set out in the following tables.

Table 1
Collaborative R&D: Outputs

	Outturn 1989-90		*Outturn 1990-91*	*Forecast 1991-92*
Link[1]				
Number of				
Programmes	11		6	3
Projects	38		90	75
Participants	123		309	230
SMEs	19		51	38
Total Project costs (£m)	23.1	(26.6)[2]	43.4	45
Eureka				
Number of Projects	10		18	35
Participants	23		21	40
SMEs	10		4	10
Total UK eligible Project costs (£m)	9.9	(11.4)[2]	32	60

	Outturn 1989-90		Outturn 1990-91	Forecast 1991-92
Advanced Technology Programmes				
Number of				
Programmes	8		6	8
Projects	89		58	64
Participants	164		222	254
SMEs	69		64	72
Total Project costs (£m)	74	(85.3)[2]	44.3	50.7
Research and Technology Organisations				
Number of				
Programmes	19		19	20
Projects	146		42	100
Total Project costs (£m)	36.4	(42.0)[2]	21.2	37
General Industrial Collaborative Projects				
Number of Projects	28		15	20
Participants	207		38	50
SMEs	40		15	25
Total Project costs (£m)	26	(30.0)[2]	9.3	15

Notes:

The forecasts in this Table are based on an interim survey and are therefore provisional. A full survey will be undertaken in advance of the next Trade and Industry Expenditure Plans report.

[1]Includes some LINK projects which have received funding from both the Science and Engineering Research Council and DTI.

[2]The figures in brackets represent outturn in 1989-90 uprated to 1991-92 prices using the GDP deflators of 7.75 per cent for 1990-91 and 7 per cent for 1991-92, as set out in Table 2.1 of the Financial Statement and Budget Report 1991-92 (House of Commons No. 300).

Table 2
Industrial Innovation Expenditure

£ million

Programme	*Outturn 1989-90*	*Outturn 1990-91*	*Forecast 1991-92*	*Forecast 1992-93*	*Forecast 1993-94*
Collaborative R and D					
Closed schemes	21	8	4	0·5	—
Open schemes	37	45.75	59	61	70
Technology Transfer and Other R and D	18(11)[1]	18.38	23	21·5	20
Single Company Support					
Closed schemes	11	2.2	1	—	—
SMART and New schemes	6	9·17	13	17	20
	93(86)[1]	83·5	100	100	110

[1] The figures in brackets relate to £7 million transferred from the Innovation Budget to the Measurement and Technology Support Budget. The outturn of £93 million in 1989-90 represents £107·2 million in real terms (uprated to 1991-92 prices using the GDP deflators described in Note [2] to Table 1 above).

Horizontal Take-off and Landing Vehicle

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the total expenditure and in which financial years, his Department supported expenditure on a space horizontal take-off and landing-vehicle; what recent contracts his Department has had with the European Space Agency and the Soviet Ministry of Aviation Industry on this matter; and whether exports of know-how and equipment relating to such vehicles require export licences, or clearance through Cocom.

Mr. Leigh: The DTI provided financial support through the British National Space Centre, towards proof-of-concept studies for the original HOTOL (horizontal take-off and landing) vehicle. The work was undertaken in the financial years 1986-87 and 1987-88. The DTI contribution amounted to £2·4 million out of total costs of some £4 million.

British Aerospace is currently undertaking a feasibility study with the Soviet Ministry of Aviation Industry for an air-launched interim version of HOTOL. No United Kingdom Government funding is involved. But BNSC was able to help with a presentation on the first results of this study given by British Aerospace to the European Space Agency on 21 June. The question of an export licence and Cocom review could be addressed only once a specific proposal was available.

Executive Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the first degree obtained by the chief executives of Companies House, the Insolvency Service, the Laboratory of the Government Chemist, the National Engineering Laboratory, the National Physical Laboratory, the National Weights and Measures Laboratory, the Patent Office, the Radiocommunications Agency and the Warren Spring Laboratory; and from which university or polytechnic it was awarded.

Mr. Lilley: This question seeks personal information about individuals; I have therefore drawn it to the attention of chief executives.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the last annual reports for Companies House, the Insolvency Service, the Laboratory of the Government Chemist, the National Engineering Laboratory, the National Physical Laboratory, the National Weights and Measures Laboratory, the Patent Office, the Radiocommunications Agency and the Warren Spring Laboratory were published; and when the next ones are due.

Mr. Lilley: The following is the information.

Agency	Date last annual report publicly available	Expected date of publication of next annual report
Companies House	August 1990	July 1991
Insolvency Service	October 1990	August 1991
Laboratory of the Government Chemist	October 1990	Autumn 1991
National Engineering Laboratory	1989	August 1991
National Physical Laboratory	February 1990	July 1991
National Weights and Measures Laboratory	July 1991	Summer 1992
Patent Office	5 June 1991	Summer 1992
Radiocommunications	July 1990	August 1991
Warren Spring Laboratory	August 1990	September 1991

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many appointments from the private sector have been made at grade 7 or above since their establishment as executive agencies to the Warren Spring Laboratory, the Patent Office, the Radiocommunications Agency, the National Weights and Measures Laboratory, the National Physical Laboratory, the National Engineering Laboratory, the Laboratory of the Government Chemist, the Insolvency Service and Companies House; and if he will list the post, grade and maximum salary payable, including performance-related element, in each case.

Mr. Lilley: The following is the information.

Agency	Grade	Numbers employed from private sector since establishment as an Agency	1991-92 Maximum salary payable including performance element
Companies House	7	1	[1]G7
Laboratory of the Government Chemist	7	1	[2]G7
National Engineering Laboratory	5	3*	[3]G5
National Physical Laboratory	7	1	[2]G7
Patent Office	6	1	[4]G6
Warren Spring Laboratory	7	1	[5]G7

* One has subsequently resigned.
[1]G7 pay range outside London: £21,905-£31,150 subject to review w.e.f. 1 August 1991. Progress beyond £26,121 subject to performance.
[2]G7 pay range in outer London: £23,616-£33,276, subject to review w.e.f. 1 August 1991. Progress beyond £28,024 subject to performance.
[3]G5 pay range outside London: £32,551-£43,307, subject to review w.e.f. 1 August 1991. Progress beyond £36,997 subject to performance.
[4]G6 pay range outside London: £24,997-£38,610 subject to review w.e.f. 1 August 1991. Progress beyond £29,809 subject to performance.
[5]G7 pay range in outer London without London Weighting: £22,891-£32,551, subject to review w.e.f. 1 August 1991. Progress beyond £27,299 subject to performance.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the maximum salary payable to the chief executives and the length of time of the chief executives' contracts of Companies House, the Insolvency Service, the Laboratory of the Government Chemist, the National Engineering Laboratory, the National Physical Laboratory, the National Weights and Measures Laboratory, the Patent Office, the Radiocommunications Agency and the Warren Spring Laboratory.

Mr. Lilley: The following is the information requested.

Agency	Term of Chief Executive's current Appointment	1991-92 maximum salary payable
Companies House	5 years	£41,681[1] plus maximum performance bonus of up to 12·5 per cent.
Insolvency Service	3 years	[2]G3 range
Laboratory of the Government Chemist	5 years	[2]G3 range
National Engineering Laboratory	5 years	£64,500 plus maximum performance bonus of up to 15 per cent.
National Physical Laboratory	2 years 9 months	[2]G5 range
National Weights and Measures Laboratory	3 years	[4]G5 range
Patent Office	4 years	[1]G3 range
Radiocommunications Agency	2 years	[2]G3 range
Warren Spring Laboratory	2 years 11 months	[3]G3 range

[1] Subject to review w.e.f. 1 August 1991.
[2] G3 pay range in London: £50,380—£58,010 rising to £51,300—£59,000 on 1 December 1991.
[3] G3 pay range outside London: £47,090—£54,720 rising to £48,000—£55,000 w.e.f. 1 December 1991. Progress in the G3 pay range is subject to performance.
[4] G5 pay range in outer London: £34,695—£45,721, subject to review w.e.f. 1 August 1991. Progress beyond £39,335 subject to performance.

Soft Drinks

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he intends to publish the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission into the supply of carbonated soft drinks.

Mr. Redwood: The MMC's report on carbonated drinks is currently being considered by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. The report will be published as quickly as practicable.

Royal Ordnance

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many transactions with Royal Ordnance, prior to privatisation, were made using BCCI; what were the transactions for; and who were the purchasers.

Mr. Leigh: This is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

European Generics Forum

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the companies represented by the European Generics Forum other than those companies within the same holding company as Generics UK.

Mr. Leigh: I am informed that the European Generics Association has recently been created to represent the common interests of the generic pharmaceutical industry and bulk chemical producers across Europe. Generics (UK) and the Netherlands company BOGIN, which were members of the European Generics Forum, are now members of this association. The other companies and organisations which are involved are Eurogenerics (Belgium), Durascan (Denmark), Stada, Azupharma, TAD, IGG (Germany), FIS/Aschimfarma (Italy), Farmindustria (Portugal), Afaquim (Spain), Centrafarm (Netherlands) and Helvepharm AG (Switzerland).

Price Marking

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received from retailers about the implications of the Price Marking Order 1991—S.I., 1991, No. 1382; whether he intends to issue guidance about its implementation; and if his officials will meet representatives of retailers to discuss the order.

Mr. Leigh: The Retail Consortium has made representations that the order, which implements EC directives requiring price indications for goods offered for sale to the final consumer, is unnecessary. I consider the order to be necessary since the directives require that price indications be given and that they must be legible. Our existing price marking requirements relate only to certain foods.

My officials have prepared a four-page guidance note to the order which has been distributed to trade associations, trading standards departments, and others. I am asking them to arrange to meet representatives of the consortium to discuss its concerns.

BAe146 (Component Parts)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has made to the United States Government to remove their embargo on the sale of component parts of the BAe146 feeder airliner to Iran; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Government have made a number of representations to the United States Administration in support of British Aerospace's application for the re-export to Iran of the United States content of six BAe146 aircraft. The decision of the United States authorities to reject the application is disappointing. The Government will continue to press for the decision to be changed.

Timeshare Promotion Schemes

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his reply to the Adjournment debate of 27 March, *Official Report*, columns 1092-4, if he will detail the action he has taken to outlaw unfair and misleading timeshare promotion schemes.

Mr. Leigh: We intend to make false or misleading descriptions in offers of free gifts (including offers which feature in timeshare award schemes) an offence under the Trade Descriptions Act 1968. The Government will legislate as soon as parliamentary time becomes available.

I have raised the issue of timeshare with the European Commission and it is considering putting forward a proposal for an EC directive. I would like to see such a directive include a requirement that prospective timeshare buyers should be given a written prospectus, a 14-day cooling-off period and protection of deposit moneys. A cooling-off period would help counterbalance the high pressure sales techniques employed by some timeshare operators.

Thomson CSF and GEC Airborne Radar

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what account he is taking of state ownership in considering whether to refer the proposed merger of Thomson CSF and GEC Airborne Radar capabilities to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission;

(2) whether he has any plans to refer the proposed merger of Thomson CSF and GEC Airborne Radar capabilities to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission;

(3) what factors he is taking into account in considering whether to refer the proposed merger of Thomson CSF and GEC Airborne Radar capabilities to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Redwood: The joint venture between GEC-Marconi and Thomson-CSF is being considered by the Director General of Fair Trading. If his office finds that it qualifies for investigation under the terms of the Fair Trading Act 1973, the Director General will advise the Secretary of State on whether it should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. The main grounds for referring a merger to the MMC is its effect on competition in the United Kingdom. In addition, the Secretary of State announced on 26 July last year that he would pay particularly close attention to the degree of state control, if any, of acquiring companies when considering whether to refer merger situations to the MMC.

Barlow Clowes

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his answer of 19 July, *Official Report*, column 319, what evidence was received by the Le Quesne inquiry into the Barlow Clowes affair relating to the relationship between Barlow Clowes and the Bank of Credit and Commerce International and in respect of money laundering; if he will *(a)* publish it and *(b)* make it available to the inquiry into the Bank of Credit and Commerce International.

Mr. Redwood: I will write to the right hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Development Area Status

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the criteria for development area status; and whether north Devon meets these criteria.

Mr. Leigh: This was set out in the 1983 White Paper "Regional Industrial Development" (Cmnd 9111) as follows:

"In considering the designation of an Assisted Area, the Government have regard to criteria first laid down in the Industrial Development Act 1966 (currently in section 1(3) of the Industrial Development Act 1982), namely:

"all the circumstances actual and expected, including the state of employment and unemployment, population changes, migration and the objectives of regional policies".

The current assisted areas map restricts development area status to 15 per cent. of the working population of Great Britain, and intermediate area status to a further 20 per cent.

On present unemployment rates in the travel-to-work areas which make up the hon. Member's north Devon constituency, there is unlikely to be justification for development area status.

Mergers and Takeovers

Mr. Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will introduce legislation to restore jurisdiction from the European Commission to the Department of Trade and Industry in dealing with proposed mergers or takeovers of very large undertakings where considerations of national or public interest are involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The EC merger regulation allows member states to take action to protect legitimate or other public interests where these are not taken into consideration by the regulation. Public security, plurality of the media and prudential rules are recognised as such legitimate interests. Action to protect other public interests can be taken only with the European Commission's prior consent where the merger regulation allows. The introduction of legislation in the House of Commons to repatriate these matters would be invalid under the treaty and the regulation.

Equipment (Overseas Sales)

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received from the United States Government over the past two years on the overseas sale of equipment by British companies; and if he will list the company and the equipment concerned in each case.

Mr. Sainsbury: It has been the practice of successive Governments not to comment on individual licensing matters.

Written Questions

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many parliamentary questions for written answer have been answered by his Department so far this Session, and in the comparable period for the last Session; and if he will publish a table of how many answers (a) do not give the information requested because of (i) disproportionate cost or (ii) other reasons, (b) give an undertaking to write to the hon. Member who asked the question and (c) were referred for answer to the chief executive of each next steps agency.

Mr. Lilley: A total of 1,234 written questions have been answered so far this Session, and the figure for the comparable period in the last Session was 1,983. The other information mentioned by the hon. Member is not held centrally, and an analysis of it could therefore be prepared only at disproportionate cost.

Package Travel (Green Paper)

Sir Robert McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he now expects to publish his Green Paper on package travel.

Mr. Leigh: The Department's consultation document on the implementation of EC directive 90/314/EEC, on package travel, package holidays and package tours, was published yesterday.

Fibreoptic Transmission Technology Ltd.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will instruct his officials in Leeds to ascertain what assistance may be made available to Fibreoptic Transmission Technology Ltd. of Bradford to remain trading; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: DTI officials have been in contact with the company on a number of occasions over the last two years. This has led to the company receiving two enterprise initiative consultancies, export assistance, and an offer of grant under the LINK scheme.

It is not DTI's role to provide financial assistance to enable individual companies to continue trading.

Telecom Networks

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the organisations which have applied to operate the Telecom networks following the end of the BT and Mercury duopoly.

Mr. Redwood: A list of applications for Telecommunications Act licences currently under consideration is kept at the Office of Telecommunications and updated weekly. The list is open to public inspection. It currently contains the following details:

Telecommunications Act 1984
Register of Licence applications under consideration by the Secretary of State
(as at 19 July 1991)

Applicant	*Services proposed*
Cognito Group Ltd.	Provision of radio packet data links to fixed terminals via its existing network.
Ionica L3 Ltd.	Provision of a national telephone service offering PSTN facilities based on fixed wireless communication.
Meteor Communications (Europe) Ltd.	Provision of telemetry and telecontrol systems to fixed and mobile apparatus throughout the United Kingdom, and Western Europe, by means of a meteor burst radio network. No connection to other telecommunication system is sought.
National Transcommunications Ltd.	Provision of broadband network services in the United Kingdom for the transmission of vision, sound and data.
Paknet Ltd.	Provision of fixed and mobile data services using the company's existing fixed network.
RAM Mobile Data Ltd.	Provision of packet switched data services to fixed terminals via its existing radio network.
Satellite Information Services	Provision of two-way satellite circuits connected to the public switched telephone network for engineering and programme control purposes in connection with outside broadcasting activities.
Sound Broadcast Services	Provision of point-to-point radio and wire systems for radio broadcasters to allow transmission of programme material, communications and data to and from studios and transmitter sites on a permanent basis.
Racal Vodafone Ltd.	Provision of fixed links in its own network or to others. Provision of telecommunications services of every type on its network. Direct connections to overseas mobile and fixed networks.

In addition, over 20 other companies have expressed a strong interest in running new networks but they have yet to make a formal application.

Telephones

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action he proposes to take to encourage the spread of hearing aid-compatible telephones.

Mr. Redwood: The licences issued to the public telecommunications operators British Telecommunications, Mercury Communications Ltd. and Kingston Communications (Hull) plc under the Telecommunications Act 1984 require them to ensure that telephones for the hearing impaired are available to meet all reasonable demands. The licensees are also required to install facilities for the hearing impaired in all their public call boxes.

Spirits (Measures)

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will be introducing any further legislation controlling the quantities of spirits or liqueurs sold for consumption on licensed premises; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: Legislation brought in last summer provided that 25 ml should be the metric measure to replace the existing imperial quantities of 1/6, 1/5, and 1/4 gill (23.7 ml, 28.4 ml, 35.5 ml). I am conscious, however, that parts of Scotland have traditionally used the larger imperial measures. Following consultation with interested parties, I therefore propose to introduce legislation to permit a second metric quantity of 35 ml for dispensing gin, rum, vodka and whisky. I do not propose, however, to extend prescribed quantities to other spirits and liqueurs.

Radio Spectrum Review

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the stage two radio spectrum review was completed; and if he will publish the Committee's report.

Mr. Lilley: I have received the report and it will be published shortly.

Carbonised Soft Drinks

Mr. Nicholls: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he can announce the date of publication of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report into carbonised soft drinks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The MMC's report on carbonated drinks is currently being considered by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. The report will be published as quickly as practicable.

Auditors

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will now announce decisions on the recognition of supervisory bodies, and of professional qualifications for auditors under part II of the Companies Act 1989.

Mr. Redwood: Yes. I have decided to recognise four supervisory bodies for company auditors under section 30 of the Companies Act 1989—the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW); the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland (ICAS); the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland (ICAI); and the Chartered Association of Certified Accountants (ACCA). I have also decided to recognise the accountancy qualifications offered by these four bodies as recognised professional qualifications for company auditors under section 32 of the Act. The rules and guidance of the four bodies, on the basis of which I have taken these decisions, include some amendments to those in the original applications. I shall be placing copies of the revised rules and guidance, excluding certain material supplied in confidence, in the Library of the House.

I am also actively considering an application from the Association of Authorised Public Accountants (AAPA) for recognition as a supervisory body, and expect to reach

a decision soon. Consideration of the application is not yet complete, but I am not aware at this stage of any problems in connection with it.

I have also received very recently an application from the Association of International Accountants (AIA) for recognition of its accountancy qualification. This application is under consideration.

In taking these decisions, I have had regard to the reports of the Director General of Fair Trading. The Director General found that the rules and guidance of the applicants relating to their professional qualifications were not likely to have significant anti-competitive effects. He reached the same conclusion on the applications to be recognised as a supervisory body, apart from the rules on ownership and control of audit firms. In the case of ACCA, he recognised that the rules were in line with the minimum requirements of the Act. The Director General did however find that the rules of the three institutes on the ownership and control of audit firms, which are more restrictive than the Act requires, were likely significantly to restrict, prevent or distort competition. Although he has welcomed some of the changes which the institutes have now made to their rules, these changes have not led him to alter this finding. I shall be placing a copy of his latest report in the Library.

Having considered the arguments carefully, I was not convinced that the anti-competitive effects identified by the Director General were likely to be significant; and I therefore decided to recognise the institutes as supervisory bodies on the basis of the revised ownership and control rules put forward by them; but I have indicated to the Director General that I would welcome a decision by him to review the operation of the new ownership and control rules in practice after two years.

The recognition of supervisory bodies for company auditors, and of professional audit qualifications, will clear the way for the commencement of the new regulatory arrangements for company auditors established by part II of the Companies Act 1989. I intend to bring the main operative provisions of part II into force from 1 October 1991. From that date, only firms and individuals who are members of a recognised supervisory body, and eligible for appointment as company auditors under the rules of that body, may accept new or renewed appointments as company auditors. Persons qualified as company auditors under existing legislation will however be able to complete after 1 October audit engagements accepted before then.

The commencement of part II will implement the UK's obligations under the eighth EC company law directive. It is designed to establish a new and effective regulatory regime for company auditors which will safeguard the traditional professional qualities of independence and integrity; introduce new monitoring arrangements which will help the profession maintain high standards; and enable the profession to respond decisively to complaints or other evidence that one of its members may be falling short of those standards.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information led to the action of his Department in November 1990 in writing to non-departmental organisations funded by grants to ask them to supply as a matter of urgency details of all their banking arrangements, including any use of the overnight money market or any similar facility; how many such organisations were found to have deposits with the Bank of Credit and Commerce International; and whether those with such deposits were contacted about them by his Department.

Mr. Redwood: My Department wrote as part of an annual review of banking arragements required by the Treasury. The exercise extends to the non-departmental bodies for which my Department is responsible. Replies received have not shown any dealings with the Bank of Credit and Commerce International.

Common Purpose Programme

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what consideration he has given to the value of the common purpose programme which his Department funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: My Department, together with other Departments in the action for cities initiative, has contributed funding to common purpose since its launch in 1989. Since then, common purpose has successfully established programmes in 15 cities: five more are due to become operational by early 1992. Five hundred and fifty people have been or are participating in common purpose programmes. My officials are in the process of commissioning an evaluation of common purpose.

Securities and Investments Board

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what criteria he adopted in agreeing the increases in the budget for the Securities and Investments Board for 1991-92;

(2) what consultation there has been between his Department, the Securities and Investments Board, the self-regulatory bodies and the recognised professional bodies on the increase in respective contributions to the Securities and Investments Board budget for 1991-92; and what changes were made as a result of those consultations.

Mr. Redwood: The Securities and Investments Board's budget is a matter for the board. I have had discussions with the chairman recently and have a further meeting planned next week. He has assured me that he and his board attach great importance to ensuring that costs are kept under firm control.

Trade Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish a table showing imports and exports from the EEC and from the rest of the world of (a) manufactures and (b) manufactures less erratics in 1970, 1973, 1979, 1988, 1989, 1990 and the current year to date.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 23 July 1991]:* The available information is shown in the following table.

United Kingdom Trade in Manufactured Goods[1] — £ billion

	Imports		Exports	
	EC (11) (incl GDR)	Rest of World	EC (11) (incl GDR)	Rest of World
1970[2]	—	—	—	—
1973[2,3]	3·6	5·1	3·3	6·8
1979	16·1	13·6	12·9	18·0
less erratics	15·2	9·4	11·5	13·3
1988	45·9	37·6	32·4	33·8
less erratics	44·8	32·7	29·9	27·6
1989	52·8	43·3	38·1	38·4
less erratics	51·6	37·7	35·6	31·1
1990	54·1	44·1	44·3	40·2
less erratics	52·8	37·8	41·4	32·7
1991 (Jan-Mar)	12·3	10·1	11·1	8·6
less erratics	12·0	8·8	10·4	7·1
1991 (Jan-May)[4]	20·6	17·5	19·7	15·2

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom.

[1] Manufactured goods have been defined as Sections 5 to 8 of the Standard International Trade Classification (Rev. 3). Erratics include: Pearls, semi-precious stones, silver, aircraft and associated equipment, ships and boats.

[2] Statistics on trade in manufactured goods for 1970, and erratics for 1973, could not be provided without disproportionate cost.

[3] The EC figures for 1973 exclude the German Democratic Republic, which is included in the rest of the world figures.

[4] Erratics data for the current year to date are not yet available.

Exporters

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what measures he is taking to notify exporters of any changes in the addresses, telephone numbers and facsimile numbers of sections of his Department supplying information and advice to exporters; and where an up-to-date list of such information is currently available.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 23 July 1991]:* We attach considerable importance to keeping our business customers informed. Through the overseas trade services network, under which the export work of my Department and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is carried out, a number of booklets and brochures are published which detail the advice and information available to United Kingdom exporters and the appropriate contact points from which this help can be accessed. These publications are updated on a regular basis, and new additions are currently being prepared for issue shortly. Contact information is also made available through the DTI enterprise initiative telephone hot-line.

At local level our network of regional offices, including DTI offices in the south-west in Bristol, Plymouth and Penzance, produce regular export newsletters which periodically detail the export section contacts within the office.

Full details of the regional network and other export-related contacts, including specific country inquiry points, are given in "The Guide to Exporting" (Fifth Edition), a copy of which is in the Library.

Redundancy Payments

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether redundancy payments are counted as state aid by the EC when considering whether sales of companies meet their fair competition criteria.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 24 July 1991]:* Government assistance towards redundancy payments could be regarded as state aid by the European Commission. This would depend on the individual circumstances of each case.

SOCIAL SECURITY

National Insurance

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what amount and proportion of national insurance contributions from *(a)* employees, *(b)* employers, *(c)* voluntary, *(d)* self-employed and *(e)* in total, were spent on (i) national insurance contributory benefits, (ii) non-contributory benefits and (iii) the national health service in each year since 1979-80.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is not available in the form requested. The available information is given in the tables. It is not possible to apportion expenditure between the classes of national insurance contributions in the way suggested by the question. However, the income to the national insurance fund is shown in table 1 and the expenditure from the fund is shown in table 2.

Table 1
National Insurance Contribution Income — £ million

	Class 1 Employees	Class 1 Employers	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4	Total
1978-80	3,953	6,153	136	11	104	10,357
1980-81	5,162	7,880	173	12	133	13,360
1981-82	7,656	10,661	221	14	150	18,702
1982-83	7,923	9,293	283	19	184	17,702
1983-84	8,909	10,094	337	28	205	19,573
1984-85	9,570	10,790	380	27	242	21,009
1985-86	10,392	12,020	373	40	288	23,113
1986-87	11,103	13,179	366	31	331	25,010
1987-88	12,419	14,724	390	30	380	27,943

	Class 1 Employees	Class 1 Employers	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4	Total
1988-89	13,850	17,118	437	32	474	31,911
1989-90	14,450	19,050	478	36	571	34,585

1. Figures for 1987-88 to 1989-90 are provisional.
2. Figures for 1990-91 are not yet available.
3. Class 3 contributions are voluntary; Class 2 and Class 4 are self-employed.
4. There was also a Treasury Supplement to the National Insurance Fund, which was progressively reduced from a rate of 18 per cent in 1979-80 until its abolition in April 1989.

Table 2
Expenditure from the National Insurance Fund
£ million

	Benefits	NHS
1979-80	12,206	882
1980-81	14,843	1,025
1981-82	17,213	1,339
1982-83	18,593	1,629
1983-84	19,709	1,705
1984-85	21,285	1,814
1985-86	22,901	2,018
1986-87	24,748	2,213
1987-88	25,826	2,702
1988-89	26,545	3,477
1989-90	28,235	4,071
1990-91	30,496	4,300

1. Contributory benefits are defined as those paid from the National Insurance Fund. However, Industrial Injuries Benefits, Guardians Allowance and Childs Special Allowance, although paid from the Fund, do not have a contribution condition.
2. Benefits include Statutory Sick Pay from 1983-84 and Statutory Maternity Pay from 1987-88. From 1990-91 expenditure on Statutory Sick Pay and Statutory Maternity Pay is reimbursed from general taxation.
3. Administration costs are not included, as the breakdown between contributory and non-contributory benefits is not available for all years.
4. Benefits figure for 1990-91 is estimated outturn.
5. NHS figure for 1990-91 is provisional.
6. Any excess of expenditure over income in any year is met by the accumulated balance of past surpluses.

Elderly Men

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the numbers of men aged 60 to 64 years who are not economically active.

Miss Widdecombe: It is estimated that, in May 1991, around 620,000 men aged between 60 and 64 years were economically inactive.

Maintenance Payments

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps his Department takes to notify an estranged spouse in receipt of maintenance payments paid by his Department that an agreed scheme of payments has ceased to be paid; and if he will review the current situation.

Mr. Jack: Under the existing arrangements the Benefits Agency does not, as a matter of course, notify a customer when an agreement to pay maintenance which is collected by the Department breaks down, because the amount of income support in payment remains unaffected. As soon as it becomes apparent that the agreement is no longer working, steps are taken to discover the reason and to re-establish payments. We aim therefore to solve the problem without unnecessarily troubling the customer. But where the problem is more serious and requires enforcement or other action, the customer will normally be involved.

As part of the new system of child maintenance being introduced by the Child Support Bill, parents with care will be able to benefit from the dedicated collection and enforcement services of the new Child Support Agency. We are still considering the detailed working procedures of the agency.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on provision of income support and other social security benefits to people granted exceptional leave to remain; and if he has any plans to revise the present arrangements.

Miss Widdecombe: There is full entitlement to social security benefits for people who are granted exceptional leave to remain, provided they satisfy the appropriate conditions of entitlement. We have no plans to amend the existing provisions.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will (1) give the reason for not granting the full rate of income support to asylum seekers; and in what ways the financial needs of claimants who are asylum seekers are considered to differ from the financial needs of other claimants;

(2) make a statement on the provision of income support and other social security benefits to asylum seekers; and if he has any plans to revise the present arrangements.

Miss Widdecombe: Asylum seekers are among the groups of people who are not entitled to income support under the normal rules but whose circumstances make it appropriate for them to receive some benefit. They can receive social security benefits while their applications for asylum are being processed by the immigration authorities. For them, as for other comparable groups, 90 per cent. of the personal allowance is paid, together with full amounts for children and any appropriate premiums. If refugee status or exceptional leave to remain in the United Kingdom is granted, personal allowance becomes payable at the full rate. We have no plans to amend the existing provisions.

Benefits, Tower Hamlets

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many people claimed *(a)* housing benefit and *(b)* community charge benefit in Tower Hamlets for the last two years;

(2) if he will list the numbers claiming housing benefit and the total benefit paid for each year since 1979 in Tower Hamlets.

Miss Widdecombe: The table sets out the available information. Before 1983 assistance with housing costs was provided through the supplementary benefit scheme and through the rent rebate, rent allowance and rate rebate schemes, run by the Department of the Environment. Because of the split in responsibilities between Tower Hamlets and the Greater London council, the information for 1983-84 and 1984-85 is not available in the form requested. The number of individuals receiving community charge benefit in Tower Hamlets in 1990-91 was 40,300, rounded to the nearest 100.

Year	*Housing Benefit Caseload*	*Benefit paid £ million*
1985-86	30,700	29·00
1986-87	30,100	33·90
1987-88	30,400	49·00
1988-89	28,400	53·20
1989-90	26,900	52·10
1990-91	26,500	57·4

(1) For 1985-86 to 1987-88, the figures are based on rate rebate caseload. Most people who get a rate rebate also receive a rent rebate or rent allowance, however this excludes a small number who receive rent rebate or rent allowance but *not* rate rebate.
(2) Figures are rounded to the nearest hundred.
(3) Figures for 1988-89 and 1989-90 are derived from rent rebate, rent allowance and rate rebate caseload.
(4) Rounded to the nearest £100 thousand.
(5) Rent rebate and rent allowance only.
(6) Based on mid year subsidy claim estimate.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Norfolk, North, 15 April, *Official Report*, column *98*, how many people are at present receiving invalidity benefit; what were the comparable figures in 1980, 1985 and 1990; and how he accounts for the change.

Mr. Scott: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour) on 30 January 1991 at columns *548-49*.

The estimated average number of people receiving invalidity benefit at present is 1,350,000[1]. Comparable figures for earlier years are in the table:

	Number
1980-81	[1]620,000
1985-86	[1]865,000
1990-91	[1]1,270,000

[1] The Government's Expenditure White Paper.

Unlike the figures quoted in my answer of 15 April, the above figures relate only to invalidity benefit.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many women over the age of 60 years receive invalidity benefit calculated according to their retirement pension contributions.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

However, the total number of women aged 60 and over receiving invalidity benefit at 31 March 1990, the latest date for which information is available, was 29,100. This figure includes women with title under the special arrangements for some widows, those where the incapacity is due to the effects of an industrial accident or disease, and those where title is based upon their own retirement pension entitlement.

Capital Values Rule

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what guidance is given to his Department's offices and income support sections on treatment of the capital values of homes for those who are unavoidably absent in order to tend relatives receiving invalid care allowance and attendance allowance; and if he will place a copy of that guidance on the record.

Miss Widdecombe: The capital value of a person's home is completely disregarded under income support, even though he or she may be temporarily living elsewhere. Guidance on this matter is contained in the adjudication officer's guide paragraphs 27717, 27720.4, 30202.1 and 30211. A copy of the AOG is in the Library.

Income Support

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the number of Scottish children *(a)* in total and *(b)* as a percentage dependent on supplementary benefit and income support for each year from 1979 to the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Bellotti: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what payments were made to residents of supportive housing accommodation project homes in Staffordshire over and above the normal payments to residents in ordinary hostels for the last two financial years.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what were the numbers of *(a)* claimants, *(b)* dependants and *(c)* total numbers dependent on income support in Scotland for each year since 1979.

Miss Widdecombe: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Members and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the number of people at each social security office who are *(a)* having deductions made from their income support to cover poll tax arrears and *(b)* were having such deductions three months, six months, nine months and 12 months ago.

Miss Widdecombe: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received concerning the level, duration and position in the hierarchy of deductions of the benefit sanction for mothers who refuse to co-operate with the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Jack: The level and duration of the reduction in the personal benefit of the parent with care who declines

without a good reason to comply with clause 6 of the Child Support Bill were announced in Committee. They have been discussed in subsequent stages in both Houses. Since then I have received representations from two organisations on this aspect. It is important to remember that the question of reducing benefit arises only where there are no reasonable grounds to believe that action on maintenance would cause harm or undue distress to the parent or her children. I should point out that as a reduction not a deduction the question of fitting into the hierarchy of deductions does not arise. The decision to make a reduction will be made only after the parent has had two separate opportunities to consider her position and explain her reasons and two different people have considered the case. The benefit reduction is therefore intended very much as a measure of last resort.

Statutory Sick Pay

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures showing the number of claims for statutory sick pay made *(a)* since 5 April 1991 and *(b)* for the comparable period in 1990 giving information on which claims were payable at the higher rate and which at the lower rate in (1) Wales, (2) Scotland and (3) England; and if he will show a breakdown of the figures for male and female employees and for manual and non-manual workers.

Mr. Scott: Information is not available in the form requested. The table shows the estimated numbers of statutory sick pay recipients at any one time during the 1990-91 and 1991-92 financial years:—

	Financial Year	
	1990-91	*1991-92*
Estimated numbers	360,000	350,000

Source: Departmental Report (Cm 1514—February 1991).

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received from trade unions, employers or employers' organisations in Wales about the likely effects of requiring employers to meet 20 per cent. of the costs of the statutory sick pay scheme.

Mr. Scott: A few representations on the reimbursement provisions of the Statutory Sick Pay Act 1991 were received from individual employers in Wales, from the Wales area office of the National Federation of the Self Employed and Small Businesses and the Welsh Council of the Confederation of British Industry.

Fraud and Special Investigations

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing for each administrative region within Wales what the target savings are for the year to date, and the year to date achieved savings, of the fraud and special investigator sections within Department of Social Security offices; whether the statistics in each area are compiled on a comparable basis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The investigation of fraud is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Carers

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to review benefits for carers in the light of the findings of his Department's research report "Social Security and Community Care: The Case of the Invalid Care Allowance"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Since the completion of the study we have introduced two improvements for carers. The ICA earnings limit has been increased twice—to £20 in April 1990 and to £30 in April this year. In October 1990 the carer premium in the income-related benefits was introduced and in October this year entitlement to the premium will be extended for up to eight weeks after caring ceases. We will continue to keep the needs of carers under review.

Social Fund

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many social fund decisions in England went to review in each of the first five months of 1991.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is in the table.

	Number of applications for review by social fund officers[1]
January 1991	6,961
February 1991	7,656
March 1991	8,189
April 1991	8,730
May 1991	9,399

[1] All applications for review are made in the first instance to SFOs.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) why the standard letter, DL/SF14, sent to applicants whose application for review of a social fund officer's decision has been rejected, no longer informs them that they can ask for a social fund inspector to decide whether the decision to reject the application was correct;

(2) why his guidance to social fund officers, in paragraph 4156 of the social fund manual, was amended to exclude the reference to payment of a crisis loan by means of a voucher.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many social fund decisions in Newham went to review in each of the first five months of 1991;

(2) how many applications for social fund loans were refused in Newham in 1990 on the grounds of inability to repay the loans;

(3) how many applications there were in Newham for review by the social fund inspector in each of the first five months of 1991;

(4) what is the current average clearance time for crisis loan applications in Newham.

(5) how many applications in Newham reviewed by the social fund inspector resulted in changes in the first five months of 1991;

(6) how many social fund decisions were changed on review in Newham in each of the first five months of 1991.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the

Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Members and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications there were in England for review by the social fund inspector in each of the first five months of 1991; and how many of these applications resulted in changed decisions.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is shown in the table.

	applications for SFI review	*revised decisions by SFI*
January 1991	701	153
February 1991	617	142
March 1991	661	151
April 1991	701	139
May 1991	761	188

Also, 2,495 cases in Great Britain were referred back for redetermination by a Social Fund Officer between January and May 1991. However information about the proportion of those cases which resulted in a revised decision will not become available until the end of 1991-92.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many social fund decisions were changed on review in England in each of the first five months of 1991.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is in the table.

	Number of decisions changed on review
January 1991	3,700
February 1991	3,654
March 1991	4,417
April 1991	4,076
May 1991	4,458

The number of decisions changed on review covers those revised both by social fund officers and by social fund inspectors.

Benefit Applications (Newham)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many benefit applications in Newham offices were received from individuals claiming refugee status in each of the last 12-month periods.

Miss Widdecombe: Information on the number of benefit applications received in Newham offices from persons from abroad is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of applications for crisis loans are paid on the day of application in Newham.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library and Public Information Office.

Benefit Agency Logo

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, further to his answer of 11 July, *Official Report*, column 463, what was the cost of the survey into customer opinion of the new Benefits Agency logo; and what was the result of this survey.

Miss Widdecombe: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the cost was £6,200, including VAT.

Benefits (Abolition and Taxation)

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what savings he estimates have accrued to the Exchequer each year since each of the following measures was introduced, both in current prices and at 1991 prices: *(a)* the abolition of earnings-related supplement to unemployment benefit, *(b)* the taxation of unemployment benefit, *(c)* the abolition of the child additions to unemployment benefit, *(d)* the abolition of the lower rate unemployment benefits, *(e)* the abatement of unemployment benefit for occupational pensions, *(f)* the extension from six to 26 weeks in the disqualification period, *(g)* the introduction of actively seeking work rules and restart interviews, *(h)* the reduced entitlement for students, *(i)* the full extent normal rule, and *(j)* the higher contributions conditions introduced in the Social Security Act 1988.

Mr. Jack: The available information is set out in the table. Savings for each year since implementation cannot be calculated given the effects of other benefit changes and economic factors. Details of savings from the taxation of benefits, restart interviews and the full extent normal rule are not available.

Measure	*Estimated savings (£ million) in year of implementation*	*Estimated savings in year of implementation at 1991 prices*
Abolition of earnings related supplement	390	695
Abolition of child dependency additions	3	5
Abolition of half/three quarter rates of UB[1]	20	26
Abatement of UB on account of an occupational pension	25	45
Extension from six to 13 weeks of the disqualification period	21	29
Extension from 13 to 26 weeks of the disqualification period	37	45
Actively seeking work[2]	100	115
Benefits for students restricted to summer vacation	9	12
Withdrawal of benefits for students	79	[3]91
New contribution conditions	10	12

[1] Unemployment benefit.
[2] Estimated savings also take into account other changes to UB legislation made in the 1989 Social Security Act.
[3] Revised estimated savings for first full financial year following implementation.

Community Care Grants

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of community care grants were awarded in England under direction 4*(a)*(iii) alone in the first five months of 1991.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of community care grants were awarded in Newham under direction 4*(a)*(iii) alone in the first five months of 1991.

Mr. Scott: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 22 July to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East, if he will break down the figure of 72 parliamentary questions referred to agency chief executives, by agency.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is as follows:—

	Number
Benefits Agency	60
Information Technology Services Agency	5
Contributions Agency	4
Resettlement Agency	3

Client Interviews (Interpretation)

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what arrangements exist for interpretation at interviews with clients who do not speak English; how much interpreters are paid; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The existing arrangements for customers who do not speak English are a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, who has taken a number of initiatives in respect of this matter. He will write to my hon. Friend and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Disablement Benefits

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will ensure claims for invalid care allowance and severe disablement allowance are being adjudicated upon, and paid, promptly.

Mr. Scott: Action on certain invalid care allowance and severe disablement allowance claims has been delayed pending the outcome of appeals. Following legal advice, arrangements are being made to ensure that all outstanding claims are now put to the adjudicating authorities and adjudicated. Where appropriate, payment will then be made as soon as is practicable.

Homelessness

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many homeless families and how many individuals within the families, were placed in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in 1990-91; what was the average number, for families and individuals, during the year; and what was the cost of their benefits.

Miss Widdecombe: Homelessness issues are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

I understand that information on the number of families or individuals placed in bed-and-breakfast accommodation during the year is not available; the average number of homeless households in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in 1990-91 is estimated at 11,900 in England; and information on the average number of individuals in each family is not available. The equivalent figures for Scotland and Wales are the responsibility of my right hon. Friends, the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales, respectively.

Information on the benefit paid is not available.

Source: Local authority quarterly returns to the Department of the Environment on their actions under the Homelessness legislation.

Mentally Handicapped Adults

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish the evidence he has submitted to the Social Security Advisory Committee on parents who have hitherto provided a mentally handicapped adult offspring with a home seeking to establish a joint tenancy with their offspring, or issuing them with a licence on a commercial basis; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department provided information to the Social Security Advisory Committee which it issued to six disability organisations on 12 June and, as part of the formal consultation exercise, again on 5 July. I have placed copies of these notes in the Library.

Community Charge Rebate

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what protection exists to ensure claimants' net income was not reduced when their community charge rebate was reduced as a result of this year's uprating to invalidity benefit; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many people in receipt of invalidity benefit and community charge rebate had a cut in their rebate in 1991-92 as a result of their increase in invalidity benefit; how many of them were worse off in net terms as a result; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Increases in invalidity benefit are taken into account when assessing entitlement to community charge benefit, but the personal allowances and premiums appropriate to community charge benefit were also uprated in April. Information is not available about the number of people in receipt of invalidity benefit whose community charge benefit has been reduced. However, we are not aware that there are any claimants in these circumstances who have not seen an overall increase in their net income from invalidity benefit after paying their rebated charge.

Family Expenditure

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide a breakdown of expenditure on families with children compared with the position before the 1988 reform.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 15 July 1991]:* I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Family Incomes

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) *Official Report*, 13 May, columns *31-34*, if he will repeat the figures including *(a)* columns for the two-parent families showing their net incomes after rent and community charge when on income support, *(b)* earnings levels for all three families of £180, £190 and £200 a week, *(c)* child care costs for the lone mother of £70 a week for the four-year-old child, and £20 a week for the six-year-old child and *(d)* comparable figures for all three families assuming they are owner-occupiers with mortgages of £40,000.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 22 July 1991]:* Income-related benefits such as family credit and housing benefit provide valuable help for many working families and make it worth while taking up and retaining employment. The social security reforms, and subsequent changes in tax and national insurance have virtually eliminated the worst effects of the poverty trap, so that it is now almost impossible for someone to be worse off as a result of an increase in gross pay.

The information requested is set out in the tables. It should be noted that the results in the tables remain arbitrary. They cannot reflect, except by chance, the actual circumstances of particular people and cannot claim to be representative of the population at large. The tables use hypothetical rents so they do not reflect the full range of housing costs which people can pay. All other assumptions are as detailed in the published tax benefit model tables.

This reply also updates and replaces figures previously supplied, applying the assumptions in the tax benefit model tables recently published, and corrects typographical errors in the *Official Report*, 13 May, columns *31-34*.

Lone parent with two children aged 4 and 6	£
(a) not working, after one year on benefit	
Income Support	57·65
Child Benefit	21·10
Rent Rebate	26·03
Community Charge Benefit	3·76
Total Net Income	113·81
Net Income After Rent and Community Charge	83·03
(b) earning £20 per week from part-time earnings	
Earnings	20·00
Income Support	52·65
Child Benefit	21·10
Rent Rebate	26·03
Community Charge Benefit	3·76
Total Net Income	128·81
Net Income After Rent and Community Charge	98·03

Notes:
1. Child Benefit includes One Parent Benefit.
2. Net Income after Rent and Community Charge includes the notional value of free school meals and welfare foods.

Lone parent with 2 children aged 4 and 6 with mortgage and child care costs

Earnings per week	*Tax*	*NI*	*Net mortgage interest*	*CC*	*Child care costs*	*Net earnings*	*FC*	*CHB*	*HB*	*CCB*	*Disposable income*
60·00	0·00	1·76	75·00	9·40	90·00	−116·16	57·70	21·10	0·00	0·00	−37·36
70·00	0·00	2·66	75·00	9·40	90·00	−107·06	54·14	21·10	0·00	0·00	−31·82
80·00	0·00	3·56	75·00	9·40	90·00	−97·96	47·77	21·10	0·00	0·00	−29·09
90·00	0·00	4·46	75·00	9·40	90·00	−88·86	41·40	21·10	0·00	0·00	−26·36
100·00	·89	5·36	75·00	9·40	90·00	−80·65	35·65	21·10	0·00	0·00	−23·90
110·00	3·39	6·26	75·00	9·40	90·00	−74·05	31·03	21·10	0·00	0·00	−21·92
120·00	5·89	7·16	75·00	9·40	90·00	−67·45	26·41	21·10	0·00	0·00	−19·94
130·00	8·39	8·06	75·00	9·40	90·00	−60·85	21·79	21·10	0·00	0·00	−17·96
140·00	10·89	8·96	75·00	9·40	90·00	−54·25	17·17	21·10	0·00	0·00	−15·98
150·00	13·39	9·86	75·00	9·40	90·00	−47·65	12·55	21·10	0·00	0·00	−14·00
160·00	15·89	10·76	75·00	9·40	90·00	−41·05	7·93	21·10	0·00	0·00	−12·02
170·00	18·39	11·66	75·00	9·40	90·00	−34·45	3·31	21·10	0·00	0·00	−10·04
180·00	20·89	12·56	75·00	9·40	90·00	−27·85	0·00	21·10	0·00	0·00	−6·75
190·00	23·39	13·46	75·00	9·40	90·00	−21·25	0·00	21·10	0·00	0·00	−0·15
200·00	25·89	14·36	75·00	9·40	90·00	−14·65	0·00	21·10	0·00	0·00	6·45

Lone parent with 2 children aged 4 and 6 with mortgage

Earnings per week	*Tax*	*NI*	*Net mortgage interest*	*CC*	*Net earnings*	*FC*	*CHB*	*HB*	*CCB*	*Disposable income*
60·00	0·00	1·76	75·00	9·40	−26·16	57·70	21·10	0·00	0·00	52·64
70·00	0·00	2·66	75·00	9·40	−17·06	54·14	21·10	0·00	0·00	58·18
80·00	0·00	3·56	75·00	9·40	−7·96	47·77	21·10	0·00	0·00	60·91
90·00	0·00	4·46	75·00	9·40	1·14	41·40	21·10	0·00	0·00	63·64
100·00	·89	5·36	75·00	9·40	9·35	35·65	21·10	0·00	0·00	66·10
110·00	3·39	6·26	75·00	9·40	15·95	31·03	21·10	0·00	0·00	68·08
120·00	5·89	7·16	75·00	9·40	22·55	26·41	21·10	0·00	0·00	70·06
130·00	8·39	8·06	75·00	9·40	29·15	21·79	21·10	0·00	0·00	72·04
140·00	10·89	8·96	75·00	9·40	35·75	17·17	21·10	0·00	0·00	74·02
150·00	13·39	9·86	75·00	9·40	42·35	12·55	21·10	0·00	0·00	76·00
160·00	15·89	10·76	75·00	9·40	48·95	7·93	21·10	0·00	0·00	77·98
170·00	18·39	11·66	75·00	9·40	55·55	3·31	21·10	0·00	0·00	79·96
180·00	20·89	12·56	75·00	9·40	62·15	0·00	21·10	0·00	0·00	83·25

Earnings per week	Tax	NI	Net mortgage interest	CC	Net earnings	FC	CHB	HB	CCB	Disposable income
190·00	23·39	13·46	75·00	9·40	68·75	0·00	21·10	0·00	0·00	89·85
200·00	25·89	14·36	75·00	9·40	75·35	0·00	21·10	0·00	0·00	96·45

Lone parent with 2 children aged 4 and 6 and child care costs
Net income after rent and community charge on income supplement 83·08

Earnings per week	Tax	NI	Rent	CC	Child care	Net earnings	FC	CHB	HB	CCB	Disposable income
60·00	0·00	1·76	26·03	4·70	90·00	−62·49	57·70	21·10	8·03	0·00	24·34
70·00	0·00	2·66	26·03	4·70	90·00	−53·39	54·14	21·10	4·43	0·00	26·28
80·00	0·00	3·56	26·03	4·70	90·00	−44·29	47·77	21·10	2·66	0·00	27·24
90·00	0·00	4·46	26·03	4·70	90·00	−35·19	41·40	21·10	0·88	0·00	28·19
100·00	0·89	5·36	26·03	4·70	90·00	−26·98	35·65	21·10	0·00	0·00	29·77
110·00	3·39	6·26	26·03	4·70	90·00	−20·38	31·03	21·10	0·00	0·00	31·75
120·00	5·89	7·16	26·03	4·70	90·00	−13·78	26·41	21·10	0·00	0·00	33·73
130·00	8·39	8·06	26·03	4·70	90·00	−7·18	21·79	21·10	0·00	0·00	35·71
140·00	10·89	8·96	26·03	4·70	90·00	−0·58	17·17	21·10	0·00	0·00	37·69
150·00	13·39	9·86	26·03	4·70	90·00	6·02	12·55	21·10	0·00	0·00	39·67
160·00	15·89	10·76	26·03	4·70	90·00	12·62	7·93	21·10	0·00	0·00	41·65
170·00	18·39	11·66	26·03	4·70	90·00	19·22	3·31	21·10	0·00	0·00	43·63
180·00	20·89	12·56	26·03	4·70	90·00	25·82	0·00	21·10	0·00	0·00	46·92
190·00	23·39	13·46	26·03	4·70	90·00	32·42	0·00	21·10	0·00	0·00	53·52
200·00	25·89	14·36	26·03	4·70	90·00	39·02	0·00	21·10	0·00	0·00	60·12

Lone parent with 2 children aged 4 and 6
Net income after rent and community charge on income support: 83·08

Earnings per week	Tax	NI	Rent	CC	Net earnings	FC	CHB	HB	CCB	Disposable income
60·00	0·00	1·76	26·03	4·70	27·51	57·70	21·10	8·03	0·00	114·34
70·00	0·00	2·66	26·03	4·70	36·61	54·14	21·10	4·43	0·00	116·28
80·00	0·00	3·56	26·03	4·70	45·71	47·77	21·10	2·66	0·00	117·24
90·00	0·00	4·46	26·03	4·70	54·81	41·40	21·10	0·88	0·00	118·19
100·00	0·89	5·36	26·03	4·70	63·02	35·65	21·10	0·00	0·00	119·77
110·00	3·39	6·26	26·03	4·70	69·62	31·03	21·10	0·00	0·00	121·75
120·00	5·89	7·16	26·03	4·70	75·76	26·41	21·10	0·00	0·00	123·73
130·00	8·39	8·06	26·03	4·70	82·82	21·79	21·10	0·00	0·00	125·71
140·00	10·89	8·96	26·03	4·70	89·42	17·17	21·10	0·00	0·00	127·69
150·00	13·39	9·86	26·03	4·70	96·02	12·55	21·10	0·00	0·00	129·67
160·00	15·89	10·76	26·03	4·70	102·62	7·93	21·10	0·00	0·00	131·65
170·00	18·39	11·66	26·03	4·70	109·22	3·31	21·10	0·00	0·00	133·63
180·00	20·89	12·56	26·03	4·70	115·82	0·00	21·10	0·00	0·00	136·92
190·00	23·39	13·46	26·03	4·70	122·42	0·00	21·10	0·00	0·00	143·52
200·00	25·89	14·36	26·03	4·70	129·02	0·00	21·10	0·00	0·00	150·12

Married couple with 2 children aged 4 and 6
Net income after rent and community charge on income support: 100·29

Earnings per week	Tax	NI	Rent	CC	Net earnings	FC	CHB	HB	CCB	Disposable income
60·00	0·00	1·76	26·03	9·40	22·81	57·70	15·50	10·08	3·84	109·93
70·00	0·00	2·66	26·03	9·40	31·91	54·14	15·50	6·48	3·01	111·04
80·00	0·00	3·56	26·03	9·40	41·01	47·77	15·50	4·71	2·60	111·59
90·00	0·00	4·46	26·03	9·40	50·11	41·40	15·50	2·93	2·19	112·13
100·00	·89	5·36	26·03	9·40	58·32	35·65	15·50	1·33	1·82	112·62
110·00	3·39	6·26	26·03	9·40	64·92	31·03	15·50	0·00	1·52	112·97
120·00	5·89	7·16	26·03	9·40	71·52	26·41	15·50	0·00	1·23	114·66
130·00	8·39	8·06	26·03	9·40	78·12	21·79	15·50	0·00	0·93	116·34
140·00	10·89	8·96	26·03	9·40	84·72	17·17	15·50	0·00	0·63	118·02
150·00	13·39	9·86	26·03	9·40	91·32	12·55	15·50	0·00	0·33	119·70
160·00	15·89	10·76	26·03	9·40	97·92	7·93	15·50	0·00	0·04	121·39
170·00	18·39	11·66	26·03	9·40	104·52	3·31	15·50	0·00	0·00	123·33
180·00	20·89	12·56	26·03	9·40	111·12	0·00	15·50	0·00	0·00	126·62
190·00	23·39	13·46	26·03	9·40	117·72	0·00	15·50	0·00	0·00	133·22
200·00	25·89	14·36	26·03	9·40	124·32	0·00	15·50	0·00	0·00	139·82

Married couple with 2 children aged 4 and 6 with mortgage
Net income after mortgage and community charge on income support: 100·29

Earnings per week	Tax	NI	Net mortgage interest	CC	Net earnings	FC	CHB	HB	CCB	Disposable income
60·00	0·00	1·76	75·00	9·40	−26·16	57·70	15·50	0·00	3·84	50·88
70·00	0·00	2·66	75·00	9·40	−17·06	54·14	15·50	0·00	3·01	55·59
80·00	0·00	3·56	75·00	9·40	−7·96	47·77	15·50	0·00	2·60	57·91
90·00	0·00	4·46	75·00	9·40	1·14	41·40	15·50	0·00	2·19	60·23
100·00	0·89	5·36	75·00	9·40	9·35	35·65	15·50	0·00	1·82	62·32
110·00	3·39	6·26	75·00	9·40	15·95	31·03	15·50	0·00	1·52	64·00
120·00	5·89	7·16	75·00	9·40	22·55	26·41	15·50	0·00	1·23	65·69
130·00	8·39	8·06	75·00	9·40	29·15	21·79	15·50	0·00	0·93	67·37
140·00	10·89	8·96	75·00	9·40	35·75	17·17	15·50	0·00	0·63	69·05
150·00	13·39	9·86	75·00	9·40	42·35	12·55	15·50	0·00	0·33	70·73
160·00	15·89	10·76	75·00	9·40	48·95	7·93	15·50	0·00	0·04	72·42
170·00	18·39	11·66	75·00	9·40	55·55	3·31	15·50	0·00	0·00	74·36
180·00	20·89	12·56	75·00	9·40	62·15	0·00	15·50	0·00	0·00	77·65
190·00	23·39	13·46	75·00	9·40	68·75	0·00	15·50	0·00	0·00	84·25
200·00	25·89	14·36	75·00	9·40	75·35	0·00	15·50	0·00	0·00	90·85

Married couple with 3 children aged 3, 8 and 11
Net income after rent and community charge on income support: 123·07

Earnings per week	Tax	NI	Net mortgage interest	CC	Net earnings	FC	CHB	HB	CCB	Disposable income
60·00	0·00	1·76	26·03	9·40	22·81	73·80	22·75	7·74	3·30	130·40
70·00	0·00	2·66	26·03	9·40	31·91	70·24	22·75	4·14	2·47	131·51
80·00	0·00	3·56	26·03	9·40	41·01	63·87	22·75	2·37	2·06	132·06
90·00	0·00	4·46	26·03	9·40	50·11	57·50	22·75	0·59	1·65	132·60
100·00	·89	5·36	26·03	9·40	58·32	51·75	22·75	0·00	1·28	134·10
110·00	3·39	6·26	26·03	9·40	64·92	47·13	22·75	0·00	0·98	135·78
120·00	5·89	7·16	26·03	9·40	71·52	42·51	22·75	0·00	0·69	137·47
130·00	8·39	8·06	26·03	9·40	78·12	37·89	22·75	0·00	0·39	139·15
140·00	10·89	8·96	26·03	9·40	84·72	33·27	22·75	0·00	0·09	140·83
150·00	13·39	9·86	26·03	9·40	91·32	28·65	22·75	0·00	0·00	142·72
160·00	15·89	10·76	26·03	9·40	97·92	24·03	22·75	0·00	0·00	144·70
170·00	18·39	11·66	26·03	9·40	104·52	19·41	22·75	0·00	0·00	146·68
180·00	20·89	12·56	26·03	9·40	111·12	14·79	22·75	0·00	0·00	148·66
190·00	23·39	13·46	26·03	9·40	117·72	10·17	22·75	0·00	0·00	150·64
200·00	25·89	14·36	26·03	9·40	124·32	5·55	22·75	0·00	0·00	152·62

Married couple with 3 children aged 3, 8 and 11 with mortgage
Net income after mortgage and community charge on income support: 123·07

Earnings per week	Tax	NI	Net mortgage interest	CC	Net earnings	FC	CHB	HB	CCB	Disposable income
60·00	0·00	1·76	75·00	9·40	−26·16	73·80	22·75	0·00	3·30	73·69
70·00	0·00	2·66	75·00	9·40	−17·06	70·24	22·75	0·00	2·47	78·40
80·00	0·00	3·56	75·00	9·40	−7·96	63·87	22·75	0·00	2·06	80·72
90·00	0·00	4·46	75·00	9·40	1·14	57·50	22·75	0·00	1·65	83·04
100·00	0·89	5·36	75·00	9·40	9·35	51·75	22·75	0·00	1·28	85·13
110·00	3·39	6·26	75·00	9·40	15·95	47·13	22·75	0·00	0·98	86·81
120·00	5·89	7·16	75·00	9·40	22·55	42·51	22·75	0·00	0·69	88·50
130·00	8·39	8·06	75·00	9·40	29·15	37·89	22·75	0·00	0·39	90·18
140·00	10·89	8·96	75·00	9·40	35·75	33·27	22·75	0·00	0·09	91·86
150·00	13·39	9·86	75·00	9·40	42·35	28·65	22·75	0·00	0·00	93·75
160·00	15·89	10·76	75·00	9·40	48·95	24·03	22·75	0·00	0·00	95·73
170·00	18·39	11·66	75·00	9·40	55·55	19·41	22·75	0·00	0·00	97·71
180·00	20·89	12·56	75·00	9·40	62·15	14·79	22·75	0·00	0·00	99·69
190·00	23·39	13·46	75·00	9·40	68·75	10·17	22·75	0·00	0·00	101·67
200·00	25·89	14·36	75·00	9·40	75·35	5·55	22·75	0·00	0·00	103·65

SCOTLAND

Local Authority Employees

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the total numbers of full-time and part-time employees in each local authority in Scotland, and the gross totals, broken down by category, in 1979 and in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Quarterly figures for local authority staffing have been published jointly by the Scottish Office and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities since 1976 and are available in the Library. Prior to 1981, figures for individual local authorities were not held centrally.

School Catchment Areas

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland of how many instances he is aware of pupils who live within the appropriate catchment area being denied places in schools which have pupils from outwith the catchment area on their rolls as a result of placing requests.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Since August 1990, two letters have been received in the Scottish Office from parents with children of school age who moved into a catchment area but at that time were unable to secure a place for their child at their local school.

Education

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table to show for each regional council in Scotland the cost of educating a child in *(a)* a primary school and *(b)* a secondary school where the school is (i) owned by a public authority and (ii) church owned by reference to denomination.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The available information is given in the table. It excludes the cost of school transport, meals and milk and central administration. Separate information for denominational and non-denominational schools is not available.

Net current expenditure per pupil in primary and secondary schools 1989-90

Region	Primary £	Secondary £
Borders	1,455	2,328
Central	1,377	2,366
Dumfries and Galloway	1,279	2,525
Fife	1,421	2,354
Grampian	1,342	2,524
Highland	1,434	2,323
Lothian	1,313	2,513
Strathclyde	1,407	2,502
Tayside	1,297	2,537
Orkney	1,686	3,218
Shetland	1,815	3,873
Western Isles	1,876	3,270

Source: Local authority financial returns.

Oil Seed Rape

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state the number and content of research projects sponsored by his Department on oil seed rape.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A research grant of £63,000 over three years was awarded to Aberdeen university in 1990 by the Scottish Office Home and Health Department for a project to study the effects of oil seed rape on human health.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list figures showing oil seed rape acreage separately for England and Wales, Scotland and each EC country in each year over the past five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The figures requested are given in the table:

Oil seed rape (hectares)

Country	Year 1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Scotland	22,000	45,000	42,000	36,000	45,000
England and Wales	276,000	341,000	304,000	283,000	343,000
Belgium	3,000	4,000	4,000	5,000	n/a
Denmark	226,000	252,000	200,000	236,000	n/a
Germany	308,000	428,000	385,000	429,000	n/a
Spain	5,000	7,000	8,000	10,000	n/a
France	392,000	737,000	865,000	625,000	n/a
Ireland	2,000	6,000	4,000	4,000	n/a
Italy	23,000	28,000	23,000	16,000	n/a
Luxembourg	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	n/a
Netherlands	6,000	10,000	7,000	6,000	n/a

Brechin Infirmary

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has had regarding the closure of the upper floor of Brechin infirmary about the reduction in the number of general practitioner beds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have received seven letters on Tayside health board's proposals to rationalise general practitioner beds at Brechin infirmary.

It is the responsibility of the health board, in the light of local circumstances and priorities, to determine the extent and level of services it provides and to review the adequacy of such services to ensure that the best use is made of resources.

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what was the gross domestic fixed capital formation in Scotland as a percentage of the United Kingdom figure in 1979; and what is the percentage for the latest year for which figures are available;

(2) what was Scotland's gross domestic product as a percentage of United Kingdom gross domestic product in 1979; and what is the percentage in the latest year for which figures are available;

(3) what percentage the Scottish contribution to United Kingdom manufacturing declined between 1979 and the latest year for which figures are available;

(4) what percentage of United Kingdom gross domestic fixed capital formation in *(a)* all industries for which an estimate is available and *(b)* manufacturing originated in Scotland for each year from 1979 to the latest year for which figures are available;

(5) what gross domestic product was per head in Scotland in cash terms and as a percentage of the United Kingdom figure for each year since 1979.

Mr. Lang: The available information can be obtained from the regional accounts databank in the Library. Library staff will be pleased to assist in obtaining this.

Regional Assistance

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing expenditure on regional preferential assistance to industry in Scotland for each year from 1974 to the most recently available date in cash and constant prices.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is given in the table.

Gross expenditure on regional preferential assistance

	Cash Prices £ million	*Constant 1989-90 Prices* £ million
1974-75	143·5	603·6
1975-76	226·0	757·3
1976-77	212·8	628·0
1977-78	142·7	370·5
1978-79	156·5	366·4
1979-80	140·8	282·5
1980-81	198·1	335·9
1981-82	234·5	362·6
1982-83	369·4	533·4
1983-84	228·6	315·5
1984-85	187·2	245·9
1985-86	197·0	245·4
1986-87	242·4	291·8
1987-88	153·2	175·1
1988-89	151·2	160·8
1989-90	144·6	144·6
[1]1990-91	159·1	147·7

[1] (provisional).

Note: Includes gross expenditure in Scotland on regional selective assistance, regional development grants, regional enterprise grants, Scottish Development Agency and Highlands and Islands Development Board expenditure on grants and land and factory building. The figures also include a number of forms of assistance in the years up to 1982 which have been discontinued.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the *(a)* total number of recorded crimes and *(b)* crime rate per 100,000 population in Scotland for each year from 1979 to the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Lang: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many employees in employment in Scotland worked in service industries in *(a)* June 1990 and *(b)* June 1991;

(2) how many employees there were in manufacturing in 1979 in Scotland; and how many there were in the latest year for which figures are available;

(3) how many employees in employment in Scotland there were in June 1979; and how many there were in June 1991.

Mr. Lang: Estimates of the number of employees in employment in Scotland are available up to March 1991. The table gives the available information.

Employees in employment in Scotland — *Thousands*

	Total	*Manufacturing*	*Services*
June 1979	2,102	604	1,224
June 1990	1,973	398	1,353
March 1991	1,956	388	1,355

Source: Employment Department quarterly estimates of employees in employment.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women in employment in Scotland currently earn less than £3·40 per hour.

Mr. Lang: I will write to the hon. Member.

Homelessness

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the official homelessness statistics for Scotland for each year since 1979.

Mr. Lang: Statistics of households who applied to Scottish local authorities under the homeless persons legislation for the years 1978-79 to 1989-90 were published in table 15 of statistical bulletin HSG/1991/4, "Housing Trends in Scotland—Quarter ended 31 December 1990". Copies were sent to all Members representing Scottish constituencies and are available in the House Library. Since then a small number of late returns have been received for 1988-89 and 1989-90. Revised figures for these years are given below. Returns for 1990-91 are now being received, and will be published in due course.

Applicant households under the homeless persons legislation by local authority assessment and year, Scotland

Local authority assessment	*1988-89*	*1989-90*[1]
Total applicants	24,711	28,501
Homeless	9,630	11,203
priority unintentional	6,718	7,934
priority intentional	727	878
non priority	2,185	2,391
Potentially homeless	6,122	6,661
priority unintentional	4,146	4,664
priority intentional	416	482
non priority	1,560	1,515
Neither homeless nor potentially homeless	2,464	2,960
Lost contact	6,495	7,677

[1] Some 2,000 returns, mostly from Glasgow, are estimated to remain outstanding.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from the Glasgow Council for the Single Homeless and the Richmond Fellowship on homelessness among discharged psychiatric patients; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We have received no such representations from these bodies.

It is Government policy, however, that patients should not be discharged from hospital until their needs have been assessed and proper arrangements made for their care in the community.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from the young housing monitoring group on homelessness among young people; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I recently received from Edinburgh Council for the Single Homeless a copy of the group's report, "Still in Demand", which presents information gathered by 20 housing agencies in Edinburgh from 274 people in the 16 to 24 age group who came to them in September 1990 seeking accommodation. I have read the report with interest. My reply to the council drew attention to the additional capital allocation of £0·75 million which we have made available to Edinburgh district council in 1991-92 for projects to combat homelessness, which should help the young people who are the subject of the report.

Health Boards

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the capital expenditure bids of each health board in Scotland and their allocated capital expenditure budget for 1990-91.

Mr. Lang: I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Earnings

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were average gross male weekly earnings in Scotland for each year since 1979 in cash terms, and as a percentage of the United Kingdom figure.

Mr. Lang: Information on the average gross male weekly earnings of full-time employees on adult rates for Scotland and Great Britain in April of each year can be obtained from part E reports from the New Earnings Survey. These are available from the Library. There is no comparable information readily available for the United Kingdom.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of *(a)* hospital beds and *(b)* acute beds for Scotland in each year from 1979 until the latest year for which figures are available and the percentage changes from 1979 to the most recent year available.

Mr. Lang: I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Testosterone

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what evaluation has been made of Di Hydrase Testosterone as a medicine for damaged prostates.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have no information on any product with this name. The in vivo metabolite of Testosterone, Dihydrotestosterone (DHT), is believed to be an active agent within the prostate gland responsible for normal and abnormal growth. There are no known studies on the use of DHT as a treatment, but there is ongoing research into the effects of DHT inhibitors.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many BSE carcases have been *(a)* incinerated and *(b)* buried in 1991 in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In the period January to May 1991, 281 BSE carcases were incinerated and two buried in Scotland.

Hospital Building Projects

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give a breakdown of the completed hospital and ward building programme for each of the years since 1979, by local health board, with the location and cost of each proposed new hospital building project and the total cost;

(2) if he will give a breakdown of the present hospital and ward building programme by local health boards, with the location and cost of each proposed new hospital building project and the total cost.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Trust Hospitals

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidance he has given to trust hospitals in Scotland about prices charged to health authorities in areas and specialties for which the trust hospital is a monopoly supplier.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Guidance has been issued to those units which have applied, or are considering applying, for trust status. This guidance advises that prices charged to health boards should cover all costs plus a 6 per cent. return on the current value of net assets. This requirement is binding on all NHS trust units.

Bus Companies (Prosecutions)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prosecutions there have been against *(a)* public and *(b)* private bus companies in Scotland for each year since 1980 for (i) drivers' hours violations and (ii) vehicle standards violations.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not separately identifiable within the criminal statistics maintained by the Scottish Office Home and Health Department.

School and Nursery Building Programmes

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will provide a breakdown of the completed school and nursery building programme for each of the years since 1979, by local education authority, together with the location and cost of each completed new building project and the total cost;

(2) if he will give a breakdown of the present school and nursery provision building programme by local education authority, together with the location and cost of each proposed new building project and the total cost.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested may be obtained from individual education authorities.

Youth Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received any representations about the youth training guarantees from local enterprise councils.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise are responsible for delivering the Government's youth training guarantee in their areas. If

any one of the local enterprise companies with which these bodies contract were concerned about the delivery of the youth training guarantee in its area it would bring that concern to the attention of either Scottish Enterprise or Highlands and Islands Enterprise as appropriate. However, neither Scottish Enterprise nor Highlands and Islands Enterprise has suggested to my right hon. Friend that it doubts its ability to ensure that the guarantee is met.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give, as per the requirement set out in the local enterprise council operating agreement, the number of youth training starts and the number of youth training trainees in training at the end of the four-weekly period as set out in the schedule of management information *(a)* for the most recent period for which information is available and *(b)* for local enterprise councils.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Local enterprise company operating contracts are contracts between individual local enterprise companies and Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise as appropriate. These contracts require local enterprise companies to deliver management information to these bodies; not to my right hon. Friend. I have therefore asked the chairmen of both bodies to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest figure for participants in youth training.

Mr. Allan Stewart: In Scotland responsibility for the delivery of youth training rests with Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. I have asked the chairmen of these bodies to write to the hon. Member with the information he has requested.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many parliamentary questions for written answer have been answered by his Department so far this Session, and in the comparable period for the last Session; and if he will publish a table of how many answers *(a)* do not give the information requested because of (i) disproportionate cost or (ii) other reasons, *(b)* give an undertaking to write to the hon. Member who asked the question and *(c)* were referred for answer to the chief executive of each next steps agency.

Mr. Lang: The number of parliamentary questions put down for written answer during the last Session and so far this Session is:

Session 1989-90—2,566
Session 1990-91 (figures to 23 July 1991)—2,242

The information requested for *(a)*, *(b)* and *(c)* could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Ambulance Service, Inverness

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he proposes to retain the control of the Highland and Western Isles ambulance service in Inverness; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I will write to the hon. Member.

Orkney and Shetland (Ferries)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress his Department has made in monitoring freight and passenger traffic levels on the ferry routes between Orkney, Shetland and the Scottish mainland, in connection with his promised mid-year review of the subvention rates; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Ethnic Minorities (Education)

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will bring forward proposals to specify funding from revenue support grant to local authorities for education and support of ethnic minorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The Government have no plans to introduce such a specific grant scheme in Scotland. Local authority spending in this area is supported by RSG.

Further Education

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations his Department has received from the Association of Principals of Colleges on financial aid to assist the transition of further education colleges to autonomous institutions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Scottish branch of the Association of Principals of Colleges has welcomed the publication of the White Paper "Access and Opportunity" and support the establishment of colleges of further education as autonomous institutions. To assist the transition to the new status, the association has called for funding to be made available for financial, legal and administrative structures. Careful consideration is being given to these representations together with others received on the White Paper.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations his Department has received from the Scottish Further and Higher Education Association on the White Paper "Access and Opportunity —A Strategy for Education"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Scottish Further and Higher Education Association has made a number of detailed comments on the White Paper proposals. These are being given careful consideration together with more than 100 other responses received.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration his Department has given to the demise of the Scottish Institute of Adult and Continuing Education and to the possible establishment of a successor body; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The demise of the Scottish Institute of Adult Education, which received grant from the Scottish Office Education Department, was a matter for the institute's governing body. The Department is currently reviewing the work of the Scottish Council for Education in the Community, including its role in adult education.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations his Department has received from the Association of Principals of Colleges concerning the importance of local authority representation on councils of further education colleges after 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Scottish branch of the Association of Principals, in its response to the White Paper, "Access and Opportunity", has indicated that it considers it important that local authorities continue to be represented on the new councils after 1 April 1993. Careful consideration is being given to these representations together with others received on the White Paper.

Fish Disease

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will obtain for his departmental library a copy of the findings of research by the Federal Research Institute for Fisheries, Hamburg, published by the German Research Service, concerning the incidence of tumours caused by pollution in fish in the North sea generally and the estuary of the River Tay in particular; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Scientists in the Department have not yet seen the full report, which they are still trying to obtain. They have, however, received more recent data from the German scientists concerned with the report. None of the data that they have seen over a period of several years demonstrates links between disease levels in fish and pollution.

Horizon Programme

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps his Department is taking to advise and assist interested groups in Scotland to apply for funds from the European social fund Horizon programme to provide job opportunities for the physically and mentally handicapped; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: This is a matter for which my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment takes responsibility; the position in relation to Scotland will be dealt with in the reply to the similar question which the hon. Member has put to my right hon. and learned Friend on this subject.

Public Transport

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will bring forward regulations so as to ring-fence allocations for public transport measures within the budgets of local authorities.

Mr. Lang: I will write to the right hon. Member as soon as possible.

Primary School Testing

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to continue the testing of primary 4 and primary 7 pupils in English language and mathematics.

Mr. Lang: A pilot round of tests in English language and mathematics was scheduled to be taken by primary 4 and primary 7 pupils between 1 March and 30 April this year. Overall about one third of eligible children sat tests, the figures for individual education authorities ranging from virtually 100 per cent. to under 5 per cent. The returns from the two largest authorities were both very close to the average.

A detailed evaluation of the pilot round of testing in over 100 schools has been carried out by a panel of moderators led by a former Chief Inspector of Schools. This was published on 23 July and I have arranged for a copy of the report to be placed in the Library of the House. This report confirms the quality of the test material and the practicability of administering the tests without significant disruption to class or school routine or distress to the pupils involved. At the same time the report makes a number of detailed recommendations. These focus particularly on the extent of introduction necessary by teachers for some test units and the procedures for marking the writing tests which proved to be over-elaborate. Other recommendations concern the assembly and organisation of resources and materials.

In the light of this report and of other comments made I have decided that testing of primary 4 and primary 7 children in English language and mathematics remains an important part of pupil assessment, and that the arrangements for its conduct should be altered to meet representations which have been made and to remedy shortcomings which have been identified. Amending regulations are accordingly being laid before the House today which will govern primary testing for the school session beginning next month. These regulations introduce two changes to the arrangements which applied to the pilot round.

First, testing will be permitted throughout the course of the school session instead of during the fixed period 1 March to 30 April. This change has been urged by representatives of education authorities, teacher organisations and parents. It will allow the tests more easily to match the school's own curricular planning, will facilitate school organisation and management and will allow tests more clearly to serve the purpose for which they are intended: to provide a measure of each pupil's progress. The last date for ordering test units is adjusted accordingly.

Secondly, the requirement to provide a summary of test results to school boards is modified to require such a summary to be presented only where this can be done without identifying the results of any individual pupil. This change responds to concern that the previous wording might inevitably have required the disclosure of individual pupils' results where the summary related to classes in very small schools.

A new document about test arrangements is also in preparation for the 1991-92 round of tests. This will take account of the more detailed observations and comments contained in the evaluation study and in representations which have been made from other sources.

Testing has been the subject of considerable misunderstanding and misrepresentation since it was first announced as part of the 5 to 14 development programme in the consultation document, "Curriculum and Assessment: A Policy for the 90s". The changes now being introduced are intended to meet concerns which have been expressed. I hope they will be viewed in that light and that education authorities, teachers and parents will now join in ensuring that testing takes its place as an established and

valuable element in the 5 to 14 programme, which itself has been very well received. As the citizens charter recognises, test results are an important element in the reports on their children's progress to which all parents are entitled.

It has also been represented by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and others that the stock of test units might be expanded so that they may be used at all stages of primary and early secondary education to confirm the accuracy of a teacher's assessment of a child's achievements. I am attracted to this suggestion and hope that in collaboration with education authorities it can be further developed.

A number of commentators have likewise asked for attention to be given to supporting those children whom the tests show as experiencing difficulty in one or more aspects of language and mathematics. I am anxious to respond to these requests. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities have been asked for their views on how resources for learning support might best be deployed for this purpose. I have also asked the Scottish Office Education Department to review the diagnostic tests needed to help identify with greater precision the support needed for any particular pupil. That work is currently under way.

Hospital Trusts

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what financial plan and projections he has received from either the sponsors of the Foresterhill hospitals unit trust application or Grampian health board relating to the trust application; and if he will make it his policy to publish such information as soon as it is available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 24 July 1991]:* The sponsors of the Foresterhill hospitals unit trust have submitted a detailed financial plan and projections covering three years. These will be treated as commercially confidential, but the trust will be asked to publish business plans for 1992-93.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when and at what rate of interest he will declare a dividend on public dividend capital in respect of trust hospitals in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Where a trust has a surplus, it will agree with the management executive whether to redeem part of its interest-bearing debt or invest it with approved institutions to provide for future capital expenditure or to declare a dividend.

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what will be the external financing limit for the proposed Foresterhill hospitals unit NHS trust in each of the financial years 1992-93, 1993-94 and 1994-95.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 24 July 1991]:* External financing limits for NHS trusts are determined each year taking into account the amount of finance available nationally, the estimated capital expenditure of the trusts and the amount of internally generated resources. The figures for the years requested are therefore not known at this time.

National Health Service Finance

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the existing external financing limit for Grampian health board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 24 July 1991]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran) on 24 July 1991.

Forestry Commission Land

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, further to his answer to the hon. Member for South Shields on 14 March, *Official Report*, columns *689-90*, if he will list the Forestry Commission's land which has been put up for sale since that date; whether it has since been sold; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 23 July 1991]:* The following forest areas have been placed on the open market since my earlier answer, and those marked with an asterisk have now been sold:

County/Region	*Name*	*Area hectares*
England		
Cumbria	Coldside Wood, Kershope	17
Dorset	Blackwater Copse	13
Gloucestershire	Valley Road, Cinderford	21
Hampshire	Mill Copse	6
Humberside	Wrawby Moor	70
Somerset	Chargot Estate	18
Suffolk	Grimsditch Woods	17
Scotland		
Borders	Hardens	88
Fife	Ballantager Burn	*4
Fife	High Valley Field	*27
Fife	Kilwhiss Strip	*3
Fife	Muirrow and Muirdean	*33
Fife	Outhmuir	*10
Fife	Parknowe	*11
Grampian	Barlatch	3
Grampian	Bloody Faulds	3
Grampian	Coral Brae	24
Grampian	Drakemyres	32
Grampian	Hillend Moss	16
Grampian	Kincardine District Woodlands	161
Grampian	Knock Hill Wood	56
Highland	Achibeg	27
Strathclyde	Ardchuple Wood	*2
Strathclyde	Blarchoarain	*36
Strathclyde	Craigbarnet and Norwood	*16
Strathclyde	St. Catherines Plantation	*32
Strathclyde	Todlaw	370
Tayside	Innerpeffray	*67
Tayside	Innerwick and Camusurachan	*125
Wales		
Clwyd	Coed Esgynfa	7
Clwyd	Coed Min yr Afon	2
Clwyd	Coed Penygelli	29
Clwyd	Coed Penynant	9
Clwyd	Crown Wood	29
Clwyd	Glol Wood	27
Clwyd	Travellers Inn	5
Clwyd	Travellers Inn Gorse	5
Dyfed	Aberdedle	7
Dyfed	Allt Banc Sina	18
Dyfed	Allt Dolfelfed	16
Dyfed	Allt Gudd	6
Dyfed	Allt Llwyn Dyfrion	11
Dyfed	Allt Pistyll Dewi	33
Dyfed	Bryn Wicket	8
Dyfed	Coed Pant Sglodion	18
Dyfed	Cynheidre Uchaf	24
Dyfed	Danygraig	10
Dyfed	Garn Fach	21
Dyfed	Glas Pant	4
Dyfed	Glebe Woods	17
Dyfed	Lon Isaf	7

County/Region	Name	Area hectares
Dyfed	Long Wood	24
Dyfed	Maes y Bont	1
Dyfed	Panteynon and Allt y Forlan	29
Dyfed	Pengallt (Allt y Foel)	18
Dyfed	Pont Henri	14
Dyfed	Portis Pant	30
Dyfed	Quay Wood	7
Dyfed	Rhos y Gwydir	2
Dyfed	River Wood	1
Dyfed	Stradmore Wood	22
Dyfed	Tynton Wood	4
Dyfed	Wenallt	17
Dyfed	Westland West Wood	2
Gwent	Llangattock Great Wood	8
Gwynedd	Braich Blaen Tafolog	28
Gwynedd	Moel Groes Heol	130
Powys	Beacon Lodge	38
Powys	Bronfelen	10
Powys	Coed Cae Gilbert	5
Powys	Craig yr Henffordd	8
Powys	Cwmgilla	30
Powys	Frachwen	10
Powys	Nantywylan	4
Powys	Pwll Llydan	31
Powys	Rhiwgoch Woods	61

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, further to his answer to the hon. Member for South Shields of 14 March, *Official Report*, columns *689-90*, if he will list the Forestry Commission land which has now been sold, giving the name of the purchaser, the grid references, the county and the sale price; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 23 July 1991]:* Of the properties listed in my previous answer, the following areas of Forestry Commission land have now been sold. The names and sale price are given only in cases where the purchasers have given their consent to such information being made public.

County/region	Name	Name of purchaser	Sale price	Grid reference
England				
Cornwall	Headweir	—	—	SS 237116
Devon	Heasley	—	—	SS 732337
Somerset	Balls Wood	—	—	ST 748423
Somerset	Pound Copse	P.J. & R.C. Cary	£16,500	ST 763402
Scotland				
Grampian	Glasslaw	—	£32,300	NK 628586
Highland	Brin Wood	—	—	NH 626286
Highland	Clashnagrave	—	—	NH 763948
Highland	Dirriemore	—	—	NH 232764
Strathclyde	Thornwood	Dr. F. Carswell	£5,500	NS 142697
Strathclyde	Ferns	—	—	NS 141695
Wales				
Gwent	Ty Vree (Cook's Wood)	—	—	ST 438978

Local Authority Investment

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidance he has given to local authorities on the use of surplus funds for investment.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 22 July 1991]:* No such guidance has been issued.

Drinking Water

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of drinking water supplies in Scotland that reach the level of the EEC directive on drinking water; and if he will name them.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 22 July 1991]:* There are 331 public water supply zones in Scotland assessed as meeting the requirements of the EC drinking water directive, which are now incorporated into the Water Supply (Water Quality) (Scotland) Regulations 1990. I will send the hon. Member a list of their names and arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library of the House.

EMPLOYMENT

Claimants

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give a breakdown for Scotland, Wales and each standard region in England of the percentage of unemployed claimants who have been unemployed for 12 months or more at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Jackson: The information requested, relating to April 1991, can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the House of Commons Library.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the ways by which training and enterprise councils are accountable to Parliament.

Mr. Jackson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 24 July, *Official Report* column *613*.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the form of the requirement set out in the training and enterprise council operating agreement the number of youth training starts and the number of youth training trainees in training at the end of the four-weekly period as set out in the schedule of

management information *(a)* for the period covering January 1991 and *(b)* for each training and enterprise council.

Mr. Jackson: Reliable training and enterprise council level information is available only from April 1991.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the result of the findings of the recent audit of five TECs as regards the issue of new guidelines about operating surpluses and their use.

Mr. Jackson: The audit of the first five training and enteprise councils was not concerned in particular with the use of operating surpluses. The TEC contract states clearly that any operating surpluses will be used by the TEC to further the aims of its corporate and business plan.

Learning Difficulties

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, further to his answer of 5 July, *Official Report*, column *218*, if he will indicate what steps he is now taking to ensure adequate monitoring of the provision for people with learning difficulties within schemes for which he has ministerial responsibility.

Mr. Jackson: Each training and enterprise council is required to set out in its corporate and business plans how it intends to meet the needs of people with special training needs. These plans are subject to my approval, and that of the Secretary of State for Wales for TECs in Wales.

The contractual requirements common to all TECs include providing appropriate training to people with special training needs, including those with learning difficulties. The Department has produced guidance on how to plan for and deliver training to meet those needs.

TECs' performance against their plans are regularly discussed with officials of the Department. In addition, the training standards advisory service has a responsibility for appraising the quality of training offered by TECs.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, further to his answer of 4 July, *Official Report*, column *202*, if he will now set targets for provision for people with learning difficulties.

Mr. Jackson: I have no plans to set such targets. The Government remain committed to the requirements on special training needs laid down in their agreements with TECs.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, further to his answer of 2 July, *Official Report*, column *108*, what proportion of the £35 million package referred to in that answer will be applied *(a)* to provision in Wales, *(b)* to people with learning difficulties in the United Kingdom and *(c)* to people with learning difficulties in Wales.

Mr. Jackson: Some £2·5 million has been allocated to Wales. The Department's office for Wales will allocate the budget to TECs according to local need. It is not possible to say how much of the money will be spent on people with learning difficulties. However, the additional money is targeted on meeting special training needs alongside training for those in the guarantee and aim groups, some of whom will have learning difficulties.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, further to his answer of 4 July, *Official Report*, column *202*, if he will make it his policy to ensure that information on the number of people with learning difficulties is collected in future.

Mr. Jackson: I have no plans to identify separately information on people with learning difficulties among those with other special training needs.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, (1) further to his answer of 2 July, *Official Report*, column *108*, for each training and employment council how each such training and enterprise council *(a)* in Wales and *(b)* in other parts of the United Kingdom has set out its intentions in regard to people with special needs in general and people with learning difficulties in particular;

(2), further to his answer of 5 July, *Official Report*, column *218*, whether he will set targets for the current year and future years in terms of provision for young people and adults with learning difficulties within the sphere of ministerial responsibilities.

Mr. Jackson: The TEC operating agreement states that each TEC must make suitable high-quality training available for all trainees who have disabilities, or other significant personal disadvantages which give rise to special training needs. TECs produce corporate and business plans on the basis of the operating agreement. TECs' corporate plans are public documents and are available in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, further to his answer of 5 July, *Official Report*, column *218*, if he will explain why the information requested is not available.

Mr. Jackson: Figures are collected on the number of people with disabilities in training, but these figures do not identify separately specific types of disability such as learning difficulties.

Training, Enterprise and Education Directorate

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether his Department's list of awards eligible for funding by the Training, Enterprise and Education Directorate is available for planning purposes to organisations such as further education colleges, managing agents and awarding bodies.

Mr. Jackson: Full details of vocational qualifications accepted by the Employment Department for TEC funding appear in the National Council for Vocational Qualifications database. This is available for purchase by any training organisation or other interested party from NCVQ. A written summary of this information, in the form of vocational qualification of listings, is circulated by the Department to TECs to fulfil the obligations of the ED/TEC contract. TECs are free to pass on this information to whomever they wish.

Youth Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give *(a)* the number of places in contract for 20 May, 23 June and 13 October, *(b)* the estimated net local recruitable potential up to 13 October, by (i) the stock of empty recruitable youth training places on 20 May and (ii) the cumulative total of new recruitment

opportunities becoming available between 21 May to 13 October, *(c)* the total number of externally resident young persons covered by youth training guarantees gaining entry to local places from 21 May to 13 October and *(d)* the net local recruitment potential up to 13 October, for each training and enterprise council.

Mr. Jackson: This information is in the form of estimates which are insufficiently reliable to warrant publication.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many trainees in the printing industry are entering youth training this year.

Mr. Jackson: The information requested is not available.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give, in terms of the information obtained in the review of the youth training supply and demand *(a)* the estimated number of locally resident young persons in the guarantee or extended guarantee groups actively seeking local entry or re-entry to youth training at 20 May 1990, *(b)* new guaranteed active seekers arising between 21 May to 13 October and *(c)* school pupils starting year of reaching minimum school leaving age in September 1990 remaining at school one year later, for each training and enterprise council.

Mr. Jackson: This information is in the form of estimates which are insufficiently reliable to warrant publication.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether, based on the reporting arrangements outlined in schedule A of the model training and enterprise council operating agreement, any of the TECs in England and Wales has used the Bank of Credit and Commerce International for banking or investment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: I am not aware of any TEC using BCCI for banking at the time the bank's business was suspended.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether any of the regional offices of the Training, Enterprise and Education Directorate consulted training and enterprise councils about banking with or investing in the Bank of Credit and Commerce International.

Mr. Jackson: Regional offices do not provide TECs, which are private limited companies, with advice about banking or investment with any financial institution.

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for what reasons the Health and Safety Executive imposed recruitment bans in 1989-90; and on what grades.

Mr. Forth: The Health and Safety Executive did not impose recruitment bans for any grades in 1989-90.

Manufacturing (Fatalities)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the number of fatalities in the manufacturing industry in the United Kingdom and each EC member state for the years 1980 to 1990 giving the work force in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The information requested cannot be made available without disproportionate cost. Relevant information for major EC countries is contained in a recent Health and Safety Executive publication, "Workplace Health and Safety in Europe" which is in the House Library. This publication, which provides a rigorous comparison between countries which operate different reporting systems shows that the British record on accident rates stands up well in comparison with other major countries in the European Community.

Printing Industry

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the role and function of the national providers unit; and what assistance it is giving to the printing industry.

Mr. Jackson: The TECs and national providers unit within the Department provides a brokerage and administrative service to facilitate contracting between TECs and national providers where both parties wish. These services comprise:

standardised contracting arrangements;
a unified claims and payment service;
centralised collection and dissemination of management information;
assistance to TECs with financial appraisal and monitoring; and
co-ordination on quality development.

The British Printing Industry Federation's training organisation is making full use of all these services.

Written Questions

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many parliamentary questions for written answer have been answered by his Department so far this Session, and in the comparable period for the last Session; and if he will publish a table of how many answers *(a)* do not give the information requested because of (i) disproportionate cost or (ii) other reasons, *(b)* give an undertaking to write to the hon. Member who asked the question and *(c)* were referred for answer to the chief executive of each next steps agency.

Mr. Jackson: The information requested is a matter of public record.

Work Permits

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will publish the results of his review of the work permit scheme; when he expects the new scheme to be in operation; and what guidance he is giving to *(a)* employers and *(b)* workers about the new scheme.

Mr. Forth: I refer the hon. Member to my answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) on 31 January, *Official Report*, columns *637-38*. The main changes to the work permit

scheme will come into effect on 1 October 1991 when revised application forms and guidance notes for employers will be available.

Hydrogen Sulphide Gas

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what established British safety standards exist for the piping on land of hydrogen sulphide gas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Hydrogen sulphide is not piped on land as a pure gas outside gas refineries; the safety of pipelines containing gases on land generally is governed by:

The Pipelines Act 1962;
The Notification of Installations Handling Hazardous Substances Regulations 1982;
The Pressure Systems and Transportable Gas Containers Regulations 1989.

In addition, the construction and operation of pipelines are subject to the general provisions of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, which require employers to protect the health and safety of employees and members of the public affected by work activity, and designers and manufacturers of articles for use at work to ensure that they are designed and constructed to be safe when properly used.

British standards, where they exist, provide a sound basis for the design and construction of pipelines. Other national or international standards providing an equivalent standard of safety are also acceptable. A British standard code of practice (BS 8010) for pipelines is currently in preparation; this is largely based on what is already current practice, and being followed by much of the industry.

Statutory Sick Pay

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received from trade unions, employers or employers' organisations in Wales about the likely effects of requiring employers to meet 20 per cent. of the costs of the statutory sick pay scheme.

Mr. Forth: I will write to the hon. Member.

Youth Unemployment

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals he has to reduce youth unemployment in tourist areas when the holiday season has ended.

Mr. Jackson: All young people aged under 18 who are not in full-time education or a job are guaranteed the offer of a suitable place on youth training. The Employment Service offers immediate assistance to anyone who has lost their job. In addition anyone aged 18 to 24 who has been unemployed for between six and 12 months is guaranteed a place on employment training, the enterprise allowance scheme, the job interview guarantee or in a job club. Provision of youth training, employment training and the enterprise allowance scheme are matters for local training and enterprise councils, which are well placed to meet the particular circumstances, such as seasonal unemployment, that arise in their areas.

Pop Concerts

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will arrange for a copy of the draft of the Health and Safety Executive guidance on pop concerts and similar events to be placed in the Library and a further copy to be supplied to the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West.

Mr. Forth: Yes. It is hoped that draft guidance will be available for consultation in October, when I will send a copy to the hon. and learned Member and arrange for a further copy to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the length of and reasons for the delays in the preparation of guidance by the Health and Safety Executive on pop concerts and similar events.

Mr. Forth: Preparation of the guidance on safety at pop concerts, which is to be issued jointly by the Health and Safety Commission and the Home Office, started in spring 1990. It was initially hoped that a draft would be available for consultation in late summer 1990.

Preparation of the guidance was delayed because of the complexity of the issues which needed to be addressed and the need to seek and obtain specialist advice.

It is now hoped that a draft will be available for public consultation in October this year and, as the hon. and learned Member will be aware, the matter is being treated with high priority.

Horizon Programme

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make it his policy to extend the European social fund Horizon programme to Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The programme already applies in Scotland and project applications will be invited from organisations throughout Great Britain. In Scotland it is expected that most of the projects for the disadvantaged group under Horizon will come from the areas of Westerhailes, Castlemilk, Ferguslie and Whitfield. However, all projects will be considered for funding on their merit provided they meet the eligibility criteria of Horizon.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which geographical areas are specified in his Department's guidelines for allocation of funds from the European social fund Horizon programme to provide job opportunities for the physically and mentally handicapped; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The Horizon initiative is targeted at two specific groups; those with disabilities and the socially disadvantaged.

Projects for people with disabilities will be invited from organisations throughout Great Britain.

It is expected that most projects for the disadvantaged would come from the following areas:

England—Newcastle, Middlesbrough, Bradford, Liverpool, Sheffield, Doncaster/Barnsley/Rotherham (Dearne Valley), Manchester, Salford, Wirral, Wolverhampton, Birmingham, Nottingham, Bristol, Lewisham, Tower Hamlets.
Scotland—Westerhailes, Castlemilk, Ferguslie, Whitfield.

There is no geographical restriction on projects in Wales, but they will be expected to be in or to clearly benefit those wards which show the highest incidence of urban deprivation.

However, all projects will be considered for funding on their merit provided that they meet the eligibility criteria for the Horizon programme.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps his Department is taking to advise and assist interested groups in their right to apply for funds from the European social fund horizon programme to provide job opportunities for the physically and mentally handicapped; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Initial guidance on the eligibility criteria for the Horizon programme together with information on the process and timetable for applying has been sent to over 700 organisations which have expressed an interest.

Further information and the application forms will be issued to potential applicants by the end of August. The deadline for the submission of projects will be the end of September.

The approval and payment of projects is dependent on the European Commission agreeing the proposals in our operational programme on how we intend to implement Horizon, which we submitted on 12 July. Approval is expected from the Commission in November, with the money being received by my Department by the end of the year, and payments being made to approved projects soon afterwards.

Golf Courses

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what guidance the Health and Safety Executive gave councils on the protection of the public from danger or injury when using public footpaths and bridleways across golf courses when delegating its responsibilities for health and safety in leisure and recreation to district councils.

Mr. Forth: It is the employer's duty to protect members of the public from danger or injury on golf courses. The Health and Safety Commission has published general guidance to employers on the need to protect the safety of members of the public. Specific guidance on golf course and range safety has been identified as a priority need and work on its preparation will start this summer. It is expected to publish this guidance in spring 1992.

Wages (Underpayment)

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he will take to increase prosecutions in the cases of illegal underpayment of wages identified by the wages inspectorate in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The policy of the wages inspectorate under all Governments has been to seek compliance by advice and persuasion and to consider prosecution only where there is a deliberate or repeated disregard for the law. There are no plans at present to change this policy. Since 1953 to date there have been eight prosecutions in Scotland for illegal underpayments.

Careers and Occupational Information Centre

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has for the future operations of the careers and occupational information centre.

Mr. Howard: I have considered the report of the consultants I appointed to investigate the future of COIC in the light of the results of last year's internal review of careers guidance, taking account of the Government's proposals to strengthen careers advice for young people set out in chapter 7 of the recent White Paper "Education and Training for the 21st Century" Cm 1536, vol. 1. I have concluded that privatisation is not feasible at present, and I am considering other options for the future of COIC.

Unemployment Benefit Rules

Mr. Knowles: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if his Department has received reports which have been commissioned into the operation of the actively seeking employment condition.

Mr. Jackson: I have today placed in the Library of the House a copy of a report commissioned from the Institute of Manpower Studies into job search behaviour following the introduction of actively seeking employment as a condition for entitlement to unemployment benefit.

Employment Action Programme

Mr. Knowles: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how the employment action programme will be funded.

Mr. Jackson: Parliamentary approval of this new expenditure will be sought in a winter supplementary estimate for the Employment Department programmes and central services vote (class VI, vote 1) in respect of England and Wales and for the Scottish Office training programmes and industrial support, Scotland vote (class XV, vote 3) in respect of Scotland. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at up to £8 million will be met by repayable advances from the Contingencies Fund.

Employment Training

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the menu which comprises the ET guarantee.

Mr. Jackson: The Government guarantee an offer of help to people aged between 18 and 24 who have been unemployed for between six and 12 months. This guaranteed help consists of an offer of a place on one of the programmes in the following menu: employment training; job interview guarantee; enterprise allowance; job club and, in future, employment action.

WALES

Minimum Wage

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the cost and effect on unemployment of introducing a minimum wage in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The Department of Employment has estimated that the effect on employment in Great Britain of a minimum wage set at half median male earnings would be that, if wage differentials were restored by half, around 750,000 jobs could be lost. On the same assumption about differentials, a minimum wage set at two

thirds median male earnings could remove about 1·25 million jobs in Great Britain. On the assumption that they would be spread throughout Britain proportionately to employment below the proposed minima Welsh Office calculate that job losses in Wales could amount to 46,500 if the level were set at half median male earnings (6·2 per cent.) and 70,000 if at two thirds (5·6 per cent.) It is not possible to estimate the additional costs to employers in Wales.

Disabled Children

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total number of children with disabilities in Wales according to *(a)* the severity of disability scale and *(b)* type of disability; and if he will also express the totals in terms of rates of disability per 1,000 children under the age of 16 years.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The latest available information is from the 1985 OPCS surveys of disability in Great Britain. The estimated numbers of children in each disability category and the cumulative rates per thousand are shown in the following table.

Information for Wales by type of disability is not readily available.

Severity category	*Estimated numbers (thousands)*	*Severity category*	*Estimated cumulative rates (per thousand aged under 16)*
10	1	10	3
9	5	9-10	11
8	1	8-10	14
7	2	7-10	18
6	2	6-10	20
5	1	5-10	23
4	2	4-10	26
3	1	3-10	28
2	0	2-10	28
1	2	1-10	31
Total	18		

Note: The sample of children identified in the survey as having a disability was less than 100 and there is therefore a margin of error attached to these estimates.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total number of children with disabilities in communal establishments in Wales according to *(a)* disability severity scale and *(b)* the type of disability; and what is (i) the percentage of all children with disabilities in Wales who are currently living in communal establisments according to the disability severity scale and (ii) the percentage of children with disabilities within communal establishments who have particular types of disability.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The latest available information is from the 1985 OPCS surveys of disability in Great Britain. The estimated numbers of children with disabilities in communal establishments are shown in the table.

Estimated numbers of children in communal establishments

Severity category	*Number*
10	53
9	30
8	35
7	49
6	45
5	38
4	9
3	10
2	0
1	0
Total	269

The sample of children in Wales identified in the survey as having a disability was too small to permit reliable estimates of the percentages by severity category of disabled children living in communal establishments.

Information for Wales by type of disability is not readily available.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what arrangements have been made for access to proposed conductive education facilities in Birmingham for disabled children in Wales; what discussion has taken place with parents and professionals in Wales concerned about the progress and development of those children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given today by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the number and ages of children who would benefit through the establishment of a centre for conductive education in the Principality.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: It is for the relevant statutory authorities to assess the needs of their local populations for services. For this purpose, information about conductive education will continue to be disseminated to them as it becomes available.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what assessment he has made *(a)* of the likely use that might be made by disabled children from Wales of the proposed conductive education project in Birmingham and *(b)* of whether Welsh requirements might be better met through separate facilities within the Principality;

(2) what assessment he has made of the benefits that could be achieved for disabled children in Wales through the establishment of a centre for conductive education in the Principality.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: On the question of the conductive education project in Birmingham, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given today by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

The Government believe that conductive education should be accessible in the United Kingdom as part of the range of available therapies. However, conductive education cannot exist without trained conductors. The Government have pledged £5 million over four years to the Peto Institute in Hungary for the building of a new international institute in order that training places will be made available for people from the United Kingdom. The Welsh Office is contributing its share towards this, and in due course trained conductors should become available for work in Wales. Meanwhile, the potential benefits offered by conductive education and other therapies are being kept under review.

Dentistry

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the number of dental practitioners employed by each health authority in Wales within the community dental service for each of the last five years; and if he will present his data per 1,000 of the population.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The available information is given in the table:

	Staff in post (whole-time equivalents) as at 30 September					*Rate per 100,000 population*				
	1986	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*[1]	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*[2]
Clwyd	13·3	12·9	13·4	10·9	11·7	3·3	3·2	3·3	2·7	2·8
East Dyfed	10·7	8·0	10·6	8·6	8·6	4·7	3·4	4·5	3·6	3·6
Gwent	18·2	20·7	18·3	16·4	15·3	4·1	4·7	4·1	3·7	3·4
Gwynedd	12·6	10·2	9·6	8·9	9·7	5·4	4·3	4·0	3·7	4·0
Mid Glamorgan	17·7	19·5	20·9	18·9	18·9	3·3	3·6	3·9	3·5	3·5
Pembrokeshire	4·6	5·6	5·6	5·6	5·6	4·2	5·0	5·0	4·9	4·9
Powys	8·0	7·9	7·0	6·2	7·0	7·1	7·0	6·1	5·3	6·0
South Glamorgan	13·8	9·8	16·7	16·8	16·2	3·5	2·5	4·1	4·2	4·0
West Glamorgan	11·8	11·8	11·8	11·5	12·3	3·2	3·2	3·3	3·2	3·4

[1] Provisional.
[2] 1989 population figures used.

Homelessness

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish figures showing *(a)* the total number of homeless households in priority needs, *(b)* the total number of homeless households with dependent children and *(c)* homeless households with a pregnant member designated by local authorities in Wales as priority need in each year since 1986.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I will write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many homeless households have applied and been accepted by Monmouth borough council for every year since 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The figures requested are as follows:

	Cases presented[1]	*Cases accepted*[2]
1981	[3]—	194
1982	[3]—	166
1983	[3]—	182
1984	193	171
1985	367	284
1986	408	258
1987	297	258
1988	406	245
1989	204	157
1990	115	115

[1] Defined as households about which inquiries were completed under Part III of the Housing Act 1985 and includes those who were not found to be homeless or threatened with homelessness.
[2] Defined as households accepted as homeless or threatened with homelessness. Both priority and non priority cases are included.
[3] Cases presented, by district, are not available before 1984.

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many households were rehoused from the housing waiting list of Monmouth borough council for every year since 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The table sets out the total number housed by Monmouth borough council from its waiting list for each year from 1981-82, the earliest year for which information is available. Information on allocations resulting from local authority nominations to housing associations is not collected centrally.

	Number
1981-82	259
1982-83	287
1983-84	290
1984-85	275
1985-86	308
1986-87	204
1987-88	207
1988-89	126
1989-90	184
1990-91	185

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total number of households in Wales living in *(a)* bed-and-breakfast accommodation, *(b)* hostels including women's refuges and *(c)* short-life housing in each year since 1986.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I will write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many homeless households were accepted for housing by Welsh local authorities in 1990; and if he will show the figures on a basis comparable with those collected by English local authorities.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: A total of 6,670 households were accepted as being homeless by Welsh local authorities in 1990. This figure excludes an estimate of 2,000 households made homeless in Colwyn as a result of the major flooding incident in February 1990, none of whom remain in temporary accommodation.

Elderly People (Voluntary Organisations)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library a list of those voluntary organisations with specific concern for the elderly which are grant-aided by his Department; and if he will specify the nature of their work, the address of each organisation, and the amount of the grant allocated for the current financial year.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The information is as follows:

Organisation	*Aims and Objectives*	*Grant allocation for the current financial year*
Age Concern England— for activities of Age Concern Wales— 1 Cathedral road, Cardiff	To further the welfare of the elderly	£132,500
Base—British Association for Services for the Elderly St. David's hospital, Cowbridge road east, Cardiff	To support those involved in the care of the elderly	£15,000
Help the Aged 298 Gladstone road, Barry	To improve the quality of life of elderly people in the United Kingdom and overseas by raising and granting funds towards community based projects, housing and overseas aid	£900
Alzheimer's Disease Society (ADS) Wales regional office, Tonna hospital Tonna, Neath, West Glamorgan	To promote an awareness of Alzheimer's disease and similar disorders and to secure improved support for carers and sufferers	£20,000—for regional development officer £17,500 for Newport ADS Disgwylfa Day Centre

In addition, Government have provided funds for schemes under our Department's initiative on the elderly and the new grant scheme which we launched this year to promote more flexible forms of community care for elderly people and those with physical and/or sensory disabilities. A number of these are run wholly by voluntary organisations.

Elderly People (NHS Services)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of the reports issued by the NHS advisory service since 1980 on the elderly in Wales specifying the date each report was issued.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Since 1980, the NHS advisory service has issued the following reports on services provided for the elderly in Wales:

Powys Health Authority	August 1982
Merthyr and Cynon Valley	July 1983
Rhymney Valley	July 1983
East Glamorgan Unit	August 1983
Mid Glamorgan Health Authority	August 1983
Ogwr Unit	August 1983
Gwynedd Health Authority	November 1983
West Glamorgan Health Authority	December 1983
Clwyd Health Authority	December 1983
East Dyfed/Pembrokeshire Health Authority	March 1985
South Glamorgan Health Authority	September 1985
Gwent Health Authority	November 1985

More recently, the NHS advisory service has been involved in visits inspecting services for the mentally ill in Wales; currently it is involved in visits to services provided for problem drug users.

Birth Statistics

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish figures showing *(a)* live births outside marriage in Wales as a percentage of all live births and *(b)* the proportion of births outside marriage which have been registered by both parents in 1961, 1979, 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The information requested is given in the table:

Live births outside marriage to residents of Wales

	(a) As a percentage of all live births	*(b) Percentage registered by both parents*
1961	4·1	[1]—
1979	9·2	[2]49·3
1989	28·2	69·5
1990	29·3	70·3

[1] Not available.
[2] Estimated.

Family Incomes

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the estimated number of children in Wales whose families *(a)* receive incomes below supplementary benefit levels, *(b)* receive supplementary benefit, *(c)* receive income above supplementary benefit levels but below 110 per cent. of supplementary benefit, *(d)* income above 110 per cent. of supplementary benefit levels but below 120 per cent. and *(e)* income above 120 per cent. of supplementary benefit levels but below 140 per cent.; what were the equivalent figures for 1979, 1981, 1983, 1985, 1987 and 1989; and what was the percentage change in each category between 1979 and 1989.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The table gives the estimated numbers of children in Wales, aged under 16 years, whose families received supplementary benefit or income support. The other information requested is not available centrally.

Year	*Number*
1979	57,000
1981	95,000
1983	110,000
[1]1986	131,000
1987	123,000
1989	118,000
1990	125,000

Percentage change 1979 to 1989 107.
Source: Annual Statistical Enquiry, Department of Social Security.
[1] Information for 1985 was not produced from this survey.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the latest figures showing gross weekly household income levels in Wales as per family type and the percentage of households earning *(a)* less than £60, *(b)* £60 to £100, *(c)* £100 to £225, *(d)* £225 to £325, *(e)* £325 to £425, and *(f)* over £425 per week.

Mr. David Hunt: Estimates are given in the following tables. The first table provides, for Wales, the average gross weekly household income, by household composition, over the two-year period 1988-89. The second table shows, for the same two-year period, the percentages of all households in Wales in each band of earnings.

These estimates, derived from the results of the 1988 and 1989 family expenditure surveys, may be subject to errors due to small sample sizes for some categories.

Composition of household[1]	*Average gross weekly income (£)*
One adult, no children	108·57
Two adults, no children	240·52
Three or more adults, no children	377·45
One adult, one or more children	103·81
Two adults, one or more children	332·46
Three or more adults, one or more children	420·28
All households	247·53

[1] Children are defined as those under 16 years of age.

Average weekly household earnings[1]	*Percentage of all households*[2]
Less than £60	9·0
£60 and under £100	6·4
£100 and under £225	30·7
£225 and under £325	26·4
£325 and under £425	11·3
£425 and over	16·3

[1] Only wages, salaries and earnings from self employment; other sources of incomes are excluded.
[2] Excluding households with no earned income.
Source: Family Expenditure Surveys, Central Statistical Office.

Welsh Assembly

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to the statement of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State of 17 July, *Official Report*, column 411, on consultation with the people of Wales on the cost of a Welsh Assembly, what is his policy on the holding of a referendum on the matter.

Mr. David Hunt: The same evidence on cost was available before the referendum on 1 March 1979, when 956,330 people in Wales voted against a Welsh Assembly and 243,048 in favour.

Schools Expenditure

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish for each year since 1979 any capital funds that have been granted to local education authoritites in Wales over and above the planned capital allocation for the construction of new primary schools; and if he will separately distinguish denominational from non-denominational schools.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Provision for local authority capital spending is not hypothecated to individual services and it is for LEAs to decide how much to spend on each service. Information about total capital expenditure on schools by local education authorities was provided in the reply which I gave to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) on 10 July 1991.

Juvenile Offenders

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* in tabular form a list of local authority community homes in Wales which provide secure accommodation for juvenile offenders giving details of the number of beds in each home for *(a)* boys and *(b)* girls.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The information is as follows:

Home	*Authority*	*Number of beds in secure unit*	*Boys/girls*
Llwyncelyn	West Glamorgan	2	Boys
Silverbrook	Mid Glamorgan	3	Boys or girls
Ty Mawr	Gwent	2	Boys

Speech Therapy

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make it his policy to reorganise speech therapy services in schools to ensure that they represent the best interests of children;

(2) who is responsible for providing speech therapy services in schools; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The provision of speech therapy services in schools is primarily the responsibility of district health authorities. Where speech therapy forms part of the special educational provision specified in a child's statement of special educational need, the local education authority has a duty to ensure that that provision is made. This is usually done through the district health authority, but if for any reason the health authority is unable to provide it, the local education authority must do so.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he intends to take to enhance the status and pay of speech therapists.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Terms and conditions of service for speech therapists are set by the scientific and professional staffs Whitley council. Basic pay rates, as recently agreed within the council, now range from £11,187 to £28,674. A flexible pay and grading structure was recently introduced enabling NHS managers to reflect local patterns of service delivery. Employing authorities also have the ability to supplement basic pay rates by up to 20 per cent. to overcome any particular recruitment and retention difficulties.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the speech therapy units in each of the local education authorities in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The information requested is not available centrally.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much was provided for speech therapy for school children in Wales for each of the years 1980 to 1991.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Information regarding expenditure on speech therapy for school children in Wales is

not collected centrally. However, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to him on Thursday 31 January 1991, which provided expenditure data for speech therapy services generally by health authorities in Wales between 1979-80 and 1989-90. Comparable information for 1990-91 is not yet available.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what response he will be making to the Welsh Consumer Council report "Speech Therapy and Children in Schools", of July 1991;

(2) if he will meet the Welsh Consumer Council to discuss their publication on speech therapy.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The report of the Welsh Consumer Council raises a number of issues which require careful consideration. My right hon. Friend and I will consider what action is warranted in the light of that detailed consideration.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will fund an all-Wales convention and discuss policy on speech therapy and children in the schools of Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: We have no plans to do so.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many BSE carcases have been *(a)* incinerated and *(b)* buried in 1991 in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Up to 31 May 1991, 855 carcases were incinerated and there were no burials.

NHS Reform

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make it his policy that each of the present district health authorities in Wales should continue in existence following the Government's national health service reforms;

(2) what are his proposals in respect of the powers, responsibilities to be exercised by, and the geographical areas to be covered by each health authority in Wales subsequent to the implementation of his national health service reforms.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Powers, responsibilities and geographical areas of health authorities in Wales are subject to statutory provision. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State keeps under review the appropriateness of the areas of authorities.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list the specific bodies which will be the purchasers of health services for the area covered by each of the present district health authorities in Wales, following his national health service reforms;

(2) if he will list the bodies which will be the purchasing authorities for health services in Wales under the Government's reform of the national health service in respect of the separation of the roles of purchaser and provider.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: District health authorities are purchasing authorities for each of their areas. They are listed as follows:

Clwyd
East Dyfed
Gwent
Gwynedd
Mid Glamorgan
Pembrokeshire
Powys
South Glamorgan
West Glamorgan

There are, in addition, seven GP fund-holding practices in Wales which can purchase services directly for their patients. They comprise:

Dr. Shah and partners, Hengoed
Drs. James, Jones and partners, Pontypridd
Dr. Jerrett and partners, Pontyclun
Dr. Parry and partners, Porthcawl
Drs. Morgan, Edwards and partners, Cardiff
Dr. Jenkins and partners, Swansea
Dr. Brackwell and partners, Rhyl

Pembrokeshire district health authority has made an application to become an NHS trust. If this application is approved, it will be necessary to review the purchasing arrangements for that part of Wales.

Young People (Remand)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to ensure that young people on remand from courts in Wales are dealt with in such a way as to maximise public protection and minimise serious reoffending while ensuring cost-effectiveness.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The responsibility for dealing with young people on remand rests with the local authorities, except where they are bailed or are remanded to prison custody. Such remands to prison are to be ended under the provisions of the Criminal Justice Act when sufficient local authority secure accommodation has been provided. Our officials have completed a review of secure care policy in Wales, including both secure accommodation and its community-based alternatives. We will be publishing this for consultation shortly.

Learning Difficulties

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) further to his answer of 4 July, *Official Report*, column 191, if he will explain why no information is available for Wales on the number of adults with learning difficulties undertaking employment training;

(2) further to his answer of 5 July, *Official Report*, columns *231-32*, if he will explain why the information requested is not available.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Figures are collected on the number of people with disabilities in training, but these figures do not identify specific types of disability. People with learning difficulties are included in total figures for people with disabilities.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, further to his answer of 5 July, *Official Report*, columns *231-32*, if he will indicate what steps he is now taking to ensure adequate monitoring of the provision for people with learning difficulties within employment schemes in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Each training and enterprise council (TEC) is required to set out in its corporate and business plans how it intends to meet the needs of people with disabilities. These plans are subject to the approval of myself and the Secretary of State for Employment.

Specific contractual requirements common to all TECs include providing appropriate training to people with special training needs, including those with learning difficulties. The Department of Employment has produced guidance on how to plan for and deliver training to meet those needs.

TECs' performance against their plans will be regularly monitored by the Department of Employment. In addition, the Training Standards Advisory Service will be appraising the quality of training offered by TECs including provision for people with learning difficulties.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, further to his answer, what proportion of the package referred to in his answer of 2 July, *Official Report*, column *101*, will be applied *(a)* to provision in Wales and *(b)* to people with learning difficulties in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to him by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment earlier today.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) further to his answer of 4 July, *Official Report*, column *191*, if he will now set targets for provision for people with learning difficulties in Wales;

(2) further to his answer of 5 July, *Official Report*, columns *231-32*, if he will set targets for the current year and future years in terms of provision for young people and adults with learning difficulties in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: We have no plans to set such targets. The Government remain committed to the requirements on special training needs laid down in their agreements with training and enterprise councils.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, further to his answer of 4 July, *Official Report*, column *191*, if he will make it his policy to ensure that information on the number of adults with learning difficulties undertaking employment training is collected in future with regard to Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: We have no plans to identify separately information on people with learning difficulties among those with other special training needs.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, further to his answer of 2 July, *Official Report*, column *101*, for each training and enterprise council, how each such TEC in Wales has set out its intentions in regard to people with special needs in general and people with learning difficulties in particular in its corporate plan.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment earlier today.

Tenancies

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many new tenancies were started and how many old tenancies were ended in 1990-91 in each local authority area in Wales; and what were the equivalent figures for each of the past five years.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: New tenancies started are given in the following table for local authority dwellings. Information on cessations is not collected centrally.

Local authority dwellings let to new tenants 1985-86 to 1990-91

District	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Aberconwy	227	175	188	155	157	192
Alyn and Deeside	297	301	296	248	239	224
Arfor	256	253	301	271	254	193
Blaenau Gwent	581	567	613	640	422	524
Brecknock	156	179	194	163	176	152
Cardiff	1,168	695	783	1,024	880	870
Carmarthen	222	202	221	174	145	146
Ceredigion	203	243	222	245	174	164
Colwyn	219	235	168	170	137	147
Cynon Valley	367	426	360	305	331	287
Delyn	270	269	235	266	242	210
Dinefwr	140	176	174	100	116	123
Dwyfor	79	75	68	76	72	52
Glyndwr	142	198	221	162	182	140
Islwyn	402	267	333	324	241	259
Llanelli	402	395	392	353	396	311
Lliw Valley	295	363	308	296	270	323
Meirionnydd	129	132	125	105	104	93
Merthyr Tydfil	413	391	425	535	482	449
Monmouth	344	238	215	171	213	218
Montgomeryshire	400	270	232	188	216	155
Neath	236	278	232	270	190	353
Newport	887	753	976	847	713	624
Ogwr	696	625	509	508	451	382
Port Talbot	315	276	413	233	234	315
Preseli Pembrokeshire	275	281	242	290	231	211
Radnorshire	127	76	80	75	69	75
Rhondda	221	453	397	176	427	462
Rhuddlan	145	184	171	113	142	109
Rymney Valley	609	538	533	629	446	463
South Pembrokeshire	187	155	141	255	99	96
Swansea	820	550	779	1,112	778	871
Taff-Ely	432	389	399	245	230	332
Torfaen	499	1,115	927	824	700	705
Vale of Glamorgan	392	390	315	374	291	319
Wrexham Maelor	981	943	826	781	735	753

District	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91
Ynys Mon	362	347	365	368	309	228
Wales	13,896	13,403	13,379	13,071	11,494	11,530

Advertising

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will set out his Department's expenditure for 1990-91, and the previous five years, on *(a)* press advertising, *(b)* television advertising and *(c)* other advertising and promotions; and state (i) the budget allocation for each of those headings and (ii) his best available projection of outturn under each heading.

Mr. David Hunt: I will write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many parliamentary questions for written answer have been answered by his Department so far this Session, and in the comparable period for the last Session; and if he will publish a table of how many answers *(a)* do not give the information requested because of (i) disproportionate cost or (ii) other reasons, *(b)* give an undertaking to write to the hon. Member who asked the question and *(c)* were referred for answer to the chief executive of each next steps agency.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is a matter of public record.

Secure Accommodation

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the alternatives to secure accommodation he is currently considering in respect of young people on remand.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Our review of secure care policy in Wales will be published shortly.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what is currently *(a)* the average cost, *(b)* the highest cost and *(c)* the lowest cost per week of holding a young person on remand in secure accommodation in Wales;

(2) what is currently *(a)* the average cost, *(b)* the highest cost and *(c)* the lowest cost per week of holding a young person from Wales on remand in secure accommodation when accommodation outside Wales has to be used.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I will write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

South Glamorgan Health Authority

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what response he has made to the views of *(a)* the Vale of Glamorgan community health council and *(b)* South Glamorgan health authority in regard to the loss of £6 million from the future resource allocation to the South Glamorgan health authority.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The new system of weighted compensation, which is based on the resident population of a health authority's area and which takes into account such factors as age structure morbidity is a much fairer system than the previous system based on service provision.

It is being introduced over a period of time to allow health authorities to adjust. South Glamorgan hospitals will be able to make contracts to provide health care with other health authorities in Wales.

The health authority's response to the consultation document, along with those from other Welsh DHAs, was taken fully into consideration when deciding on a weighted capitation formula for Wales. No communication has been received from the Vale of Glamorgan community health council on the subject.

Ambulance Services

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, further to his answer of 2 May, *Official Report*, column *280*, regarding ambulance services in Wales, if he will give an undertaking that his proposals will not be finalised and no action taken to change arrangements for the ambulance services without *(a)* an adequate period of open public consultation and *(b)* seeking the views of hon. Members.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I am happy to repeat my earlier assurances that there will be widespread consultation on the consultants' recommendations before any decisions are made on possible changes to the structure and organisation of patient transport services in Wales.

Consultation will begin shortly and three months will be set aside for the submission of comments. The views of right hon. and hon. Members in Wales will be invited along with those of other interests.

Carers

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what policy initiatives he proposes to assist carers;

(2) what measures he intends to introduce to increase respite care.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: We have made clear in all our policy and practice guidance the high priority which should be given to the support of carers and the development of respite care, which can benefit significantly both those in need of care and their families.

It is for local and health authorities to decide what services should be provided to meet the assessed needs of their local populations. They are expected to address these needs in county plans produced under the all-Wales mental illness and mental handicap strategies, in social care plans and in local strategies for health.

In support of these programmes, grants are available from the Welsh Office under certain schemes which are unique to Wales—the mental handicap and mental illness strategies. A new scheme to promote the development of more flexible forms of community care for elderly people and for people with physical or sensory disabilities has also been introduced. We are also continuing to support schemes under our earlier initiative for the elderly.

Planned expenditure on these programmes in 1991-92 is nearly £43 million compared with some £32 million last year.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the respite care locations in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: This information is not held centrally.

Mental Handicap

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how he intends to improve the quality of service to people living both in hospitals and the community who suffer mental handicap.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The all-Wales mental handicap strategy seeks to do precisely this, as will our proposals for its future development which we intend to publish shortly.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list his proposed changes to the all-Wales strategy for people with a mental handicap; if he will indicate the period for comment on those proposals; and if he will give an assurance that he will continue to provide ring-fenced funding for the strategy.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: We intend to publish our proposals shortly, including the timetable for comments.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the organisations and voluntary bodies he has consulted in anticipation of the outcome of his review of the all-Wales strategy for mental handicap.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House.

Diet

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the impact on children's health in Wales of the effect of low income and low benefit levels on the cash available to provide a sound and nutritious diet.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The Health Promotion Authority for Wales is currently engaged in a pilot project which seeks to address the general issue of cost and availability of healthy dietary options. A preliminary report on the project will be available in April 1992.

Medical Negligence

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of *(a)* the cost of action in respect of medical negligence in Wales, *(b)* the impact of delay in dealing with such claims on patients and families in Wales and *(c)* steps that could be taken to deal more simply and more effectively with such claims in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: As regards the costs arising from medical negligence litigation, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the replies that I gave him on 17 June and the letter that I subsequently sent him on 16 July.

Information on the impact of possible delays in litigation on plaintiffs is not available centrally.

Smallholdings

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of smallholdings provided by each local authority in Wales in April 1991 and at the same date on each of the previous five years, indicating in each case the number and percentage *(a)* below 20 hectares, *(b)* between 20 and 40 hectares and *(c)* in excess of 40 hectares.

Mr. David Hunt: The figures for 1991 are not available. Statistics for the previous five years collated at 31 March are given in the tables.

(a) below 20 hectares

	1990		1989		1988		1987		1986	
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
Gwynedd	87	48·9	87	48·9	87	49·2	88	49·4	88	49·4
Clwyd	73	43·7	73	42·7	89	49·4	78	45·3	85	48·3
Powys	115	49·6	123	51·3	124	51·2	126	51·6	127	51·8
Dyfed	71	40·6	71	40·6	71	40·6	70	40·2	71	40·6
Gwent	43	40·6	42	39·3	48	42·5	48	42·5	50	43·5
West Glamorgan	2	66·7	2	66·7	2	66·7	2	66·7	2	66·7
Mid Glamorgan	9	45·0	9	45·0	9	45·0	9	45·0	12	52·2
South Glamorgan	15	39·5	16	41·0	19	43·2	22	48·9	22	48·9
Wales	415		423		449		443		457	

(b) between 20-40 hectares

	1990		1989		1988		1987		1986	
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
Gwynedd	71	39·9	71	39·9	70	39·5	70	39·3	70	39·3
Clwyd	76	45·5	81	47·4	75	41·7	81	47·1	77	43·8
Powys	104	44·8	104	43·3	105	43·4	105	43·0	106	43·3
Dyfed	86	49·1	86	49·1	86	49·1	86	49·4	86	49·1
Gwent	54	50·9	56	52·3	56	49·6	56	49·6	55	47·8
West Glamorgan	1	33·3	1	33·3	1	33·3	1	33·3	1	33·3
Mid Glamorgan	7	35·0	7	35·0	7	35·0	7	35·0	7	30·4
South Glamorgan	19	50·0	19	48·7	21	47·7	19	42·2	19	42·2
Wales	418		425		421		425		421	

(c) in excess of 40 hectares

	1990		1989		1988		1987		1986	
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
Gwynedd	20	11·2	20	11·2	20	11·3	20	11·2	20	11·2
Clwyd	18	10·8	17	9·9	16	8·9	13	7·6	14	8·0
Powys	13	5·6	13	5·4	13	5·4	13	5·3	12	4·9
Dyfed	18	10·3	18	10·3	18	10·3	18	10·3	18	10·3
Gwent	9	8·5	9	8·4	9	8·0	9	8·0	10	8·7
West Glamorgan	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Mid Glamorgan	4	20·0	4	20·0	4	20·0	4	20·0	4	17·4
South Glamorgan	4	10·5	4	10·3	4	9·1	4	8·9	4	8·9
Wales	86		85		84		81		82	

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of *(a)* the area of land available as smallholdings in Wales in the year 1990-91, *(b)* the increase and decrease compared with the previous year and *(c)* the adequacy of this land to meet the interests of agriculture in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The information for 1990-91 is not yet available. The total area of land provided by local authorities for smallholdings at 31 March 1990 was 20,741 hectares. This was a decrease of 2·9 per cent. on the previous year. The availability of this land provides worthwhile opportunities for new entrants to agriculture.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the number of tenants of local authority smallholdings *(a)* in Wales and *(b)* in each local authority area at 31 March and at the same date for each of the past five years.

Mr. David Hunt: The information for 1990-91 is not yet available. The information as at 31 March for the previous five years is contained in the annual report to Parliament on Smallholdings in Wales (table 3), a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the areas of land held for smallholding by each local authority in Wales on 1 April, or the nearest convenient date, and the same date for each of the past five years.

Mr. David Hunt: The information for 1990-91 is not yet available. The information as at 31 March for the previous five years is contained in the annual report to Parliament on Smallholdings in Wales (table 1), a copy of which is in the Library.

Care Facilities

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) whether he will make it his policy that any company intending to open hospital or other care facilities in Wales shall have to show that it is not owned or controlled by individuals or corporate bodies which have previously *(a)* provided such facilities at a sub-standard level or *(b)* been involved in actions detrimental to public health; and if he will make it his policy to monitor such links even after the establishment of any such facilities;

(2) whether he will make it his policy to monitor the share ownership in any company operating hospital or care facilities in Wales in order to ensure that no major individual or corporate shareholder has a record of being directly or indirectly involved in the provision of sub-standard facilities in the field of health or care nor a record of environmental pollution nor any other record of failure or neglect in regard to public health.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: In addition to the arrangements for the statutory registration and inspection of nursing and residential care homes, contracts for health services and care packages will include quality specifications. It will be for purchasing authorities to insist upon and monitor standards. It will not be necessary for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to monitor share ownership as part of ensuring high quality services.

Environmental pollution and public health are separate matters which are monitored by the appropriate statutory authorities.

Countryside Council for Wales

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends to publish the final version of the statement of policy for the Countryside Council for Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I have placed the final version of the statement of policy in the Libraries of both Houses and made copies available to those organisations who commented on the statement while in draft form. I am grateful for the useful comments received which have been carefully considered. The statement has also been discussed with the council. Copies of the council's management statement have also been placed in both Libraries.

HEALTH

GPs (Prescription Budgets)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number and percentage of general practitioners on a spending profile outside their indicated prescription budget at the end of May; and how this percentage varies between health regions.

Mr. Waldegrave: I will write to the hon. Member.

Asthma

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a table showing the expenditure per head in each national health service region for the latest available period using prescribing analyses and costs data for general practitioner prescribed drug treatment of asthma and related conditions.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested is shown in the table.

	Cost (thousands) £	List size	Cost per head £
Northern RHA	4,376,934	3,179,270	1·38
Yorkshire RHA	4,626,018	3,783,074	1·22
Trent RHA	5,989,421	4,878,399	1·23
East Anglia RHA	2,432,996	2,081,579	1·17
North West Thames RHA	3,787,033	4,111,169	0·92
North East Thames RHA	3,922,551	4,278,.439	0·92
South East Thames RHA	3,926,892	4,046,572	0·97
South West Thames RHA	3,105,008	3,234,806	0·96
Wessex RHA	3,232,522	3,011,032	1·07
Oxford RHA	3,023,177	2,665,838	1·13
South Western RHA	4,230.747	3,590,948	1·18
West Midlands RHA	7,190,335	5,472,767	1·31
Mersey RHA	3,223,910	2,513,942	1·28
North Western RHA	5,891,977	4,154,172	1·42

Note: For PACT purposes every FHSA within each region is permanently allocated to one of three quarterly processing cycles. The information provided is based on data relating to the following PACT periods:
January 1991 to March 1991
February 1991 to April 1991
March 1991 to May 1991

Water Contamination

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the delay in notifying consumers in Ealing, Northolt and Hanwell of the contamination of their water supplies.

Mr. Baldry: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the statement made by my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside on 22 July, *Official Report*, column 789. The drinking water inspectorate has already started a thorough investigation of the incident. This will cover the action taken by the company to notify its consumers.

Severely Disabled People

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he is instigating to take into account the needs of present and future generations of severely physically disabled people in long-term national health service and regional and district authority plans.

Mr. Dorrell: It is the responsibility of health authorities to assess the health needs of their local population including severely physically disabled people and to obtain appropriate services for them. The consultative document, "The Health of the Nation", sets out the Government's proposals for the development of a health strategy for England, including suggested targets for some services of particular relevance for people with severe physical disabilities. We have also appointed an advisory group on rehabilitation to advise us on the development of NHS rehabilitation services.

Optical Appliances (Vouchers)

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will increase the value of vouchers for optical appliances under the national health service, to reflect the increase in VAT to 17·5 per cent.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) on 24 July.

Spectacles (Vouchers)

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the increase in the value of vouchers for glasses for each year since their introduction in *(a)* cash and *(b)* real terms.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Increases in voucher values, in cash and real terms, have varied in each year since vouchers were introduced, depending on the voucher band. In general we have aimed to make the largest increases in those voucher bands where we perceived there to be the greatest need. The following table shows the range of percentage increases for each year except 1987 when voucher values were not increased.

Voucher values 1986 to 1991

Date	Cash value increase per cent.	[1] Real value increase per cent.
1 April 1988 1 September 1988	8·77 to 28·79 4·70 to 5·88	−1·48 to +16·82
1 April 1989	3·70 to 10·48	−2·51 to +3·86
1 April 1990	2·04 to 6·10	−4·97 to −1·53
1 April 1991	2·00 to 7·22	−4·67 to +0·02

[1] Calculated using the GDP deflator.

Guy's Hospital

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions the NHS management executive has had with the Guy's NHS trust on its future financial viability.

Mr. Waldegrave: Current discussions with the Guy's and Lewisham national health service trust have focused on the financial strategy contained in its business plan. As is well known, the trust faces some financial problems in the current year, but these do not undermine its financial viability and are being effectively dealt with by its management.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information the NHS management executive has received from Guy's hospital on its plan to replace its director of finance.

Mr. Waldegrave: Appointments, such as the director of finance, are a matter for trust boards and the national

health service management executive would not normally expect to be involved in new appointments or replacements. In this case, the NHSME was informed of the change that the trust board had decided to make.

NHS Patients

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients were treated in NHS hospitals in each year since 1970.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is given in the table.

Hospital treatments

(thousands)

Year	*In-patient treatments*	*day cases*	*Outpatient treatments*
	Discharges and deaths		
1970	5,011	n/a	32,355
1971	5,170	n/a	33,129
1972	5,222	376	33,243
1973	5,132	409	33,317
1974	5,172	451	33,352
1975	4,976	421	30,947
1976	6,255	481	32,396
1977	5,345	536	33,282
1978	5,370	562	33,950
1979	5,400	592	34,100
1980	5,670	671	35,243
1981	5,760	714	35,571
1982	5,720	706	35,651
1983	6,019	813	36,520
1984	6,178	903	37,043
1985	6,354	963	37,440
1986	6,414	1,050	37,728
1987-88	6,619	881	36,874
1988-89	6,586	1,016	36,146
1988-89	7,335*	1,016	36,146
1989-90	7,447	1,163	36,336

* From 1988-89 onwards, in-patient activity has been measured in terms of Finished Consultant Episodes, including figures for well babies being cared for in hospital. Previous statistics did not count these babies.

District Health Authorities

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of the expenditure of each district health authority is devoted to administration; and what are the comparable figures for each year since 1978-79.

Mr. Dorrell: Tables of percentage figures showing expenditure on headquarters administration as a proportion of total expenditure, as reported in the annual accounts of each regional and district health authority in England, for the years requested since the establishment of district health authorities on 1 April 1982, have been placed in the Library. Figures for each special health authority for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals, which cannot be attributed to particular regions, are also included for completeness. Equivalent information for 1990-91 will be available in the autumn.

Regions are managed in an integrated way. It would be misleading to interpret the figures for particular districts in isolation, or to regard regional health authorities' data as distinct from that for the districts they manage. The division of functions between the RHA and districts and between districts varies from region to region and consequently the region totals provide a more valid picture.

Because of the changes in the structure of the NHS on 1 April 1982, establishment of district health authorities, and on 1 April 1985—separation of family practitioner committees from districts—information on which to base fully comparable data or an analysis to districts for 1978-79 is not held centrally. However, in 1978-79 expenditure on headquarters administration by the health authorities then broadly equivalent to those in the table represented 5·07 per cent. of their total current and capital expenditure.

NHS Charges

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if his Department will estimate the cost of abolishing national health service charges and transferring the net burden to national insurance; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what would be the cost of extending exemption from national health service charges to persons in receipt of housing benefit; and if he will do so;

(3) what would be the cost of extending exemption from national health service charges to all those eligible for 80 per cent. community charge relief; and if he will make it his policy to do so;

(4) what would be the cost of extending exemption from national health service charges to all pensioners; and if he will do so;

(5) what would be the cost of extending exemption from national health service charges to all aged under 19 years who remain in full-time education; and if he will make it his policy to do so;

(6) what would be the cost of extending exemption from national health service charges to all those on long-term sickness or in receipt of invalidity benefit; and if he will make it his policy to do so.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if his Department will consider a review of its system of benefits which assist payment of national health service charges for treatment with a view to greater simplification and accessibility; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on 6 June at columns *300-01*.

As that reply made clear, the review of the administration of the low income scheme will be wide ranging. The procedures for claiming help under the scheme will be an important part of the review.

Benzodiazepines

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many prescriptions were dispensed by community pharmacists for each benzodiazepine in 1990.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested is as follows:

Benzodiazepines—England 1990

Drug group	*Prescriptions £ millions*
Temazepam	5·4
Nitrazepam	3·1
Diazepam	2·7

Drug group	Prescriptions £ millions
Triazolam	1·4
Lorazepam	1·2
Chlordiazepoxide	0·5
Oxazepam	0·3
Lormetazepam	0·1
Clonazepam	0·1
Clobazam	0·05
Total	14·85

These figures are based on the number of prescriptions in England which were dispensed by community pharmacists.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will bring forward proposals to ban the prescription of lorazepam;

(2) what evidence he has on the link between use of the tranquilliser lorazepam and the onset of symptoms of paranoia.

Mr. Dorrell: The current advice from the Committee on Safety of Medicines is that lorazepam and other licensed benzodiazepine tranquillisers have a place in the short-term treatment of anxiety if used with appropriate care. Behavioural disorders are known to occur rarely with lorazepam and difficulty in withdrawal is also well documented. Prescribers have been made aware of the correct use of these compounds and the problems which can occur if not used in accordance with the CSM's recommendations. There are no plans to ban lorazepam.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will state, in relating to the newly opened National Addiction Centre, *(a)* how many staff will work on problems in relation to benzodiazepines, *(b)* what work they will carry out on benzodiazepine drugs, *(c)* how many people addicted to benzodiazepine will be treated at the centre and *(d)* what finance is being provided for treatment of benzodiazepine addiction and research into benzodiazepines at the centre.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not collected centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. T. Owen, chairman of Bethlem and Maudsley special health authority, for details.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will bring forward proposals to tighten the control on the administration of benzodiazephines and other tranquillisers to children in care in the near future.

Mr. Dorrell: Benzodiazepines and other tranquillisers can be supplied only on a doctor's prescription and used in accordance with the doctor's instructions. Other than in the case of patients detained under the Mental Health Act 1983 medical treatment can be given only with the consent of the patient. If a child is not of sufficient understanding to give consent, the consent of the child's parent, or local authority if the child is in care, is required, except in an emergency where immediate treatment is, in the opinion of a medical practitioner, needed to protect the child's life or health.

Advice on this is confirmed in volume 4 in the Children Act guidance and regulations series published today.

Information (Confidentiality)

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the draft guidance on the confidentiality of personal health information in the NHS will be *(a)* issued for consultation and *(b)* completed.

Mr. Dorrell: The draft guidance will be issued soon. The timetable for completion of substantive guidance will depend upon the comments received.

Intensive Therapy Units

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average number of fully funded beds in intensive therapy units; and if he will give the equivalent figure for 1986.

Mr. Dorrell: Information in the form requested is not held centrally.

Organ Transplants

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has received any requests for the implementation of a system of recording on a national register an agreement for organ donation for transplantation purposes in the event of sudden death.

Mr. Dorrell: We have received a number of suggestions proposing a national computerised register of potential organ donors. Evidence from trial projects so far do not support the case for the high expenditure necessary.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many organs have been donated for transplantation purposes in the North West regional health authority area during each of the last five years.

Mr. Dorrell: The number of organs donated in the North Western regional health authority as reported to the United Kingdom transplant support service is as follows:

	Kidney	Heart	Heart/Lung	Lung	Liver
1986	86	11	2	0	9
1987	81	17	3	0	16
1988	120	17	9	0	23
1989	136	21	6	0	24
1990	148	24	6	6	32

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will consider introducing legislation for the implementation of an opt-out system to increase the number of organs for transplantation purposes.

Mr. Dorrell: No.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies he has undertaken of the system of retrieving human organs for transplant operated in Belgian intensive therapy units; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: None.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions he has had with the medical profession regarding the introduction of new legislation to increase the number of organs available for transplantation.

Mr. Dorrell: The conference of the medical royal colleges working party, which in 1987 looked into the

supply of donor organs for transplantation, recommended that organ donation could best be increased by introducing procedures for identifying and referring protential donors. The working party believed that this would be more effective than the introduction of legislation. We have accepted that recommendation.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has received any requests for a note to be made on hospital admissions records of an individual's willingness to donate organs for transplantation in the event of death while in hospital.

Mr. Dorrell: The content of the hospital admission forms is a matter for individual authorities to decide.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the cost of kidney dialysis treatment for an individual patient over the course of one year; and what is the cost of carrying out a kidney transplant operation together with after-care costs for an individual patient.

Mr. Dorrell: The cost of organ transplantation varies between units and according to the complexity of the case. The figure of around £10,000 for a kidney transplant represents the latest estimate of a likely cost at 1989-90 prices. Information is not collected centrally on the annual cost of the drug regime required to sustain organ transplants.

We hold no reliable information on the costs of maintaining dialysis patients, but according to a report published today by the Office of Health Economics the annual cost of dialysis is between £11,000 and £18,000.

Pharmaceutical Prices

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the level of pharmaceutical price increases over the last 12 months.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry has published figures which show pharmaceutical companies prices rising by 1.9 per cent. in 1989 and 2.5 per cent. in 1990.

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what changes there have been in the basic elements of the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme in the past 12 months.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: None. The PPRS continues to be operated on the basis of the 1986 agreement.

GP Contract

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps are taken by family health services authorities to monitor the number of night visits by general practitioners.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Family health service authorities collect information on night visit fee claims as part of their managerial responsibility to monitor the general practitioner's contract.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether there has been any change in the extent of night visits and out-of-hours work by general practitioners since the introduction of the new general practitioner contract;

(2) whether there have been any changes in the use by general practitioners of deputising services since the introduction of the new general practitioner contract.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We are currently conducting a bi-annual survey to collect data on the number of general practitioners who have consent to use a deputising service and the number of night visits made and by whom. The results should be available by the end of October.

Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the work of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority does not assume its full powers until 1 August 1991. The authority has made good progress in undertaking the preparatory work.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance he will give to the licensing authority, established under the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act, about the proposed destruction of fertilised embryos currently held in storage facilities.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I will write to the hon. Member.

Nursing Homes

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he is taking to reverse the trend of patients and their families using the private sector and to establish more national health service nursing homes based on three DSS pilot schemes.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Health authorities are expected to ensure that a range of services are available for elderly people, including long-term care. It is for each health authority to decide the level and type of provision taking account of local needs and priorities. Within this our policy is to promote choice and the development of a flourishing independent sector alongside good quality public services.

Patients Charter

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list those organisations and individuals who will be consulted before the publication of the patients charter; what form the consultation will take; and what is the timetable.

Mr. Dorrell: Our proposals for the charter for patients will be discussed with key members of the professions, NHS management and consumer representative bodies over the next few weeks before publication in early autumn.

Lung Cancer

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will set out the number of deaths per 1,000 in Devon and Cornwall caused by lung cancer; and what is the national average.

Mr. Dorrell: The information is set out in the table.

Mortality rates per 1,000 population from malignant neoplasms of the trachea, bronchus and lung (ICD 162), for: (1) England, Wales and Elsewhere; (2) Cornwall; and (3) Devon, 1990.

Area	*Rate per 1,000 population*
England, Wales and Elsewhere[1]	0·68
Cornwall	0·62
Devon	0·63

[1]Elsewhere refers to people who are not normally resident in England and Wales, but who die there.

Hen Slaughter

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence he has of the incidence of food poisoning in humans since the policy of slaughtering hens was introduced; and what evidence he has of correlation between these figures.

Mr. Dorrell: The reported incidence of salmonellosis in humans is regularly provided in the Public Health Laboratory Service/state veterinary service update on salmonella infection. Copies of the July 1991 edition are in the Library.

A range of factors affect the reported incidence of human salmonellosis and no one factor can be singled out. Action therefore needs to be taken at all points in the food chain from farm to consumer. The figures for the first six months of this year are encouraging in showing a reduction compared with the same period in 1990, but it is premature to assess the full effects of the flock slaughter policy in reducing the risks of human infections.

Tobacco Products

Mr. Aspinwall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received concerning the new regulations on the labelling of cigarette products, whereby United Kingdom manufacturers are required to print warnings on cigarette packs larger than those required of importers.

Mr. Dorrell: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Supra-regional Services

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, further to the reply given to the hon. Member for Eastleigh on 5 March, *Official Report*, column *113*, if he will make available a summary of the funding and levels of activity agreed for 1991-92 with centres designated to provide supra-regional services.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A summary of this information has been placed in the Library as an addendum to the document "Supra regional services 1991-92: announcement by the Secretary of State for Health".

Breakspeare Hospital

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement regarding the closure of the Breakspeare hospital, Hertfordshire.

Mr. Dorrell: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Di Hydrase Testosterone

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evaluation has been made of Di Hydrase Testosterone as a medicine for diseased prostates.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Section 118 of the Medicines Act 1968 precludes the disclosure of information relating to product licence applications of their subsequent progress through the licencsing system.

Before any new drug can be licensed in the United Kingdom it is evaluated in the first instance by the Committee on Safety of Medicines for its safety, efficacy and quality for the purposes set out in the product licence application.

AIDS

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that resources for AIDS are targeted effectively and that full use is made of AIDS care education and training;

(2) what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that the £140 million AIDS allocation is being used efficiently and appropriately to meet current needs.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department monitors the use of ring-fenced money allocated to regional health authorities through the AIDS (Control) Act reports.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he intends to take to ensure there are no delays in the payment of NHS AIDS money to the voluntary sector; and what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the current arrangements.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department allocated £137·3 million of ring-fenced AIDS money in 1991-92 to regions, which in turn allocate them to their districts. In addition, we also allocated £1·9 million to the voluntary sector in 1991-92 and £10·2 million through the AIDS support grant scheme to local authorities. Mechanisms for payment and for decisions about grant-giving and contracts are established locally, according to local circumstances and need.

Children's Homes

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will bring forward his detailed guidance under the Children Act 1989 regulations covering the management of residential children's homes.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have today published a compilation of guidance on residential care as volume 4 in the Children Act 1989 series. A copy will be placed in the Library.

This will apply to all local authority, voluntary and private children's homes, and some small boarding schools. They will be required to maintain a written statement of their purpose; provide proper standards of accommodation and staffing; prohibit corporal punishment; and keep detailed records. Inspection of children's homes will be expected normally to be carried out by local authorities' arms-length inspection units.

The new volume also draws together guidance and regulations previously published on placing children in homes; contact with parents; review of children's needs and circumstances; complaints procedures; independent visitors; and after-care.

The Children Act 1989 comes into force on 14 October. This follow-up package will also apply from then. Together, these provisions create a new framework for looking after children in homes which is comprehensive and forward looking and keeps the welfare of children at centre stage.

Medical Negligence

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of *(a)* the cost of action in respect of medical negligence, *(b)* the impact of delay in dealing with such claims on patients and families and *(c)* steps that could be taken to deal more simply and more effectively with such claims.

Mr. Dorrell: We have no central intelligence on the costs incurred by health authorities in dealing with negligence claims or of the impact of possible delays in litigation on plaintiffs.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State drew attention earlier this year to improvements in the litigation process being implemented as a result of the civil justice review and also undertook to consider the possibility of a system of arbitration for medical negligence. The Department will invite views on a consultation document to be published shortly.

RU486

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his reply of 18 July, *Official Report*, column *287*, on what date his Department officially announced that RU486 was to receive a product licence in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department does not make immediate announcements about the issue of product licences. The licence for RU486 (Mifegyne) was granted to Roussel on 1 July. The company announced the following day that it had received a product licence.

Formal notification of decisions to grant product licences is via the *London, Edinburgh* and *Belfast Gazettes*. In the case of RU 486 (Mifegyne), publication will be at the end of August.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research, other than clinical trials, has been carried out on the safety aspects of the drug RU486.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: As for all new drugs, safety testing was undertaken according to the requirements of directive 75/318 EEC. The Committee on Safety of Medicines was fully reassured as to the safety of RU486 from the results of these tests.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give details of the new responsibilities in regard to the licensing of new drugs undertaken by the Medicines Control Agency since it was given independent status.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Medicines Control Agency is an executive agency of the Department of Health operating within a published policy and resources framework document.

The chief executive of this agency is responsible and accountable to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the efficient management, overall performance and future development of the agency.

The licensing of medicines, including new drugs, remains the responsibility of Ministers—"the United Kingdom licensing authority"—under the provisions of the Medicines Act 1968 and associated European directives.

Remand Costs

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is currently *(a)* the average cost, *(b)* the highest cost and *(c)* the lowest cost per week of holding a young person on remand in secure accommodation which is subject to supervision or inspection by his Department.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not collected centrally.

Central Manchester Hospital Trust

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what extra moneys will be made available in the current financial year to the Central Manchester hospital trust to guarantee continuity of patient care;

(2) if he will make a statement on the financial position of the Central Manchester hospital trust, including details of any plans or proposals which will lead to a reduction of the financial overspend.

Mr. Dorrell: The Central Manchester hospital trust had an overspend in the first quarter of this financial year. It has taken the action necessary to balance income and expenditure for the year.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he had made of the quality and quantity of services provided by the Central Manchester hospital trust; and if he will take steps to ensure they are sustained in the future.

Mr. Dorrell: The quality and quantity of the services it provides both now and in the future are a matter for agreement between the Central Manchester hospital trust and its purchasers.

Caesarean Sections

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list for each district health authority the percentage rate of caesarean sections for all births.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information relating to the method of birth delivery is collected via the hospital episodes statistics system. At present, it is possible only to give reliable estimates at national level. For this information I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave her on 8 March at columns *322-23*. Work is currently in progress to investigate the possibility of producing estimates at regional level. Some incomplete information on method of delivery at district health authority level is available in the health service indicator package, a copy of which is in the Library.

Purchasing Agreements

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will now take steps to ensure that the minimum permissible expiry time for any purchasing agreement between a health service purchaser and a provider will not be less than the recently announced guaranteed maximum waiting time for the respective treatment.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Under the citizens charter, health authorities will be responsible for ensuring that no resident waits more than two years for any operation, except for some special cases such as transplants. This duty will not be affected by the period of operation of any particular contract.

Maternity Services

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list the district health authorities which have established maternity services liaison committees;

(2) if he will make a statement about maternity services liaison committees.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Maternity services liaison committees continue to be an important forum both for obtaining professional agreement on the operation of local maternity and neonatal services and for representing the views of the consumer.

At the end of 1988, all district health authorities providing maternity services had set up a maternity services liaison committee. This was in line with the good practice guidance set out in the reports of the Maternity Services Advisory Committee.

Remand (Young People)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy that young people on remand are dealt with in such a way as to maximise public protection and minimise serious re-offending while ensuring cost-effectiveness.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Local authorities already have a statutory power to take account of the need to protect the public in determining how any child in their care, including those on remand, might most appropriately be accommodated. Under the Children Act 1989, local authorities will additionally be under a duty to take reasonable steps designed to encourage children in their area not to commit criminal offences. Guidance on practical steps which authorities might take in exercise of this new duty was given in "The Children Act 1989: Guidance and Regulations Volume 1 Court Orders" a copy of which is available in the Library.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the alternatives to secure accommodation he is currently considering in respect of young people on remand.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Guidance on how local authorities might exercise their new duty under the Children Act 1989 to take reasonable steps designed to avoid the need for children in their area to be placed in secure accommodation is being given in "The Children Act 1989: Guidance and Regulations Volume 4 Residential Care", to be published this week.

Additionally, the Department has invited a number of bodies, including the local authority associations and the Association of Directors of Social Services, to join a national steering group whose remit will include consideration of further steps which might be taken to develop alternatives to secure accommodation for young people on remand.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Jessel: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has concerning the amount of time lost by consultants and other specialists in the national health service as a result of patients failing to keep appointments or to give notice that they cannot attend appointments at the appointed time; what assessment he has made of the impact of this practice on waiting lists; and what action he intends to take to remind the public of the contribution they can make to reducing waiting lists.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information is not available centrally on time lost by consultants and other specialists as a result of failure by patients to attend appointments. It is regrettable that some patients do not inform hospitals when they know in advance that they cannot keep an appointment. This results in a waste of resources which could be used for the benefit of other patients. We have recently issued guidelines on the management of waiting lists, commissioned from Qa Business Services, to all health authorities in England. These guidelines provide advice on what hospitals should tell patients about their responsibilities as users of the service. All patients should be told to inform the hospital if their circumstances change in any way that might affect their appointment or admission. All hospitals should also regularly validate their waiting lists to weed out the names of patients who, for one reason or another, no longer require treatment. This will help to cut the number of non-attendances.

Child Birth

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the district health authorities which have domino schemes for child birth.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not collected centrally.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will provide information for each of the last five years about the clinical outcomes for births which take place *(a)* in the home and *(b)* in hospital settings.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Ambulance Service

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what conditions he lays down for providers of ambulance services in the national health service to publish their specifications for replacement vehicles; and if the relevant requirements are open to competitive tender.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Vehicle specifications for replacement ambulance vehicles are prepared or updated by service providers at the time that tenders for their supply need to be issued. The Majority of these requirements will be open to competitive tender and in many cases, because of the potential order value, subject to EC directives with regard to purchasing procedure.

Conductive Education

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement outlining the current situation and further plans for the department of conductive

education in England in general, about the specific development of facilities at Birmingham, and the access to such facilities for patients from other parts of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dorrell: I will write to the hon. Member.

Meningitis Vaccine

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when his Department will introduce a vaccine for bacterial meningitis; for what age groups of children the bacterial meningitis vaccine will be introduced and at what times in the immunisation schedule; what plans the Department of Health has to publicise the introduction of the bacterial meningitis vaccine; and what number of children he estimates will be given the bacterial meningitis vaccine during 1992, 1993, 1994 and 1995.

Mr. Dorrell: We plan to introduce a vaccine against haemophilus influezae b (Hib), the most common cause of bacterial meningitis, from 1 October 1992. Subject to the outcome of studies in progress in Gloucester and Oxford, the recommendation will be for the vaccine to be given in three doses at ages two, three, and four months—at the same time as immunisation against diphtheria, tetanus, polio and whooping cough.

Before the vaccine is introduced there will be a major publicity campaign aimed at professionals in the NHS and at parents. We hope that Hib will be at least as well accepted as the other vaccines in the childhood immunisation programme, and achieve at least 90 per cent. uptake by the first birthday. This level of acceptance would mean that about 600,000 infants per year would be immunised in England.

Health Promotion

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assistance his Department is able to offer to voluntary organisations establishing health promotion schemes.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department provides funding to support the agreed national activities of a large number of voluntary organisations, many of which undertake health education as part of their overall role.

Steroids

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East of 9 July, *Official Report*, column *338*, if he will give details in each case of the length of time between *(a)* the seizure of evidence and the issue of the summons and *(b)* the issue of the summons and the final court decision.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I will write to the hon. Member.

Health Service Trusts

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will name any health service trust which has introduced its own terms or conditions of service since the passing of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990; and if he will list those powers which would enable any provider organisation to take such steps *(a)* with his consent and *(b)* without his consent.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information about the terms and conditions of service of staff in NHS trusts is not collected centrally. All provider units are subject to certain powers governing the employment of staff. For NHS trusts, these are set out in sections 5, 6 and 7 of schedule 2 to the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990. For staff in other provider units, including those staff transferred to NHS trusts who chose to remain on their contracts of employment on transfer, the powers are paragraph 10(1) of schedule 5 to the National Health Service Act 1977, paragraph 11 of schedule 3 to that Act and the National Health Service (Remuneration and Conditions of Service) Regulations 1991 (SI 1991 No. 481).

Written Questions

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many parliamentary questions for written answer have been answered by his Department so far this Session, and in the comparable period for the last Session; and if he will publish a table of how many answers *(a)* do not give the information requested because of (i) disproportionate cost or (ii) other reasons, *(b)* give an undertaking to write to the hon. Member who asked the question and *(c)* were referred for answer to the chief executive of each next steps agency.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is a matter of public record.

Mrs. Kamala Sunthankar

Sir Alan Glyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will hold a public inquiry into the death of Mrs. Kamala Sunthankar in the Royal Berkshire hospital on 17 April, details of which have been sent to him.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 8 July 1991]:* I will write to my hon. Friend.

DEFENCE

Nuclear Facilities (Iraq)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the nuclear activities conducted by Iraq at *(a)* the Fallujah facility near Baghdad, *(b)* the Tarmiyah plant, *(c)* the Abu Ghurayb military base and *(d)* the underground complex near Mosul.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: All nuclear activity conducted by Iraq at these and other sites is currently under investigation by the UN Special Commission and the International Atomic Energy Authority which report directly to the UN Secretary General. The UN has released a consolidated report of the first two inspections of Iraqi nuclear facilities and copies of this have been placed in the Library of the House.

South Atlantic Command Structure

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out the command structure for a white ensigned vessel in the south Atlantic and a blue ensigned vessel.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Command of Her Majesty's ships is the responsibility of the Commander in Chief Fleet, who

in turn is responsible to the Chief of the Naval Staff and the Chief of the Defence Staff. The command structure for blue-ensigned vessels depends upon the Government organisation or other public body which operates them.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list the number of hostile incidents involving a blue ensigned vessel in the south Atlantic in the last 30 years;

(2) on what occasions the United Kingdom has taken military action following harassment of *(a)* a white ensigned vessel and *(b)* a blue ensigned vessel in the south Atlantic.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Ministry of Defence records show that during the last thirty years, there has been only one incident involving blue ensigned vessels in the south Atlantic, excluding actions during the Falklands conflict in 1982. This was an unsuccessful attempt by an Argentinian vessel to stop the RRS Shackleton in February 1976. During the same period, with the exception of operations during the Falklands conflict, there have been no occasions on which military action has been taken following harassment of either white or blue ensigned vessels.

Naval Vessels

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the difference in effect between the presence of an armed vessel flying the white ensign and an unarmed blue ensigned vessel.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It would depend on the circumstances.

Low Flying

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the numbers of low-flying movements in the highlands restricted area in each year since 1981; and what information he has on the breakdown of these figures by aircraft type.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I have nothing to add to the answer that my predecessor gave to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) on 22 December 1988 at column *369*.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions United States air force units stationed in the United Kingdom have been granted permission to fly at less than 250 ft over the United Kingdom during work-up training for red flag exercises in the United States of America; and what is his current policy on the granting of such permission.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: There are no records of United States air force units stationed in the United Kingdom ever having been authorised to carry out operational low flying training at less than 250 ft over the United Kingdom during work-up training for red flag exercises in the United States. My Department's general policy on such training remains as set out in evidence to the Defence Committee last year (HC 120/90, pp. 12-13).

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many representations he has received in the last year on the subject of low flying.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on 15 July at column *94*.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if aircrews are permitted to select towns or villages as turning points when planning the route of a low-flying sortie.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: All aspects of a low-flying sortie, including the choice of turning points, are subject to regulations on the avoidance of populated areas which are designed to minimise disturbance to the general public.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the measures taken by his Department to ensure that United States forces stationed in the United Kingdom are complying with the regulations and advice set out in the United Kingdom military low flying handbook.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Aircraft of the United States air force stationed in the United Kingdom and using the United Kingdom low flying system are subject to the same monitoring as the Royal Air Force to ensure compliance with United Kingdom low flying regulations.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any further United States air force low-flying training at less than 250 ft over Wales has been authorised since the reply given to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on 19 December 1990, *Official Report*, column *208*.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No operational low flying training at less than 250 ft has been authorised over Wales for United States air force aircraft since the reply in question.

OSEX Exercises

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the requirement for aircraft attack training during the OSEX series of exercises.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The OSEX series of exercises is designed to provide aircrew with training in a range of offensive support operations. Airfield attack is one such operation.

RAF (Training)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the requirement for night forward air control training in the Royal Air Force; when training in this role was first introduced into the training programme of Royal Air Force tactical weapons units; and if he will list the locations used for night forward air control training.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There is currently no requirement for the RAF to carry out night forward air control training, and no such training takes place.

Ministerial Guidance

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the NATO defence ministerial guidance to 1998 agreed in May 1991 and its implications for answering threats to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The 1991 ministerial guidance which was approved by Defence Ministers at their meeting at the end of May provides political guidance for defence planning activities in NATO, both national and collective, for the period up to 1998 and beyond. The guidance emphasises the need to maintain the effectiveness of the alliance's collective defence arrangements and thus to provide the level of resources necessary to ensure that forces contributing to the new force structures are adequately manned, equipped, trained and exercised, and so capable of countering any threat to the territory of allies.

Air Refuelling

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if air-to-air refuelling operations are permitted in United Kingdom airspace outside the designated air refuelling areas published in the United Kingdom air pilot and royal air force flight information publications; and what are the regulations governing such operations.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Air-to-air refuelling is permitted outside the designated air refuelling areas listed in the United Kingdom air pilot and Royal Air Force flight information publications, but normally only over the sea. If, exceptionally, permission is given to conduct air refuelling over land and outside the designated areas, such operations must be carried out at high level, away from built-up areas.

Anti-ballistic Missiles

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards the adoption of an anti-ballistic missile capability by NATO.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: This was addressed recently when alliance Ministers met in Brussels on 28-29 May. The final communiqué issued at the end of that meeting reports that Ministers discussed the potential risk posed by proliferation of ballistic missiles and weapons of mass destruction and the need to consider complementary approaches to dealing with the problem, including export controls and missile defences. Ministers welcomed a briefing by the United States concerning its concept for global protection against limited ballistic missile strikes.

F15E Aircraft

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning the location of F15E aircraft.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 5 February 1991 at column 161.

Squadron Roles

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide a costing for maintaining dual capable units of the armed forces in a nuclear role for each of the following types of units currently in service: *(a)* Tornado squadrons, *(b)* Buccaneer squadrons, *(c)* Sea Harrier squadrons, *(d)* Nimrod squadrons, *(e)* Sea King squadrons or flights, *(f)* Lance regiments and *(g)* 155 mm self-propelled artillery regiments.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information is not held in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Territorial Reserve Forces

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the territorial reserve forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence in the House on 23 July, and the accompanying White Paper entitled, "Britain's Army for the 90s" (Cm. 1595).

Defence Spending

Mr. Walden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the percentage of gross domestic product spent on defence will be in the United Kingdom after the proposed reductions are implemented; and what information he has on the comparable proportion of gross domestic product spent on defence in France and Germany, allowing for cuts planned in the same period by these countries.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Plans announced last autumn showed the percentage of gross domestic product spent on defence reducing from 4 per cent. in 1990-91 (excluding expenditure on the Gulf deployment) to 3·4 per cent. in 1993-94. These plans are being reviewed during this year's public expenditure survey in the light of the further work that has taken place to refine the "Options for Change" proposals. No information is yet available on future levels of gross domestic product to be spent on defence by France. Although Germany has announced plans for defence spending to 1994, no forecasts of German gross domestic product are avaialable for that year for comparison with United Kingdom figures.

Faslane and Coulport

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how much has been spent on the Faslane Trident training facility in financial years *(a)* 1987-88, *(b)* 1988-89, *(c)* 1989-90 and *(d)* 1990-91 in (i) then-year prices and (ii) 1991-92 prices;

(2) how much has been spent on the Faslane shiplift in financial years *(a)* 1987-88, *(b)* 1988-89, *(c)* 1989-90, *(d)* 1990-91 and *(e)* 1991-92 in (i) then-year prices and (ii) 1991-92 prices;

(3) how much has been spent on the Coulport maintenance support building in financial years *(a)* 1990-91, and *(b)* 1991-92 in (i) then-year prices, and (ii) 1991-92 prices;

(4) how much has been spent on shore construction at Faslane and Coulport in support of the Trident programme in each of the last 10 financial years in (i) then-year prices, and (ii) 1991-92 prices;

(5) how much has been spent on the Coulport re-entry body processing building in the financial years *(a)* 1987-88, *(b)* 1988-89, *(c)* 1989-90, *(d)* 1990-91 and *(e)* 1991-92 in (i) then-year prices and (ii) 1991-92 prices;

(6) how much has been spent on the Faslane site services distribution 1 to 4 berths in financial years *(a)* 1989-90, *(b)* 1990-91, and *(c)* 1991-92, in (i) then-year prices, and (ii) 1991-92 prices;

(7) how much has been spent on the Faslane strategic weapons support system in financial years *(a)* 1987-88, *(b)* 1988-89, *(c)* 1989-90, *(d)* 1990-91 and *(e)* 1991-92, in (i) then-year prices and (ii) 1991-92 prices;

(8) how much has been spent on the Faslane Neptune senior ratings mess in financial years *(a)* 1989-90, *(b)* 1990-91 and *(c)* 1991-92 in (i) then-year prices and (ii) current prices;

(9) how much has been spent on the Coulport electrical generating station in financial years *(a)* 1987-88, *(b)* 1988-89, *(c)* 1989-90, *(d)* 1990-91 and *(e)* 1991-92 in (i) then-year prices and (ii) 1991-92 prices;

(10) how much has been spent on the Coulport ready issue magazines in financial years *(a)* 1987-88, *(b)* 1988-89, *(c)* 1989-90, *(d)* 1990-91 and *(e)* 1991-92 in (i) then-year prices, and (ii) 1991-92 prices;

(11) how much has been spent on the Faslane finger jetty in financial years *(a)* 1987-88, *(b)* 1988-89, *(c)* 1989-90, *(d)* 1990-91, and *(e)* 1991-92, in (i) then-year prices and (ii) 1991-92 prices;

(12) how much has been spent on the Coulport special area security in the financial years *(a)* 1987-88, *(b)* 1988-89, *(c)* 1989-90, *(d)* 1990-91 and *(e)* 1991-92 in (i) then-year prices and (ii) 1991-92 prices;

(13) how much has been spent on the Faslane dockside cranes in financial years *(a)* 1989-90, *(b)* 1990-91, and *(c)* 1991-92, in (i) then-year prices, and (ii) 1991-92 prices;

(14) how much has been spent on the Coulport explosives handling jetty in financial years *(a)* 1987-88, *(b)* 1988-89, *(c)* 1989-90, *(d)* 1990-91 and *(e)* 1991-92 in (i) then-year prices and (ii) 1991-92 prices;

(15) how much has been spent on the Coulport jetty foreshore in financial years *(a)* 1987-88, *(b)* 1988-89, *(c)* 1989-90, *(d)* 1990-91 and *(e)* 1991-92 in (i) then-year prices and (ii) 1991-92 prices;

(16) how much has been spent on the Coulport jetty roads and perimeter fence in financial years *(a)* 1987-88, *(b)* 1988-89, *(c)* 1989-90, *(d)* 1990-91, and *(e)* 1991-92 in (i) then-year prices and (ii) 1991-92 prices;

(17) how much has been spent on the Coulport re-entry body magazine in financial years *(a)* 1987-88, *(b)* 1988-89, *(c)* 1989-90, *(d)* 1990-91 and *(e)* 1991-92 in (i) then-year prices and (ii) 1991-92 prices;

(18) how much has been spent on the Faslane northern utilities building in the financial years *(a)* 1987-88, *(b)* 1988-89, *(c)* 1989-90, *(d)* 1990-91, and *(e)* 1991-92 in (i) then-year prices and (ii) 1991-92 prices.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information is not available in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, cumulative capital and resource cash outturn figures to the end of 1990-91 for these projects are shown in the table:

£ thousands

Project	*Capital*	*Resources*	*Total*
Trident training facility	12,140	2,440	14,580
Faslane shiplift	125,369	41,917	167,286
Coulport maintenance support building	829	1,292	2,121
Faslane shore construction	343,303	99,756	443,059
Coulport shore construction	276,793	69,035	345,828
Coulport re-entry body processing building	7,790	1,560	9,350
Faslane SSD/1 to 4 berth	6,095	3,013	9,108
Faslane strategic weapons support building	14,094	3,237	17,331
Faslane senior rates mess	807	878	1,685
Coulport generating station	27,496	8,537	36,033
Coulport ready issue magazines	11,043	2,268	13,311
Faslane finger jetty	15,506	5,184	20,690
Coulport special area security	18,421	3,783	22,204
Faslane dockside cranes	15,586	5,211	20,797
Coulport explosives handling jetty	63,368	23,759	87,127
Coulport jetty foreshore	12,205	2,419	14,624
Coulport jetty roads and perimeter fence	28,476	5,645	34,121
Coulport re-entry body magazines	15,540	3,191	18,731
Faslane northern utilities building	30,048	10,047	40,095

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement about the role and function of the Coulport ready issue magazines;

(2) if he will make a statement about the role and function of the Faslane finger jetty;

(3) if he will make a statement about the role and function of the Coulport special area security;

(4) if he will make a statement about the role and function of the Faslane dockside cranes;

(5) if he will make a statement about the role and function of the Coulport explosives handling jetty;

(6) if he will make a statement about the role and function of the Coulport jetty roads and perimeter fence;

(7) if he will make a statement about the role and function of the Coulport re-entry body magazine;

(8) if he will make a statement about the role and function of the Faslane northern utilities building;

(9) if he will make a statement about the role and function of the Coulport jetty foreshore;

(10) if he will make a statement about the role and function of the Coulport electrical generating station;

(11) if he will make a statement about the role and function of the Faslane strategic weapons support system;

(12) if he will make a statement about the role and function of the Faslane Neptune senior ratings mess;

(13) if he will make a statement about the role and function of the Coulport re-entry body processing building;

(14) if he will make a statement about the role and function of the Faslane site services distribution/1 to 4 berths;

(15) if he will make a statement about the role and function of the Coulport maintenance support building;

(16) if he will make a statement about the role and function of the Faslane trident training facility;

(17) if he will make a statement about the role and function of the Faslane shiplift.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: These facilities will variously support Vanguard submarines, some other classes of submarine, and the Trident strategic weapons system.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how much of the cost of the Coulport re-entry body magazine is attributable to the Trident programme;

(2) how much of the cost of the Coulport electrical generating station is attributable to the Trident programme;

(3) how much of the cost of the Coulport re-entry body processing building is attributable to the Trident programme;

(4) how much of the cost of the Coulport jetty roads and perimeter fence is attributable to the Trident programme;

(5) how much of the cost of the Coulport explosives handling jetty is attributable to the Trident programme;

(6) how much of the cost of the Coulport jetty foreshore is attributable to the Trident programme;

(7) how much of the cost of the Faslane strategic weapons support system is attributable to the Trident programme;

(8) how much of the cost of the Coulport ready issue magazines is attributable to the Trident programme;

(9) how much of the cost of the Faslane finger jetty is attributable to the Trident programme;

(10) how much of the cost of the Faslane dockside cranes is attributable to the Trident programme;

(11) how much of the cost of the Faslane Trident training facility is attributable to the Trident programme;

(12) how much of the cost of the Faslane Neptune senior ratings mess is attributable to the Trident programme;

(13) how much of the cost of the Faslane northern utilities building is attributable to the Trident programme;

(14) how much of the cost of the Coulport special area security is attributable to the Trident programme;

(15) how much of the cost of the Faslane shiplift is attributable to the Trident programme;

(16) how much of the cost of the Faslane site services Distribution/1 to 4 berths is attributable to the Trident programme.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not our policy to discuss the detailed Trident attribution of individual projects or contract packages.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what was the original estimate of expenditure, in 1991-92 prices, on the Faslane Neptune senior ratings mess; what is the current estimate of expenditure; and what are the reasons for the difference;

(2) what is the expected expenditure, in 1991-92 prices, on the Coulport jetty roads and perimeter fence in financial years *(a)* 1992-93 and *(b)* 1993-94;

(3) what is the expected expenditure, in 1991-92 prices, on the Coulport electrical generating station in financial years *(a)* 1992-93 and *(b)* 1993-94;

(4) what was the original estimate of expenditure, in 1991-92 prices, on the Faslane northern utilities building; what is the current estimate of expenditure; and what are the reasons for the difference;

(5) what is the expected expenditure, in 1991-92 prices, on the Coulport ready issue magazines in financial years *(a)* 1992-93, *(b)* 1993-94 and *(c)* 1994-95;

(6) what is the expected expenditure, in 1991-92 prices, on the Faslane finger jetty in the financial years *(a)* 1992-93 and *(b)* 1993-94;

(7) what was the original estimate of expenditure, in 1991-92 prices, on the Coulport special area security; what is the current estimate of expenditure; and what were the reasons for the difference;

(8) what is the expected expenditure, in 1991-92 prices, on the Faslane dockside cranes in financial years *(a)* 1992-93 and *(b)* 1993-94;

(9) what was the original estimate of expenditure, in 1991-92 prices, on the Faslane shiplift; what is the current estimate of expenditure; and what were the reasons for the difference;

(10) what was the original estimate of expenditure, in 1991-92 prices, on the Coulport maintenance support building; what is the current estimate of expenditure; and what are the reasons for the difference;

(11) what is the expected expenditure, in 1991-92 prices, on the Coulport explosives handling jetty in financial years *(a)* 1992-93, *(b)* 1993-94 and *(c)* 1994-95;

(12) what is the expected expenditure, in 1991-92 prices, on the Coulport jetty foreshore in financial years *(a)* 1992-93 and *(b)* 1993-94;

(13) what was the original estimate of expenditure, in 1991-92 prices, on the Faslane site services distribution/1 to 4 berths; what is the current estimate of expenditure; and what are the reasons for the difference;

(14) what was the original estimate of expenditure, in 1991-92 prices, on the Coulport re-entry body processing building; what is the current estimate of expenditure; and what are the reasons for the difference;

(15) what is the expected expenditure, in 1991-92 prices, on the Faslane shiplift in financial years *(a)* 1992-93, *(b)* 1993-94 and *(c)* 1994-95;

(16) what is the expected expenditure, in 1991-92 prices, on the Coulport maintenance support building in financial years *(a)* 1992-93, *(b)* 1993-94 and 1994-95;

(17) what was the original estimate of expenditure, in 1991-92 prices, on the Faslane Trident training facility; what is the current estimate of expenditure; and what are the reasons for the difference;

(18) what is the expected expenditure, in 1991-92 prices, on the Faslane site services distribution/1 to 4 berths in financial years *(a)* 1992-93 and *(b)* 1993-94;

(19) what was the original estimate of expenditure, in 1991-92 prices, on the Coulport electrical generating station; what is the current estimate of expenditure; and what are the reasons for the difference between these estimates;

(20) what is the expected expenditure, in 1991-92 prices, on the Faslane northern utilities building in financial years *(a)* 1992-93 and *(b)* 1993-94;

(21) what was the original estimate of expenditure, in 1991-92 prices, on the Coulport jetty foreshore; what is the current estimate of expenditure; and what are the reasons for the difference;

(22) what was the original estimate of expenditure, in 1991-92 prices, on the Coulport ready issue magazines; what is the current estimate of expenditure; and what are the reasons for the difference;

(23) what was the original estimate of expenditure, in 1991-92 prices, on the Faslane finger jetty; what is the current estimate of expenditure; and what are the reasons for the difference;

(24) what was the original estimate of expenditure, in 1991-92 prices, on the Faslane dockside cranes; what is the current estimate of expenditure; and what are the reasons for the difference;

(25) what was the original estimate of expenditure, in 1991-92 prices, on the Faslane strategic weapons support system; what is the current estimate of expenditure; and what are the reasons for the difference;

(26) what was the original estimate of expenditure, in 1991-92 prices, on the Coulport jetty roads and perimeter fence; what is the current estimate of expenditure; and what are the reasons for the difference;

(27) what is the cost of the Coulport maintenance support building;

(28) what was the original estimate of expenditure, in 1991-92 prices, on the Coulport explosives handling jetty; what is the current estimate of expenditure; and what are the reasons for the difference;

(29) what is the expected expenditure, in 1991-92 prices, on the Faslane Neptune senior rates mess in financial year 1992-93;

(30) what was the original estimate of expenditure, in 1991-92 prices, on the Coulport re-entry body magazine; what is the current estimate of expenditure; and what are the reasons for the difference.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not our policy to discuss the latest estimated costs or expected annual expenditure of individual projects or contract packages for reasons of commercial confidentiality.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the current estimate of year of completion for the Faslane site services distribution 1 to 4 berths; and what was the original estimate of year of completion;

(2) what is the current estimate of year of completion for the Coulport special area security; and what was the original estimate of the year of completion;

(3) what is the current estimate of year of completion for the Faslane shiplift; and what was the original estimate of year of completion;

(4) what is the current estimate of year of completion for the Faslane northern utilities building, and what was the original estimate of year of completion;

(5) what is the current estimate of year of completion for the Coulport maintenance support building; and what was the original estimate of year of completion;

(6) what is the current estimate of year of completion for the Faslane Neptune senior ratings mess; and what was the original estimate of year of completion;

(7) what is the current estimate of year of completion for the Coulport re-entry body magazine; and what was the original estimate of year of completion;

(8) what is the current estimate of year of completion for the Coulport electrical generating station; and what was the original estimate of year of completion;

(9) what is the current estimate of year of completion for the Coulport re-entry body processing building; and what was the original estimate of year of completion;

(10) what is the current estimate of year of completion for the Coulport jetty roads and perimeter fence; and what was the original estimate of year of completion;

(11) what is the current estimate of year of completion for the Coulport explosives handling jetty; and what was the original estimate of year of completion;

(12) what is the current estimate of year of completion for the Coulport jetty foreshore; and what was the original estimate of year of completion.

(13) what is the current estimate of year of completion for the Faslane strategic weapons support system; and what was the original estimate of year of completion;

(14) what is the current estimate of year of completion for the Coulport ready issue magazines; and what was the original estimate of year of completion;

(15) what is the current estimate of year of completion for the Faslane finger jetty, and what was the original estimate of year of completion;

(16) what is the current estimate of year of completion for the Faslane dockside cranes; and what was the original estimate of year of completion;

(17) what is the current estimate of year of completion for the Faslane Trident training facility; and what was the original estimate of year of completion;

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested is shown in the table:

Project	*Estimated year of completion*	
	[1]*Original*	*Current*
Faslane SSD/1-4 Berth	1993-94	1993-94
Coulport special area security	1990-91	Complete
Faslane shiplift	1990-91	1993-94
Northern Utilities Building	1990-91	1991-92
Coulport Maintenance Support Building	1992-93	1992-93
Faslane senior rates mess	1991-92	[2]1991-92
Re-entry body magazines	1991-92	1991-92
Coulport generator station	1991-92	1991-92
Re-entry body processing building	1991-92	1991-92
Jetty roads and perimeter fence	1990-91	[3]1991-92
Explosives handling jetty	1991-92	1992-93
Coulport jetty foreshore	1991-92	[4]1991-92
Strategic weapons support building	1990-91	completed
Coulport ready issue magazines	1991-92	1991-92
Finger jetty	1990-91	1991-92
Dockside cranes	1990-91	1991-92
Trident training facility	1988-89	works completed 1988-89

[1] At time of contract let.
[2] Advanced works only.
[3] Jetty link road and fence.
[4] Jetty support area.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) why the Coulport re-entry body magazine was not included in table 1 of class I, vote 4 of the supply estimates for 1991-92;

(2) why the Coulport re-entry body processing building was not included in table 1 of class I, vote 4 of the supply estimates for 1991-92;

(3) why the Coulport jetty roads and perimeter fence was not included in table 1 of class I, vote 4 of the supply estimates for 1991-92;

(4) why the Faslane strategic weapons support system was not listed in table 2 of class I, vote 4 of the supply estimates for 1991-92;

(5) why the Coulport special area security was not included in table 1 of class I, vote 4 of the supply estimates for 1991-92;

(6) why the Coulport maintenance support building was not included in table 1 of class I, vote 4 of the supply estimates for 1991-92.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces will write to the hon. Member.

Challenger II Tank

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the first Challenger II tank is scheduled to enter operational service with the Army.

Mr. Alan Clark: We expect the first Challenger II to enter service with the British Army in the mid-1990s.

Nuclear Submarines

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any further decisions have been made regarding the decommissioning of nuclear submarines.

Mr. Alan Clark: The policy for disposal of decommissioned nuclear submarines remains under active consideration. No final decision has yet been taken.

RAF Greenham Common

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any further decisions have been made regarding the future use of RAF Greenham Common.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

HMS Warspite

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the timetable for the decommissioning of HMS Warspite.

Mr. Alan Clark: HMS Warspite is undergoing decommissioning at Devonport at the present time.

Menwith Hill Byelaws

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many prosecutions have been brought under the Menwith Hill Military Lands Byelaws in each of the years since the byelaws entered force; and how many convictions were secured under these byelaws in each year.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces will write to the hon. Member.

Barton Stacey Married Quarters

Sir David Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his plans to offer empty married quarters at Barton Stacey for sale; if he will set out the timetable for the sale; and what are his proposals on the future of Army houses where the offer for sale to service personnel is not taken up.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Fifty-one married quarters at Barton Stacey have been identified as surplus to our long-term requirements and will be offered for sale to service personnel through the services discount scheme. Some of the houses to be sold are still occupied. Those already vacant will be offered for sale as soon as the details can be drawn up for publication in the sales bulletin and the remainder will be offered for sale as soon as they become vacant. Any houses not taken up under the discount scheme are normally offered for sale on the open market at full market price, but depending on the number of quarters available the possibility of a bulk disposal in this particular instance cannot be ruled out.

International Military Services

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what co-operation there has been between the International Military Services and the defence equipment finance department of the Midland International Trade Services in the last two years.

Mr. Alan Clark: Decisions on individual business contacts of International Military Services Ltd. are matters for the company's judgment, and are subject to commercial confidentiality.

Iraq

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what contingency measures are in place to deal with the environmental damage that could arise from a decision to bomb Iraq's nuclear plants;

(2) what contingency plans there are to evacuate civilians or offer assistance in the event of a decision being made to bomb Iraq's nuclear plants.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We look to Iraq to comply in full with the terms of Security Council resolution 687. I am not prepared to speculate about any action which may be necessary to ensure Iraqi compliance.

Royal Ordnance

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many transactions with Royal Ordnance, prior to privatisation, were made using the Bank of Credit and Commerce International; what were the transactions for; and who were the purchasers.

Mr. Alan Clark: The records for this period are no longer held centrally, but any role for BCCI in transactions involving Royal Ordnance would have been a matter for the customer. Details of such transactions would be regarded as commercially confidential.

Kuwait

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what additional precautions have been taken for service personnel working in the Kuwait region since 26 February to *(a)* safeguard their general health and *(b)* reduce their exposure to air pollution;

(2) what criteria have been used to determine the levels of exposure to air pollution that are applied to service personnel who have been working in the Kuwait region since 26 February;

(3) whether anti-pollution masks have been issued to service personnel working in the Kuwait region since 26 February;

(4) what plans he has to improve anti-air pollution measures for service personnel in the Kuwait region;

(5) what assessment has been made of the application of health and safety precautions by his United States counterpart in the Kuwait region since 26 February.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Service personnel in close proximity to the oil fires are provided with protective masks and their lung function is being monitored.

The health and safety of personnel deployed in Kuwait is a matter of priority. The individual measures taken to ensure health and safety, which are kept under review, are based on expert advice and reflect the extensive experience of the services in such matters. No formal assessment of equivalent United States measures has been carried out.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what expenditure was incurred on *(a)* general health and safety precautions and *(b)* anti-air pollution measures for service personnel working in the Kuwait region since 26 February.

Mr. Archie Hamilton This information is not available as it is subsumed in other costs.

Mobile Force

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what expenditure will be saved as a result of not retaining the United Kingdom mobile force;

(2) what is the strategic rationale for the decision not to retain the United Kingdom mobile force.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The decision that NATO should reply on smaller conventional forces in Europe, with an increased emphasis on flexibility and rapid deployment was based on a careful reassessment of the risks of war in Europe, and developments in the Soviet Union. Against this background, "Options for Change" concluded that the role of the United Kingdom mobile force needed to be re-examined along with other deployment options for reinforcement forces on an Allied Command Europe-wide basis. Elements of the United Kingdom mobile force will be redeployed within our contribution to the new Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps structure. It is not possible separately to identify savings attributable to its disbandment.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consultations have taken place with his Danish, German and Norwegian counterparts regarding the withdrawal of the United Kingdom mobile force.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Denmark, Germany and Norway were consulted, along with other allies, through the normal alliance procedures.

Service Commitments

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many *(a)* infantry battalions and *(b)* armoured regiments will be assigned to the Rapid Reaction Corps;

(2) whether he will list the future commitments of the British Army envisaged under "Options for Change", giving details of the number of battalions and regiments that will be required to fulfil those commitments.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to paragraphs 9 to 20 "Britain's Army for the 90s" (Cm. 1595), published on 23 July 1991.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether he will list the current commitments of the British Army, giving details of the number of battalions and regiments that are required to fulfil those commitments;

(2) whether he will list the future commitments of the Royal Air Force envisaged under "Options for Change", giving details of the number and type of squadrons that will be required to fulfil those commitments;

(3) whether he will list the current commitments of the Royal Navy, giving details of the number and type of vessels that are required to fulfil those commitments;

(4) whether he will list the current commitments of the Royal Air Force, giving details of the number and type of squadrons that are required to fulfil those commitments;

(5) whether he will list the future commitments of the Royal Navy envisaged under "Options for Change", giving details of the number and type of vessels that will be required to fulfil those commitments.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to volume 1, chapter 4 of the Statement on the Defence Estimates, "Britain's Defence for the 1990's" (Cm. 1559-1) which was published on 9 July.

Naval Support

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what financial savings are estimated to result from his statement on changes in naval support of 16 July, *Official Report*, columns 148-49.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) on 22 July 1991 at column *452*.

Operation Granby

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which units deployed as part of Operation Granby were undermanned.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: All units deployed on Operation Granby were manned to their full war establishment.

Five-power Defence Arrangement

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what effect "Options for Change" will have with regard to the five-power defence arrangement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Her Majesty's Government remain committed to the five-power defence arrangements as a useful source of security for friendly nations in south-east Asia and it is intended that, subject to availability of resources, the active participation of all three services in FPDA exercises will continue.

Redundancies

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what redundancy terms he plans to offer to those service personnel who are made redundant as a result of "Options for Change".

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave on 23 July to the hon. Member for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn). Redundancy terms are the same for all three services and are embodied, for the Royal Navy, in Orders in Council; for the Army, in part 9 of the Army pensions warrant; and for the Royal Air Force in chapter 46 of Queen's Regulations (Royal Air Force).

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for handling redundancy in the services and among Ministry of Defence United Kingdom-based civil servants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to "Britain's Army for the '90s" (Cm. 1595), which has been published today. Details of Army redundancies are set out in paragraphs 39 to 42.

As to redundancies in the other two services, the Royal Navy judges that there may be a measure of redundancy among officers and ratings, mainly at more senior levels. Subject to further assessment of the numbers involved, it is hoped to achieve these by voluntary redundancy, some late in 1992-93, with the majority subsequently. Some compulsory redundancies might be necessary to complete the programme.

No decisions have yet been taken about RAF redundancies, but it is considered that redundancies among airmen are unlikely, with the possible exception of a small number of senior NCOs in a few trades. In the case of RAF officers, some measure of redundancy at squadron leader level and above may be necessary over the period to the mid-1990s, but it is hoped to keep this to a minimum. The terms and conditions of RN and RAF redundancy will be same as those for the Army.

On current plans about 20,000 United Kingdom-based civil service posts will be reduced over the period 1991-92 to 1996-97. To the greatest extent possible, this reduction will be achieved by natural wastage, early retirement and redeployment. However, there will inevitably be some redundancies, particularly among industrial and non-mobile staff. Numbers will to some extent depend upon which establishments are closed and on the timing. Redundancies will be handled under the Ministry of Defence redundancy agreement. Redundancy compensation is paid under the principal civil service payment scheme.

Top-level Budgets

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will provide detailed figures of the operating costs and programme expenditure in top-level budgets described on page 61 of the 1991 "Statement of the Defence Estimates 1991" Cm. 1559.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Detailed figures for operating costs and programme expenditure in the top level budgets described on page 61 of the 1991 Statement on the Defence Estimates are as follows:

	Operating costs £ million	*Programme expenditure £ million*
CinC Fleet	717	—
Commandant General Royal Marines	191	—
British Army of the Rhine	1,692	—
Field Army	1,118	—
Assistant Chief of the General Staff	521	73
Strike Command	1,236	—
RAF Germany	358	—
Overseas Commands	520	—
Naval Home Command	514	—
Fleet Support	666	1,089
Quartermaster General	270	453
Army Individual Training Organisation	713	—
Support Command	739	33
Air Member for Supply and Organisation	250	1,112
Principal Personnel Officers	339	2,169
Other MOD TLBs	521	677
Chief of Defence Procurement	995	—
Defence Research Agency	626	—
Meteorological Office	59	—

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide details of the amounts assigned to the top-level budget holders listed on page 60 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1991", Cm. 1559; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The amounts assigned to the top level budgets listed on page 60 of the 1991 Statement on the Defence Estimates are as follows:

	£ million
CinC Fleet	717
Commandant General Royal Marines	191
British Army of the Rhine	1,692
United Kingdom Land Forces	1,831
of which:	
Field Army	1,118
Army Individual Training Organisation	713
Assistant Chief of the General Staff	594
Strike Command	1,236
RAF Germany	376
Naval Home Command	514
Chief of Naval Personnel	666
Fleet Support	1,755
Adjutant General	1,095
Quartermaster General	723
Support Command	772
Air Member for Personnel	746
Air Member for Supply and Organisation	1,362
Other MOD TLBs	[1]636
Vice Chief of Defence Staff	563
of which:	
Defence Staff HQ	43
Overseas Commands	520
Chief of Defence Procurement	995
Defence Research Agency	626
Meteorological Office	59

[1] "Other MOD TLBs" include the 2nd Permanent Under Secretary of State, Chief Scientific Advisor and Chief of Defence Intelligence. The figure cannot be disaggregated, for reasons of national security.

WE 177 Weapon

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 3 June, *Official Report*, column *128*, to the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) if he expects to make a statement on the costs of replacing the WE 177 weapon before the beginning of the summer adjournment of the House.

Mr. Alan Clark: No.

"Options for Change"

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what formal consultations took place with NATO allies prior to 25 July 1990 regarding "Options for Change".

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave him on 4 July at column *212*.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with the Nepalese Government and the Brunei Government regarding "Options for Change".

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Both Governments have been informed of the implications of "Options for Change" in relation to the Brigade of Gurkhas.

Mr. Hague: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on how many service and United Kingdom civilian personnel are affected by "Options for Change"; and what roles the civilian staff employed by the Ministry of Defence carry out.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The current strength of the armed forces is some 305,000. The 1979 figure was 322,000, and the mid-1990s figure will be some 246,000. The Ministry of Defence employs a total of 169,000 civilians, 140,000 United Kingdom-based and 29,000 engaged overseas. The 1979 total was 286,000 and the total by the mid 1990s will be 135,000. Ministry of Defence civilians carry out a wide variety of roles in support of all three services. Since they cost less and can provide greater continuity, they are widely employed to release service personnel for military tasks. Programmes on which civilians are employed are set out in the Statement on the Defence Estimates. As well as headquarters work, examples of their tasks and roles are:

Running the Royal Fleet Auxiliaries. These include tankers, support and supply ships which sail with the fleet and on operations. (About 2,500 people).
Running the Navy's supply and armament depots.
Building, maintaining and storing the nuclear deterrent.
Explosive Ordnance Disposal.
Manning army workshops.
Computer support for all three services.
Bill paying for all that is bought by the three services.
The Ministry of Defence police, some 5,000 strong, who guard key establishments against terrorists.
The fire services for all three services.
RAF repair, maintenance and supply depots and other support tasks in RAF Commands. (About 20,000 in all).
Running service mess facilities.
Scientific research in our research establishments.
The scientists and other professionals who run the Meteorological Office (weather forecasting) and most of the staff in the Hydrographic Office.

Logistical Support

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes he has made to his policy regarding logistical support as a result of *(a)* Operation Granby and *(b)* "Options for Change".

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We are considering the outcome of Operation Granby and the conclusions to be drawn from it in the logistics and other areas but it is too early to say what changes may result. Within "Options for Change" we have set ourselves the goal of making substantial savings in the support area commensurate with those in the front line. The Statement on the Defence Estimates published on 9 July contains a full statement of our plans. We have already announced some decisions affecting the Army logistic base and corps, naval support infrastructure and a number of RAF bases. More announcements will be made in due course.

NATO Forces

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contribution he envisages British armed forces making to NATO's main defence forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: While the British Army's main contribution to the defence of Europe will be as part of the new multinational ACE Rapid Reaction Corps, 1st (UK) Armoured Division will also have deployment options with a German-led main defence force corps if it is available and required. The RN and RAF will be contributing to main defence forces; details of their assignment are still being discussed within NATO.

Merlin Helicopter

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many jobs are involved in *(a)* the Merlin helicopter project and *(b)* the prime contractor functions of this project.

Mr. Alan Clark: This would be a matter for those companies participating in the project.

Injuries Compensation

Sir George Gardiner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of the armed forces have applied for compensation for injuries sustained while on duty in each of the last 10 years; and how many cases, in respect of each year, are still awaiting settlement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested is not readily available. My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces will write to the hon. Member.

Radar Companies

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the long-term military procurement implications of the proposed merger between Thomson CSF and GEC Airborne Radar capabilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The proposed joint venture between GEC-Marconi and Thomson-CSF is being considered by the Director General of Fair Trading. Advice by the MOD to the regulatory authorities is given on a confidential basis and it would be inappropriate for me to comment at this stage.

Royal Navy Museum

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether the development of the museum of the Royal Navy at Portsmouth is dependent on any commercial venture; where any company involved in the development is registered; and what consideration has been given to the consequences for the developments at the museum of the Royal Navy of financial problems or collapse suffered by any company involved;

(2) whether he will increase the grant-in-aid to the museum of the Royal Navy at Portsmouth to obviate the development of the museum being taken over by a commercial company.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Responsibility for the development of the Royal Naval Museum at Portsmouth rests with the trustees of the museum. The MOD provides an annual grant-in-aid as a substantial contribution towards meeting the running costs of the museum.

Trident

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he proposes to publish a formal response to the Defence Committee's report on the Trident programme.

Mr. Alan Clark: It is our intention to reply to the House of Commons Defence Committee's report on the Trident programme within the next two months.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what notification is given to local fire authorities prior to the transport of nuclear warheads or missiles through the centre of a city;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 16 July, *Official Report*, column *148*, whether the local police force is warned in advance when a nuclear weapons convoy is to pass through their area of responsibility.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Advance notice of the routes and timings of nuclear weapons convoys is kept to a strict minimum for security reasons. Nevertheless, liaison is maintained with those local police forces which might have such convoys passing through their area of responsibility.

Caledonian MacBrayne Ferry (Near Miss)

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made into investigating the near-miss of a Buccaneer jet and Caledonian MacBrayne ferry Lord of the Isles on 30 April; when he expects the investigations to release the inquiry report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I hope to write to the hon. Member shortly.

Benzodiazepines

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how widespread is the use of the benzodiazepine sleeping pill temazepam by RAF personnel; and how many of these are undergoing treatment for panic attacks as a result of taking the drug.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Temazepam is used by RAF personnel who have difficulties in sleeping due to disturbance of their rest and activity patterns associated with intensive air operations.

I am not aware of any personnel having undergone treatment for panic attacks as a result of taking temazepam.

Regimental System

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arguments he considered against the regimental system before deciding to retain it.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The future of the regimental system was never in doubt: it was the degree of change to the regimental structure that was a factor for consideration in the "Options for Change" exercise.

Hydrographic Office

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the performance of the Hydrographic Office in its first year of operation as a defence support agency and on performance targets for 1991-92.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have today placed in the Library a copy of the Hydrographic Office Defence Support Agency's annual report for the year 1990-91.

At the time of the launch in April 1990 the chief executive was set a number of demanding targets covering quality of service, efficiency and productivity. The results from the first year of operation as an agency have been very encouraging. As the 1990-91 annual report shows, the Hydrographic Office has met or exceeded most of its targets. This has been achieved in a year in which the Hydrographic Office played a significant role in support of Operation Granby.

The need to secure economies in defence spending continues, and defence support agencies which remain an integral part of the Ministry of Defence cannot be exempt from contributing to this process. Against this background, and recognising the progress already made, the key targets for this financial year and beyond have been revised.

On quality of service, the chief executive is required to continue to ensure that all immediate dangers are promulgated by radio navigation warnings within the now reduced period of 20 hours, and to accelerate the programme of modernisation and metrication of charts by reducing the number of imperial unit charts remaining in the inventory by at least 90 such charts per annum. The chief executive is also required to increase the number of new charts and new editions by at least 5 per cent. per annum to 1994-95.

As regards commercial sales a higher target has been set, to increase revenue from such sales by at least 13 per cent. over the first five years of the operation of the agency. Over the same period the aim remains to increase productivity by an average of at least 1 per cent. per annum.

The chief executive has also been required to reduce the agency's net operating costs by £0·9 million per annum but may offset all or part of such a reduction by increasing revenue above that already budgeted.

As regards an overall efficiency target to which the above key targets and other targets in the agency's business plan will contribute, the assumption is that the discipline of the next steps approach and the additional freedoms and flexibilities which agencies receive will allow them to do better in terms of efficiency than in the rest of the Department. The chief executive is, therefore, being required to achieve an efficiency target of 2·5 per cent. this year, compared with 1·5 per cent.for the Department as a whole. I would, however, hope an average of 3·5 per cent. would be achievable over the period 1992-93 to 1994-95.

As the annual report for 1990-91 shows, progress has been made on the remaining two key targets, to develop within 1990-91 an improved system of output measurement and improved management information and management accounting systems. Those targets have now been refined to provide for the development of the agency's financial and management accounting information system by 1 April 1992 and the installation of a fully integrated IT-supported management information system by 1 April 1994.

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OFFICIAL REPORT

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Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

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Bills 1R=first reading, 2R=second reading, Money res=money resolution, Com=Committee stage, Rep=Report stage, 3R=third reading, amendt/amendts=amendment/amendments, *=matter taken formally, without debate.

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